Abstract

In his exploration of overlapping territories and intertwined histories, Edward Said declares “appeals to the past, are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present.” Ethiopians and other interrelated Horn-of-African groups living in the Diaspora embody the tenets of Said’s argument. This observation led to a search for modalities to interpret the meanings of how and why this was the case. In response to this phenomenon, this research sought to ascertain the nexus between personal, cultural and national histories when reading contemporary expressions of Ethiopian identities.

Utilizing a mixed methods approach, this dissertation examines the historical roots of contemporary representations of Ethiopians and other interrelated identities in Canada. Oral histories, Canadian archival records and other forms of representation are examined in this thesis to discern the roots of an Ethiopian identity premised on a legacy of historical visibility. Roots of the most prevalent self-ascribed and super-imposed representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians are situated within an intersecting Canadian and Ethiopian historical framework.

Hallmark representations of Ethiopian identities evidenced in Canadian society are contextualized through the identification and examination of four key points of intersection in Ethiopian and Canadian history in the twentieth century. The four major catalysts for the permeation of Ethiopian identity chronicled are: the Abyssinian Crisis and Italo-Ethiopian War (1934-36), Ethiopian participation at Expo 67 (1967), the African/Ethiopian famine of 1984-88, and Ethiopian Migration and Settlement in Canada (1974- present). A macro, meso and micro framework of analysis is applied to each period to demonstrate the prevalence of representations.

As an exclusively Canadian case study, this dissertation demonstrates the ways in which Ethiopia and representative symbols of Ethiopian history and identity were highly visible within an interpretive framework of both world and Canadian history. In conjunction with existing scholarship and paradigms of Ethiopian studies globally (classical, literary, political and religious), this dissertation historicizes the Canadian manifestations of various signifiers and perceptions of Ethiopian identities throughout the twentieth century. This dissertation contributes to the existing scholarship on Ethiopians and
other interrelated Africans in Canada. It also contributes to studies on migration, identity and Canada-Africa relations more broadly.

**Keywords**

Summary for Lay Audience

The increased migration and settlement of Ethiopians in Canada after 1984 facilitated the prevalence of self-representation by Ethiopians and other inter-related identities in Canada. When interpreting contemporary representations of Ethiopian and other interrelated identities in Canada, this dissertation illustrates that it is imperative to have some contextual knowledge of the political and cultural history of the Horn-of-Africa region, and Canada’s relationship to it.

Through an intersecting examination of Canadian and Ethiopian history, this dissertation locates when and how Ethiopians first penetrated the Canadian imagination. At its core, this project sought to find the answers to the following interrelated questions: Who are the Ethiopians in Canada? What does the existing scholarship say about them and why? Why and how do Ethiopians and other interrelated members of the Diaspora continue to perpetually invoke their historical legacy after migration and settlement abroad? Is there a correlation between Ethiopian migration and prevalent mainstream representations of Ethiopians and other Africans in Canada? What narratives do forms of self-representation by Ethiopians tell? How is this narrative different than the one that is perceived by mainstream Canadian society? Is there evidence of the claim to Ethiopian historical visibility and pertinence hidden within Canadian archives and other repositories of social memory?

This dissertation proves that Ethiopians were present in the Canadian imagination, long before the first Ethiopian migrant was recorded in the immigration statistics of the nation.
Acknowledgments

There are many people who deserve acknowledgements, and too few pages to give them. First and foremost, this thesis would not have been possible without the steadfast support, insights and sacrifices of my immediate family (Hosham, Gabrielle, Ali, Samir and Khadijah). There were countless long days, early mornings and late nights committed to assembling this work, and I am grateful to each one of you for keeping me honest and accountable throughout the years. Your curious questions and challenges to my perspectives were often inspiring to explain things better.

The journey to study history as a discipline was inspired by my roots in Ethiopia. Those roots developed thanks to my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and extended kin. A special thank-you to my grandmother Etye Salem Paulos for introducing us to an intricate world of people and places at a young age. Another debt of gratitude to my aunts Etye Gebaynesh Gashaw Gant and Etye Senait Gashaw, for taking on additional burdens to lighten my load throughout the years. I truly wish that Gashaw could have been here to share this moment. To my aunt Etye Ghennet Girma for being an enigma, and a source of inspiration to uncover more about the past. To my parents Etse-Genet Gashaw and Solomon Girma, you provided us with a solid educational foundation, brought us to Canada and sparked the path of curiosity by always encouraging us to ask questions; even when you did not like them.

The Ph.D. process would have been too insular without the support of a champion and the formation of friendships with an extended community of scholars. My supervisor Dr. Stephanie Bangarth deserves a lot of credit for supporting my vision throughout the years. I could not have completed such an exploratory and innovative study without her encouragement and belief in my ability. I am also deeply grateful for the opportunities that you opened for me in teaching and writing Canadian history, and so much more than I could list here. I am forever grateful to Dr. Robert Wardhaugh for always challenging my perspectives and providing the impetus to drill deeper and write more concisely. Dr. Laurel Shire, your steady encouragement, sharing of resources and insights contributed to my success. Dr. Erica Lawson, our serendipitous connection has enriched my academic life tremendously. I have truly valued your mentorship and friendship.

The long journey was also sustained by friends and mentors from the Migration and Ethnic Relations Specialization Program (MER) at Western University; you all know who you are. From this big group, a special debt and thanks is owed to: Dr. Victoria Esses, Dr.
Belinda Dodson, Dr. Randa Farah, Dr. Christopher Stuart Taylor, Dr. Alexandra Bozheva, Dr. Elaine McKailworth, Dr. Rita Nketieh, Dr. Esra Ari, Dr. Mabel Ho, Dr. Jon Malek, Dr. Shezan Muhammedi, and Dr. Guliz Akkayamak. My Africa Institute and Global Health Community at Western was forged in 2017. Since that time, I have gleaned insights into Canada-Africa relations that would not have been possible without this involvement. A big thanks is owed to Dr. Julie McMullin, Dr. Irena Creed, Dr. Eric Arts, Dr. Henri Boyi, Dr. Nicole Haggerty, Dr. Jessica Prodger and David Reid for the opportunities and insights offered.

Members of the Canadian Network on Humanitarian History (CNHH) have provided invaluable opportunities along the way. Dr. Dominque Marshall has championed my work since we first met in 2014, and her encouragement did wonders to motivate me. The late Dr. Greg Donaghy was instrumental in the development of my chapter on Canada’s involvement in the Famine relief efforts of the 1984-88 period. I am deeply indebted to him for the introduction to the Hon. David MacDonald. Both Dr. Donaghy and Dr. David Webster were integral in challenging ideas presented in my chapter publication drafts and for proposing thoughts for my consideration. My work is better for it. In the true spirit of kinship (intellectual and cultural), Dr. Mary Goitom took the time to share her expertise and insights, giving me invaluable guidance along the tail end of the path. Dr. Hewan Girma, you reached out and offered a lifeline opportunity at a time when everything was in flux; I am forever in your debt.

To all the librarians and archivists I encountered over the years, thank you for your service and for sharing your expertise in trying to help locate sources from obscure references. Your work is a labor of love that deserves recognition.

To members of the Ethiopian Community Association of London, I am forever grateful for your invitations. You welcomed me and reminded me of the ways in which I belong.
Last, but not least, to all the participants who took part in this study, my deepest gratitude for sharing pieces of your history with me. This study would not have been possible without your involvement and willingness to share. I still cherish each and every discussion. Your willingness to participate in this study restored a piece of my identity. More importantly, your rich narratives contributed to new understandings of Ethiopian and other interrelated identities in Canada. I sincerely hope that I have done your perspectives justice.

Thank you all.
Preface

In Ethiopia, food is often looked at through a strong spiritual lens, stronger than anywhere else I know. It's the focal point of weddings, births and funerals and is a daily ceremony from the preparation of the meal and the washing of hands to the sharing of meals.

Marcus Samuelsson

Anyone who has ever tried to make Ethiopian food knows the painstaking preparation time required to get it “just right”. The process of researching and writing this thesis was akin to that long and laborious process of Ethiopian food preparation, that some of us had the good fortune to witness first-hand. You truly learn how to cook Ethiopian food by first observing, then adding and subtracting ingredients as you make a recipe your own. There is seldom a written and regimented family recipe to follow. The tacit knowledge acquired from observation and then first-hand experience of doing what you saw, dictates the quality of the variety of dishes assembled and served on a single Messob of injera. It is very rare that two versions of the exact same dish will turn out looking or tasting the same. Many will argue that the outcomes of Ethiopian dishes are highly dependent on the “hands” of the person(s) who made the dish. The steps that the individual took to prepare the dish, and the time that it took to cook or simmer the dish itself all make a big difference. Much like the process for learning how to cook Ethiopian food, the researching and writing of this thesis first required learning from observation, and then the addition and subtraction of ingredients to get a final product that can be dedicated to the many who made it possible.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................... ii

Keywords ........................................................................................................................... iii

Summary for Lay Audience ............................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................... v

Preface ............................................................................................................................. viii

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................... ix

List of Tables ................................................................................................................... xiii

List of Figures .................................................................................................................. xiv

1 INTRODUCTION: Historical Intersections and Rooting and Reading the History of Representations and Perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canadian Archives .... 1

1.1 Socio-Historical Context For This Study ................................................................. 3

1.2 Methodology, Structural Framework and Theoretical Underpinnings of Dissertation ............................................................................................................................. 8

1.3 Rooting Perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in the Canadian Record .......... 17

1.4 Locating Oral Histories and other forms of Self-Representation by Ethiopian and other Interrelated East African Identities in contemporary Canadian society ...... 37

2 CHAPTER 1: Of Canadian Concern: Peace, War, and Sanctions and the Role of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis (1934-36) in Framing Venerable Representations of Ethiopia From Adowa To Haile Selassie ................................................................. 49

2.1 “Ethiopia Unbound”: Contextualizing Ethiopia’s Cultural and Political Symbolism Preceding 1935 ........................................................................................................ 53

2.2 The Question of Ethiopian Slavery ....................................................................... 59

2.3 Socio-Political and Cultural Context for the Permeation of Perceptions and Representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in the 1934 -36 period ..................... 65

2.4 Of Collective Security and Canadian concerns .................................................... 67

2.5 Canadian Interest in Foreign Policy and the Interpolation of the Italo-Ethiopian Affair ...................................................................................................................... 74

2.6 Peace, War and Sanctions ..................................................................................... 83
## Table of Contents

**2.7** The Economics of War ........................................................................................................... 86

**2.8** The Emperor, The Warriors and The Legacy of Adowa: The Role of Canadian Missionaries and The Canadian Press in Perpetuating The Historical Legacy of a Christian Civilization ................................................................. 95

**2.9** The Narrative of the Impenetrable Ethiopian Fortress ...................................................... 100

**2.10** Haile Selassie and the Narrative of David and Goliath .................................................... 102

**2.11** “Ethiopia Rallies”: The Warriors and Representations of the Nation ............................... 104

**2.12** Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 107

**3** CHAPTER 2: Portrayals of Symbolic Affluence: Ethiopian Participation in Expo 67 and the Predominance of Representations Rooted in History, Politics and Culture ............................................................................................................................... 119

**3.1** Why Expo? Contextualizing The Scale and Significance of Ethiopian Participation at the World’s Fair ................................................................................................................................................. 123

**3.2** Of Canadian Interest: Ethiopian Participation and Canadian Political Aspirations of “Internationalism” ........................................................................................................................................................................... 127

**3.3** Selling Expo 67 and The Politics of Ethiopian and African Participation ........................... 139

**3.4** Symbolism in The Emperor’s Welcome .................................................................................. 153

**3.5** Fashioning An Identity: The Ethiopian Pavilion and Representations of a Steadfast 3000 Year Old Legacy ......................................................................................................................................................... 162

**3.6** The Memory .......................................................................................................................... 168

**3.7** Conclusions .......................................................................................................................... 176

**4** CHAPTER 3: From Discourses on His Majesty To The Dust Bowl of Africa: Canadian Political and Social Mobilization For Famine Relief in Ethiopia (1984-88) and The Lingering Aesthetics of The Starving Ethiopian .......................................................................................................................................................... 183

**4.1** The Samaritan State Rallied: The Widespread Implications of Canadian Political Engagement ..................................................................................................................................................................... 193

**4.2** The Rise Of The Cause Célèbre, The Creation Of A Disenchanted State And The Ensuing Memory Of Mass Deprivation .................................................................................................................................................................. 207

**4.3** “Bushels of Bread to Feed Ethiopians”: Religious Fervor and the Moral Imperative for Famine Relief ........................................................................................................................................................................... 218

**4.4** The long-lasting Effects of the Aestheticization of Famine and Celebrity Humanitarianism ................................................................................................................................................................................. 221
4.5 Conclusions......................................................................................................................... 229

5 CHAPTER 4: Rooted in History: Embodied Histories and Self Representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada ...................................................................................................... 242
5.1 Contextualizing Oral-Histories As Case Studies in Representations of Ethiopian Identity ........................................................................................................................................... 247
5.2 Rooted In History: Identities Rooted in expressions of love for Country, Reverence for History and Topography .............................................................................................................. 253
5.3 Fragmentation In Identity Formation.................................................................................. 274
5.4 Whence Came the Time of The Derg: Narratives of Trauma and Resilience .... 284
5.5 Famine and Historical Displacement .................................................................................. 290
5.6 Conclusions .......................................................................................................................... 295

6.1 What it means to be Habesha ................................................................................................. 309
6.2 Identifying Intersections in Histories, Politics and Culture: Socio-Historical Context for the Stories and Experiences of the Second-Generation ................................................................. 311
6.3 Claiming Hybrid Identities Rooted in A History of Fragmentation and Cohesion .............................................................................................................................................. 316
6.4 Engaging With The Effects of the Ideological Parables of Famine and Perpetual Poverty .................................................................................................................................................. 326
6.5 Topographies of Settlement and Expressions of Identity (Food and Culture) .... 338
6.6 Conclusions .......................................................................................................................... 353

CONCLUSION............................................................................................................................ 360
6.7 Contemporary Resonance .................................................................................................. 390

7 Bibliography ............................................................................................................................ 393

Curriculum Vitae ....................................................................................................................... 419
Education ................................................................................................................................. 419
Honors and Awards .................................................................................................................. 419
Publications ..................................................................................................................... 419
Invited Speaking Engagements .................................................................................... 420
List of Tables

Table 1: Statistical Representation........................................................................................................ 277
# List of Figures

Figure 1: Map Shows How Europe Divides Big Africa ......................................................... 53

Figure 2: Native Priest Poses Near Old Aksum Cathedral .................................................... 55

Figure 3: Chained Debtors To Be Cleared From Streets ........................................................ 62

Figure 4: Ethiopian Ministers Sons In England ................................................................. 64

Figure 5: Slavery In Ethiopia? ............................................................................................ 65

Figure 6: Follow The News With This Latest Map of Africa ............................................... 68

Figure 7: Lions of Judah Speaks for Talkies and Radio ....................................................... 75

Figure 8: Abyssinian Emperor's Suicide Gun ...................................................................... 76

Figure 9: Ethiopian Oddities .............................................................................................. 77

Figure 10: Abyssinian Christians Worship In Open Air ..................................................... 78

Figure 11: Scotts Scrapbook .............................................................................................. 79

Figure 12: Telegram Pictures From The Ethiopian Front .................................................... 82

Figure 13: The Emperor In Black ....................................................................................... 103

Figure 14: On A White Charger I Will Lead ....................................................................... 104

Figure 15: Children In Arms .............................................................................................. 105

Figure 16: Toronto Children Collect Medical Supplies For Ethiopia ................................ 112

Figure 17: Emperor Takes Salute ....................................................................................... 120

Figure 18: Ethiopian Guard ............................................................................................... 136

Figure 19: Ethiopia Unveils Gay Exhibit .......................................................................... 152

Figure 20: Ethiopian Expo Stamp ..................................................................................... 163
1 INTRODUCTION: Historical Intersections and Rooting and Reading the History of Representations and Perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canadian Archives

The history, the land, all this can be interpreted as, what did history do to us?

Ato Mengesha Beyene

In his exploration of overlapping territories and intertwined histories, Edward Said declares that “appeals to the past, are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present.” Ethiopians and members of other interrelated East-African groups living within the context of a contemporary global Diaspora often embody the tenets of Said’s argument. Ethiopians in the Diaspora perpetually reference, invoke, revere, contest, and engage with representative elements of their cultural, political and historical identity. Whether it be through their politically selective business names, cultural festivities, ethno-religious publications or individual historical narratives, Ethiopians and other interrelated East-Africans employ appeals to the past, in order to make representative statements about their present historical, political, and socio-cultural circumstances.

When interpreting contemporary representations of Ethiopian and other interrelated identities in Canada, this dissertation illustrates that it is imperative to have some contextual knowledge of the political and cultural history of the East-African region, and Canada’s relationship to it. Through the purview of historical intersections,

---

1 Oral History Interview 1 with Ato Mengesha Beyene, March 27, 2014.
3 The term “interrelated East-Africans” refers specifically to ethnic groups from the region which were either once considered to be a part of the Ethiopian nation state (Eritrea 1952-1991); or groups which have engaged in well-documented (in scholarship) and protracted struggles for independence such as: the Oromo and Tigray peoples. However, within a Canadian Diaspora context, this term also refers to the numerous other members of Ethnic groups who are in the present still considered to be a part of the Ethiopian Nation state (legally) but wish to identify as other. This includes the term Harari (listed as a category in the National Household Survey of 2016 (www.statscan.ca) and the term Gurage, a fact ascertained through the process of oral history interviews with members of the Diaspora.
this dissertation identifies and examines the roots of the most prevalent self-ascribed and super-imposed representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians, prolific within present-day Canadian society.

The study of migration and identity is inherently interdisciplinary, as much as it is transnational. Applying a mixed methods approach, this dissertation interweaves an analysis of the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian history and identity in Canada (1935- to the present), with an analysis of self-representations by multi-generational members of the Horn-of-African/ East-African Diaspora. Through a combined analysis of sources garnered from Canadian archival repositories and the use of oral historical narratives as illustrative case studies, this dissertation historically and geographically situates contemporary iterations and contestations of Ethiopian identities within an intersecting and interpretive Ethiopian and Canadian historical framework.

To Said’s point, this dissertation maintains that the history of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity in Canada is deeply intertwined with Canada’s historical relationship to Ethiopia and Ethiopians. Hallmark representations of Ethiopian identities evidenced in Canadian society today, are contextualized in this dissertation through the identification and examination of four key points of intersection in Ethiopian and Canadian history in the twentieth century. The four major catalysts for the permeation of Ethiopian identity in Canada identified through the course of this research are: the Abyssinian Crisis and Italo-Ethiopian War (1934-36), Ethiopian participation at Expo 67 (1967), the African/Ethiopian famine of 1984-88, and Ethiopian Migration and Settlement in Canada (1974- present). An examination of each of these four intersections in history pinpoints distinct points of mass permeation of stalwart representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity within Canada.
1.1 Socio-Historical Context For This Study

The Ethiopian and interrelated Diaspora officially started to form in Canada, and the rest of the world, after the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974. The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 commenced the onset of period of rule by a brutal Communist-Marxist military junta and precipitated the mass exodus of Ethiopians into exile or refugee status across the world. The number of people settling in Canadian cities from the war-torn East-African region significantly increased between 1984-1996. Increased migration from the region in this period facilitated a space for the proliferation of self-representations in metropoles across Canada, like the city of Toronto.

When factored into the paradigm of Canada as a ‘Nation of immigrants’, Ethiopians are a numerically small but historically symbolic cohort to examine. There were 44,065 people listed as being of Ethiopian Ethnic origin in the 2016 Canadian National Census (the last long-form census to-date). When factoring in all of the “Ethnic

---

4 Ethiopia begins to be recorded as the country of last permanent residence in Canadian Immigration Statistics in 1973. Prior to 1973, there was no separate category in place by Manpower and Immigration Canada for counting Ethiopian immigrants. Based on the numbers reported in 1973, it is presumable that if there were any prior to this year that they would have likely been categorized as from “Africa, n.e.s”, “not elsewhere specified”. Source: 1973 Immigration Statistics, Manpower and Immigration, Immigration Division, Page 5. Accessed here: [http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/immigration_statistics-ef/mp22-1_1973.pdf](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/immigration_statistics-ef/mp22-1_1973.pdf). For more information with regards to Ethiopian migration to Canada see: “Ethiopians”, as found on the Multicultural Canada website. The Encyclopedia of Peoples section.


5 This analysis is yielded from examining all annual publications by the Minister of Supply and Services Canada, entitled Immigration Statistics, and published by Immigration and Employment Canada from 1984-1996. *Geographer Ransford Danso makes a similar argument in “From ‘there’ to ‘here’: An Investigation of the initial settlement experiences of Ethiopian and Somali Refugees in Toronto”, Geo Journal 56 (2002): 3-14.


7 This number increases to 51,765 when other Ethnic Origins from groups that are still a part of the Ethiopian Nation State are factored in, such as: Amhara: (1,530), Harari: (665), Oromo:
Origins” listed which are part of the present Ethiopian state, Ethiopians rank as one of the top 6 Continental African “Ethnic Origins” identified in the Canadian census alongside Nigerians (51,835), Somalis (62,550), Algerians (67,335), Egyptians (99,140) and Moroccans (103,940). Ethiopians are the second most numerically significant group originating from the East and Southern parts of the African continent, after Somalians. However, their longstanding presence and visibility within Canadian history has yet to be fully examined and documented.

Histories of migrants and migrations do not begin in medias res. Ethiopians are well known for their pride in their long and rich cultural history; one which precedes their dispersing into a Global Diaspora. Symbols and representations of Ethiopian history evoked by members of the Diaspora in the present, were once prevalent identifiers of the Horn-of-Africa nation worldwide. Continuity is an integral component to Ethiopian narrative constructions of history, and this dissertation explores both the continuities and discontinuities inherent in contemporary representations of Ethiopian history and identity. In contrast to contemporaneous prevalent mainstream perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians as impoverished refugees and displaced persons from the perceived dustbowl of Africa, self-representations within the Diaspora are instead hinged upon the evocation of over 3000 years’ worth of historic symbols and markers of identity, ranging from the classic Kingdom of Aksum (100-700 A.D), to the once renowned reign of the Emperor Haile Selassie (1932-1974).

Conventionally, Historian Bahru Zewde writes that “Ethiopian history began with the visit of the Queen of Sheba, allegedly from Ethiopia to Solomon, King of Israel in the tenth century B.C”. Hence the allusion to the legacy of “three thousand years of

(3,350), Tigrian (2,155). Source: Census Profile, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

www.statcan.gc.ca

8 Ibid.

9 Ethiopians are second to Somalians as the largest group listed from Eastern and Southern Africa in the Canadian census. Source: Census Profile, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada

www.statcan.gc.ca


history” that would be referenced time and time again in everyday parlance and scholarly discourses for much of the twentieth-century. In their contemporary self-representations, Ethiopians in the Diaspora invoke the prominent symbols of a 3000 thousand-year historical legacy such as Queen Sheba, the civilization of Axum, the Emperors Twedros II, Yohannes and Menelik II, the Battle of Adowa and Emperor Haile Selassie I; as they discuss both the prominence and subsequent diminishment of these signifiers in the West.

In response to this phenomenon, this research underscores the need to ascertain the nexus between personal, cultural and national histories when reading contemporary expressions of Ethiopian identities. Ethiopians evoke the famous Battle of Adowa (1896) and underscore the political implications and cultural significance of an Ethiopian army emerging victorious over a predominantly white Italian army, over a century ago. The relevance of Ethiopia’s status as the sole un-colonized nation on the African continent is ascertained in self-representations by citing the legacy of an ancient civilization ruled by globally revered monarchs. Consequently, this dissertation examines Canadian archival records to discern the roots of a persistent Ethiopian identity premised on pride in a longstanding legacy of historical visibility. An examination of the Canadian archives demonstrates that the signifiers of Ethiopian history and identity were also once prevalent within the Canadian vernacular; due to their global historic and geopolitical value which subsequently augmented their cultural cachet. Subsequently, the disappearance of this historical awareness from mainstream consciousness of Canadians is also identified and historicized.

To the outside world, the revolution of 1974 rendered Ethiopia’s renowned “monarchs relics” and effectively decimated the political, cultural and historical cachet of a 3000-year historical legacy. Ethiopia also garnered worldwide attention for a particularly blight episode of famine in the 1984-86 period. Global engagement with this episode of famine changed the course of humanitarian history. Consequently, by the late

12 “Abyssinia”, The Leader (Toronto), May 6, 1868: Page 1.
twentieth century, “images of famine and abject poverty –not obelisks, rock-hewn churches, and grand mosques” became the most pervasive references for Ethiopia in the West.\textsuperscript{14} It was the same phenomenon in Canada. The settlement and growth of the Horn-of-African Diaspora in Canada coincided with the diminishment of any awareness of the East-African region’s cultural, political and historical relevancy. In response to the near complete invisibility of Ethiopian history within contemporary Canadian history and politics, the growth and development of Diasporic communit(ies) across Canada has facilitated a space for the precipitation of historically, culturally and politically rooted representations of Ethiopian identity(ies) within pockets of Canadian society. The political and cultural expressions of the Horn-of-Africa émigré groups in Canada elucidate elements of Canada’s past and present relationship with Ethiopia and Ethiopians.

To date the most comprehensive and pertinent scholarship available on the nature of Ethiopian and other interrelated East-African identities in Canada has been by sociologist John Sorensen. Sorensen’s most relevant works for this dissertation are: “The politics of Social Identity: “Ethiopians” in Canada” (1991), “Essence and Contingency in the Construction of Nationhood: Transformations of Identity in Ethiopian Diasporas” (1993), \textit{Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa} (1993) and his collaborative monograph \textit{Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora} (2001) with Atsuko Matsuoka.\textsuperscript{15} Sorensen and Atsuko Matsuoka have also collaborated on other articles and chapters focused on Eritreans in Canada that have bearing on the assertions of this dissertation that conceptualizations of “history” continue to impact the self-representations of all members of the interrelated East-African Diaspora, in the present.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
Over three decades after the establishment of a sizeable East-African Diaspora in Canada, both Sorensen’s individual and collaborative works provide the necessary socio-historical and political contexts required to understand several tenets of this historical project. Other works of particular relevance are: “Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea” (2001), Eritrean Women in Canada: Negotiating New Lives” (1999) and “Eritrean Canadian Refugee Households as Sites of Gender Renegotiation” (2008).\(^\text{16}\) In addition to the individual and collaborative works by Sorensen, this dissertation also engages with scholarship that is more recent on Habesha youth by Mary Goitom. Goitom’s works collectively illustrate the continued influences of interplays in culture, history and politics upon the lives of Habesha youth growing up in Canada. In particular, her following publications are insightful and help to contextualize the oral interviews conducted for this research: *Becoming Habesha: The Journey of Second-Generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Youth in Canada* (2012), “Living in Our Own World”: Parental Influence on The Identity Development of Second-Generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Youth During Their Formative Years” (2016) and “Bridging Several Worlds”: The Process of Identity-Development of Second-Generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Young Women in Canada (2017).\(^\text{17}\) In dialogue with Sorensen and Goitom’s work on Ethiopians and the interrelated Diaspora in Canada, this dissertation project examines the politics of self-representation in Canada.

Distinct from the existing scholarship, this project seeks the roots of contemporary self-representations in Canadian archives. Through the prism of historic


intersections in Canadian and Ethiopian history vis-à-vis socio-political and socio-cultural relations throughout the twentieth century, this project traces and pinpoints the historical forces that enabled the permeation of an Ethiopian identity in Canada, long before the migration and settlement of Ethiopians and other interrelated ethnicities. Canada’s historical relationship to Africa is of the utmost importance to understanding both the trajectory of Canada-Ethiopia relations and representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada. In the early twentieth century, Africa was of political and cultural significance to Canadians only due to the dialogical relationship between Britain and Canada (as a Dominion) and the proxy relationship to the African colonies (pre-1967). In the era of decolonization, Canada’s relationship to Africa developed through the framework of the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. Canada’s role in international development and peace keeping also shaped Canada-Ethiopia relations. These past relations were hinged upon conceptualizations of race and race relations, which ebbed and flowed throughout the twentieth century. Ethiopia’s centrality to Pan-Africanism throughout the twentieth century also bolstered relations between the two countries. Findings from this research contribute to studies of migration and identity, Canada-Africa relations and international and foreign affairs broadly.

1.2 Methodology, Structural Framework and Theoretical Underpinnings of Dissertation

Studies of migrations and identity often necessitate the use of frameworks that are intersectional. When writing a history of immigration history in Canada, macro-, meso- and micro-structural analysis offer a framework whereby more inclusive and comprehensive histories can be written.18 Rooted in the works of British sociologist Anthony Giddens and his theory of structuration, the migration systems approach is premised on the theory that any migratory movement can be understood as the consequence of interactions between macro- and micro structures.19 Stephen Castles and

Mark Miller assert that “in the migratory process, macro-, meso- and micro-structures are intertwined, as there are no clear divisions to be made between them”. The terms macro, meso and micro are also utilized by other social scientists to define and delineate three distinct but interrelated levels of social relations for examination.

In conjunction with ideations of intersection and interplay as structural frameworks, this dissertation applies the use of macro, meso and micro structural analysis throughout, to illustrate the pervasiveness of the permeation of Ethiopian symbolism in each historical intersection examined. Macro-structural analysis encompasses the examination of large-scale institutional structures which include intersections between states, the global political economy, and the laws, policies and practices established by the states to control migration. Throughout this dissertation, the macro-analysis completed for each historical intersection is inherent in the analysis of the ideological, political, institutional and social conditions which shaped Canada-Ethiopia relations at each juncture, and in-turn influenced the representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians. An analysis of the influencing intermediary or meso-structural (social) ties between the two nation’s vis-à-vis community-based organizations, churches, businesses, universities or humanitarian agencies is also integrated as appropriate or available for each juncture.

A micro-level analysis is applied throughout through the integration of examinations of the role of individual Canadians in role of forging forms of bi-lateral relations between the two nations throughout the twentieth century (1935- present). Micro-level analysis is also exemplified through the study of oral-historical narratives as form of self-representation. All chapters throughout the dissertation include and showcase the interdependent nature of each of these modes of analysis. Employing a macro, meso and microanalysis allowed for an in-depth and nuanced analysis of the dynamics and manifestations of social phenomena throughout the twentieth-century

\[20\] Ibid., 30.
\[22\] Ibid.
intersections in Canadian-Ethiopian history that had influenced representations and perceptions of Ethiopians.

The dissertation is ordered in a chronological fashion. In order to better situate and understand present-day narratives and self-representations, this dissertation is divided into two interrelated sections. Through the prism of three significant historical intersections, Section I of this dissertation overviews the historical roots of prevalent representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada. Comprising chapters 1-3, this first section underscores the significance of the Abyssinian crisis and the Italo-Ethiopian War (1934-36), Ethiopian participation at Expo 67 (1967) and the African/Ethiopian famine (1984-88) in shaping the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity in Canada from 1935-1991.

Within an interpretive framework of intersections in Ethiopian and Canadian history, section I provides a disremembered foundational knowledge for the proper interpretation of a historical legacy which is invoked, revered, or contested by the Ethiopian and interrelated East -African Diaspora today. Through an examination of Canadian and Ethiopian government documents, Canadian and Ethiopian newspaper articles and editorials, travel books, pamphlets, photographs, videos, documentaries, autobiographies and memoirs, individual correspondences, subject matter expert testimonials and other materials produced on Ethiopia and Ethiopians by Canadians, section I of this dissertation corroborates and historicizes contemporary references made by Ethiopians to the existence of a once venerated Ethiopian identity.

For the purposes of this project, extensive archival research was conducted at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the D.B Weldon library at Western University. Findings at LAC and Weldon also led to a visit to the Red Cross (National Office, Ottawa) and the need to source materials from other repositories across Canada and the United States. Primary materials were also sourced from Université Laval (Quebec), the S.I.M International Archives in Fort Mill, South Carolina, U.S.A and the CBC Digital Archives (http://www.cbc.ca/archives/), along with reviews of several other blogs and interrelated webpages as appropriate for each intersection examined. Inquiries were also
made with the Nova Scotia Public Library, Chatham Public Library, City of Toronto Municipal Clerks office, and the University of British Columbia (UBC). In conjunction with the extensive archival research conducted, this first section of the dissertation also considers the perspectives of three Canadian subject matter experts. Dr. Paul and Lila Balisky, two members of S.I.M who spent more than three decades immersed in Ethiopian culture and society reached out to me in 2015.23 We were connected by a SIM archivist in South Carolina, whom I had contacted seeking information on SIM activities in Ethiopia during the 1930s. Coincidently, their first introduction to Ethiopian culture was at Expo 67. They flew out to their first mission trip to Ethiopia from Montreal, and they made a deliberate stop at Expo to experience the microcosm of the world, before embarking on their life-long journey. Their perspectives as Canadians living in Ethiopia from 1967 until 1992 are factored into the overall analysis, where appropriate. Their love for Ethiopia was clear, and indicative of the types of relationships that several Canadians have forged with the country over the course of the twentieth century. Their insights early in the research process reaffirmed the importance of applying an integrative and intersecting framework of Ethiopian-Canadian history to examine the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopians within Canada.

Last, but certainly not least, this dissertation also integrates the perspectives and experiences of the Honorable David MacDonald. MacDonald was the Mulroney Government’s appointed Canadian Emergency Coordinator/ African Famine (1984-1986). He later served as the Canadian ambassador to Ethiopia and Sudan (1986-88). MacDonald championed Canada’s relief efforts and relations to Africa at a critical time in the history of Canada-Africa relations. He learned of my research through the late Dr. Greg Donaghy after my presentation on Canada’s leadership role during the African famine of 1984-88, at The Samaritan State Conference held at Global Affairs Canada in December of 2016. After reading a sample of my work, I was interviewed by him via telephone, and subsequently invited to conduct a full oral history interview on March 28,

2017. With decades of commitment to a life of public service, his insights offered into a “unique” period in Canadian history enhanced the quality of the analysis presented in Chapter 3.24

Overall findings from Canadian archives reviewed for section I attest to the geopolitical and cultural significance of Ethiopian history throughout the twentieth century. During this long durée, interplays in history, politics and culture facilitated the permeation of stalwart representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians within a collective western consciousness. Representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians proliferated in Canada during each of the historical intersections examined in this thesis, primarily because Ethiopia was of political relevance to the Canadian government of the time. Ethiopia’s relative political importance between 1935-1988 made the country and its peoples of both political and cultural significance to the general Canadian populace. It was only in light of the political relevance of Ethiopia to Canadians during each historical intersection examined between 1900-1991 that prolific representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians manifested across the country through a wide variety of public forums. Each of the historical intersections examined demonstrates the interrelationship between history, politics and culture in both the generation and proliferation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopians within mainstream Canadian society.

In their introduction the edited collection *Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories* (2016), historians Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford make the argument that in spite of some general awareness of the Third World, “most Canadians know relatively little about the historical foundations of the complex nature of the country’s entanglements with non-western societies”. 25 It is inarguable that at present, Canada’s entanglements with the Global South permeate across several paradigms. Dubinsky et al assert that these entanglements are embedded into the daily lives of ordinary Canadians through the consumption of material goods, multiculturalism, migration, remittances, foreign policy and the actions of civil societies.

---

24 Author Interview with the Honorable David MacDonald, March 28, 2017.
However, the prevalence of contemporary relations generates the false impression that “Canada’s relationship to the Third World has a present but not a past.”\textsuperscript{26} The research premise and findings for this dissertation are in alignment with these assertions. Canada’s relations to Ethiopia have a long-rooted past.

During each period of major historical intersection examined in section I (1934-35, 1967, and 1984-1988), Ethiopia and Ethiopians were the focus of Canadian attention through a variety of socially pervasive mediums. In the key moments of historical overlap, Ethiopia penetrated into the Canadian imagination and captured the gaze of the nation’s populace. Representations and perceptions of Ethiopians flourished through the broad reach of popular publications (press dailies, magazines and pamphlets) and radio airwaves and picture screens. They also flourished through church pulpits, university lectures, debate clubs, and luncheons and dinners hosted by various associations, clubs and unions. Young Canadians gained exposure to the East African nation within elementary and high school curriculums. These are the mediums through which symbols of Ethiopian identity became imbedded into the contemporaneous Canadian vernacular of each of the historical intersections examined in this thesis.

By interlacing examinations of political, cultural, economic (both private and public enterprise), and civil society ties between Canada and Ethiopia, this dissertation historicizes the longstanding relationship between the two nations, beyond the paradigms of traditional studies of foreign relations or migration studies solely focused on any one facet of analysis such as government policy objectives and outcomes. Instead, the paradigm of interplays in history, politics and culture is applied to demonstrate the interdependency of the three facets of analysis in the permeation of stalwart representations of Ethiopian history and identities during each period examined within the purview of this thesis. The study of imagery and rhetoric pertaining to the Horn of

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.,3.
Africa is not purely textual, as the tropes and themes prevalent in the past, continue to be of relevance in people’s lives today.27

In the twenty-first century, self-representation is the most prolific manner in which variations of historically rooted Ethiopian, and other interrelated East-African identities are visible within the Canadian milieu. The processes of migration and settlement complicate personal life trajectories, in so much as they complicate conceptualizations of national identities and histories. In his examination of identity formation in a Post-Modern world, the late cultural theorist and immigrant Madan Sarup contended that there is a fundamental link between memory and identity. Sarup argued that an integral component to the construction and negotiation of identities “is the past-present relation and its reconciliation”.28 Elements of Sarup’s arguments are evidenced in self-representations by members of the Ethiopian Diaspora.

In _Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa_ (1993) John Sorensen makes the argument that for the heterogeneous group of peoples from the Horn-of-Africa region, “conflicts over images, histories, and identities are struggles for power”, and that they have historically been “efforts to create and define reality”.29 In addition to the fact that they are rooted in select elements of Ethiopian history, visual markers and symbols of identity evoked by Ethiopians and other interrelated East-Africans in the present are reminders of the fact that their underlying meanings are in constant dialogue with what it means to be an Ethiopian, Ethiopian-Canadian, or an interrelated East-African in Canada. It is in light of the African nation’s geopolitical and historical significance for more than half of the twentieth century that Ethiopia’s preceding, and since diminished levels of political and cultural cachet, are referenced, revered or outright contested by Ethiopians and other inter-related East-Africans living within the context of a Diaspora in Canada today.

---

29 Ibid.
Using oral histories as illustrative case studies, and an accompanying examination of census data, ethno-cultural publications and other forms of public representation, section II of this dissertation (chapters 4 and 5) examines the ways in which conceptualizations of history continue to shape expressions of identity (self-representations) by the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora in Canada. Through the voices and experiences of 10 participants of Ethiopian heritage, and 1 of Eritrean-Canadian descent, chapters 4 and 5 explore the continued influences of history, memory and identity upon contemporary representations of Ethiopian identities in Canada. Oral history interviews were conducted with members of the Diaspora between 2013 and 2015.

From the outset, the oral historical narratives were envisioned as case studies and they were positioned as essential components to this project. Modelled after Roni Berger’s approach, the method of the case study approach employed was discovery focused, with an interest in the qualitative potential of the material yielded from the oral history interviews.30 Discovery focused research has gained more popularity in the social sciences over the last two decades for uncovering and exploring little known fields and complex multi-dimensional social phenomena.31 In light of some of the underlying principles and assumptions of qualitative research, in this case study, the semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to construct their lived experiences and place emphasis and meaning on the aspects that they chose. Being illustrative case studies, the narratives were then contextualized both within the available historical literature on migration to Canada, as well as the broader inter-disciplinary literature available on the subjects of ethnicity and identity to extrapolate on any points of comparison or emergent patterns for further examination.

The oral histories featured in this dissertation are exemplars of what social scientists Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett label as “counter

---

31 Ibid., 29.
narratives”.32 The narratives featured throughout this dissertation connected “the personal to the historical in ways that create a tension between the two”.33 Often pitted against hegemonic perceptions of Ethiopians and Africans in general proliferating within mainstream consciousness, Ethiopians and other interrelated East-Africans perpetually engage with representative elements of their cultural, political and historical identity. There are convergences between mainstream representations (misrepresentations) of Ethiopian history in Canada, and the ways in which historical narratives are articulated by members of the Diaspora and their descendants.

Historian Elizabeth Tonkin argues that “one cannot detach the oral representation of pastness from the relationship of teller and audience in which it was occasioned.”34 All of the participants in this study were conscious of my positionality as an embedded researcher. In alignment with the assertions of Wendy Frisby and Gillian Creese, I acknowledge that my knowledge claims are “historically situated, socially embodied, and mediated through multiple and shifting relations of power and privilege”.35 Whilst the connections that were established during each interview session were minimal prior to the formal interview sessions held in-person or over the telephone, there was a degree of tacit knowledge which facilitated the creation of a rapport and allowed for more organic and dynamic flows of information exchange between researcher and participants. Pre-existing knowledge of facts of life in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and familiarity with the customs and conventions with which people from the region interact were of the utmost importance in establishing the necessary trust and connection with the participants. As a consequence, discussions of ethnic identity, politics and history were inextricably intertwined throughout the duration of the conversations with each participant.

33 Ibid.
Commitment to doing community engaged research and giving voice were central considerations throughout the research, analysis and writing process.\(^{36}\) To a researcher seeking multi-generational perspectives, a mutual interest in the subject of history facilitated discussions with the elders involved in this study and enhanced the depth of their participation and the materials yielded for further analysis. It was in light of my own cultural heritage and position within the research nexus that often times the narratives of the participants in this study traversed between continents, world purviews and mindsets fluidly. Everything political was personal, and everything personal was political as the narrators traversed back and forth seamlessly from accounts of their life experiences and life trajectories into an analysis of the major historical events which both impacted their lives and their ancestral homeland. Hence, why it is argued that the most prevalent conceptualizations of Ethiopian history and identity visible within a contemporary Canadian milieu (public sphere), and expressed within the oral historical narratives (private articulations) of members of the Ethiopian or East-African Diaspora are best understood only when situated and interpreted within an intersecting framework of Ethiopian and Canadian history.

1.3 Rooting Perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in the Canadian Record

In the 2010 special edition of *Callaloo* on “The Romance of Ethiopia”, scholars Dagmawi Woubshet, Salamishah Tillet and Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis argue that Ethiopia has historically “been a source of spiritual and political armour and creativity”.\(^{37}\) Rooting the romance of Ethiopia within a broader Western scholarly and literary cannon is imperative to understanding why Ethiopia had both political and cultural cachet for much of the twentieth century. W.B Carnochan asserts that English knowledge of Ethiopia is

---

\(^{36}\) This section is written in fulfillment of the original ethics proposal submitted in 2011. In accordance to the proposal submitted and approved, the narratives collected are analyzed as primary sources. Because of my personal connection with some of the subject matter, I am acknowledging my positionality in the spirit of being transparent about “how the narratives were constructed or collected and how they were interpreted” (Maynes et al., Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences And History. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008: 124-25).

traceable back to 1682, and the translation of *A New History of Ethiopia, being a full and Accurate Description of The Kingdom of Abessinia, Vulgarly, Though Erroneously Called The Empire of Prester John*, from Latin to English, by John Philips.\(^{38}\) Thereafter, Ethiopia served as an exotic and mythical source of intrigue to missionaries, religious scholars, travellers, historians, anthropologists, journalists and general aficionados of classical studies and civilizations. Perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians throughout the twentieth century are rooted in this long history of visibility and representation of the East African nation in Western scholarship and popular publications.

In Black studies, “the Ethiopian past epitomized a golden age in which Africans enjoyed relative prominence in world history”.\(^{39}\) Black writing “is replete with references to Ethiopia’s legacy”.\(^{40}\) The name Ethiopia was initially a generic reference to both the Black race and Africa emanating from the Old Testament.\(^{41}\) By the nineteenth century, the term Ethiopia signified the geographical region of Abyssinia.\(^{42}\) Pan-Africanism is traceable to the various political and religious movements known as “Ethiopianism”.\(^{43}\) In the early twentieth-century, Abyssinia/Ethiopia was a prominent symbol of unity in paradigms of racial uplift and Pan-Africanism. The formidable role of Ethiopia in conceptualizations of a Pan-African identity is also integral to understanding the political and cultural potency of the East African nation throughout the twentieth century, and into the present. The “Romance of Ethiopia” that Woubshet et al articulate held steadfast throughout the Western world, pre the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia.\(^{44}\)

---

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 301.
Representations of Abyssinia/Ethiopia date as far back as the mid-nineteenth century in the Canadian record. The name Abyssinia was imbedded within the Canadian vernacular as part of a staple Classical education focused on ancient civilizations, or within the context of the political interests of the British Empire and its implications for its Canadian Dominion (1860 -1942). As early as October 12, 1867, *The Globe and Mail* featured a series of breaking news stories on the East African Empire of Abyssinia.\(^45\) In the burgeoning stages of the imperial scramble for Africa (pre-Berlin Conference of 1884-85) Abyssinia captured the attention of the west, when Emperor Tewodros II imprisoned between 61-67 British missionaries and envoys, along with other Europeans (mostly German) by accusing them of plotting against him.\(^46\) The Abyssinian Empire made Canadian news in this early period, due to British Colonial interests in the East-African region.

Emperor Tewodros II is credited for inaugurating “the modern history of Ethiopia”, in his effective response to both internal and external challenges faced by the East-African Empire.\(^47\) His military prowess coupled with his “unrelenting drive to acquire modern arms” earned him a reputation as a warrior to be reckoned with, during the quest for empires in the east.\(^48\) Thus, Abyssinia/Ethiopia inarguably commanded the respect of Western nations in this period. Subsequently in 1867, English Canadians, alongside the rest of the world, were forced to pay attention as the British deployed the Napier expedition (1867-68) in response to the actions of an emboldened Black African monarch. Archival records on Ethiopia and Ethiopians are imbued with vacillating tensions between veneration for the country and her monarchs, and repudiation for their anti-foreign or anti-white colonial styles of governance.

\(^48\) Ibid., 34.
As a prime example, the fanfare surrounding the Napier Expedition marks it as the first cause célèbre event which bourgeoned representations of Abyssinia/Ethiopia as an African nation of geopolitical and cultural significance to Canadians. Sir Robert Napier’s expedition to rescue the British Missionaries and envoys held captive by the Emperor Twedros II captured the attention of the British, American, Canadian and European press alike. And through the prism of the imperial interests of Mother England, English Canadians in this period gleaning insight into the topography, culture, political structure and history of Ethiopian society vis-à-vis newspaper publications, and the travel journals and accounts of missionaries and other sojourners in the region. This early period of fanfare and proliferation in representations frames the tenor for the types of representations of the East-African nation that flourished throughout the twentieth-century.

Reading Canadian archival documents on Ethiopia with an awareness of a consistent focus on what was happening within the empire from 1867-1967 speaks volumes to the East-African country’s longstanding geopolitical relevance to Canadians. During the peak of the perceived crisis in 1868, first-hand testimonials from subject matter experts who had travelled to the land were extensive in providing information on the East-African kingdom. On Wednesday May 6, 1868, the Toronto Leader reported that “Abyssinia is one of the most ancient monarchies in the world, and has been governed from time immemorial by an emperor”. Dr. Beke, the erudite informant for the aforementioned article claimed that Abyssinia was “an hereditary monarchy” governed “under the sway of an Emperor claiming descent from Solomon King of Israel and the Queen of Sheba”. Even though the claim to such a prestigious lineage was libeled as

---

49 Some examples include: The Highlands of Ethiopia Described, During Eighteen Months’ Residence of a British Embassy at the Christian Court of Shoa, by Major W. Cornwallis from 1844 as advertised in the Globe and Mail, and The autobiography of Theophilus Waldmeier, missionary: being an account of ten years’ life in Abyssinia; and sixteen years in Syria published in 1886 by Waldmeier Theophilus.

50 “Abyssinia”, The Leader (Toronto), May 6, 1868: Page 1.

51 Ibid.
potentially “mere fiction”, the editorial still upheld the merit of the claim in the declaration that:

*there are few Christian sovereigns who can show a more illustrious lineage than the Emperors of Ethiopia, whose progenitors received the Christian faith, and possessed a native version of the Holy Scriptures as early as the fourth century, when the now civilized nations of Europe were in a state of barbarism.* 52

Testimonials such as the former from the nineteenth century are of relevance to this dissertation, because the representations and perceptions of Abyssinia/ Ethiopia from this early period framed the narrative on the East-African nation in Canada (and the West in general) for the next one hundred years. Bahru Zewde’s analysis of the convention of the writing of Ethiopian history as rooted in the visit of King Solomon to the Queen Sheba flourishes in Canadian archives. In publications surveyed from 1867-1967, Christian kinship was undoubtedly the primary paradigm by which the Ethiopia was revered in publications such as manuscripts, pamphlets, government documents and editorials. Descriptions such as the former, juxtaposing an early Christian Ethiopia endowed with scriptural texts prior to a “barbaric Europe”, exude a certain level of distinction, if not outright veneration, for the often allegedly archaic and primeval kingdom on the so-called “Dark Continent”. Early instances provide substantiation for the existence of steadfast and archetypal tropes. The unrelenting manner in which the legacy of a “three thousand years of history” is referenced time and time again in everyday parlance, and scholarly discourses is evidenced from 1867-1967. 53

Ethiopia’s civilization credence and Christian lineage was also a strong factor for the country’s symbolism to the Pan-African and racial uplift movements of the early twentieth century. During the 1920’s, *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, Canada’s leading Black newspaper dedicated to racial uplift and community advancement featured several news

52 Ibid.
articles discussing the political and cultural symbolism of Abyssinia/Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{54} In October of 1924, J.F Jenkins proclaimed in an editorial that “we Black folk are proud of the accomplishments of the Ethiopian church”.\textsuperscript{55} In alignment with the veneration for the East African nation premised on a Biblical legacy of Christianity expressed in the mainstream newspapers, the Black Press of the early twentieth-century also politically and culturally epitomized “the Ethiopian church and the power it is drawing unto itself by uniting all of Black Africa”.\textsuperscript{56}

Ethiopia was a politically and culturally poignant symbol for the times, because through the power of the Ethiopian Church the historic nation represented strength and the promise of an alternate and dignified existence for Blacks. Praise for the strength and power of the Ethiopian church found in the Black Press was in clear juxtaposition to the prevailing sentiment that “the present color scheme of North America, at any rate is calculated to humiliate and degrade the spirit of all Black people.”\textsuperscript{57} The symbolism of Ethiopia was pertinent for Blacks across the world, including Canadians. In alignment with mainstream representations and reflective of geo-political tensions, Christian Blacks revered the Ethiopian church for the following reasons:

\textit{for it has not only shown the Black people the power of unity, it has not only preserved self-respect among the natives and given shape to that rising bode of energy, but it has also saved countless millions to Christianity, which under the present order of things- class distinction racial prejudice-standards set up by white men- would have been swept away by the forces of Mohammedenesim or some other movement’}.\textsuperscript{58}

Ethiopia’s unparalleled political feat in gaining admittance into the League of Nations in 1923 was thus construed in religious terms for Blacks. Ethiopia’s admittance into the

\textsuperscript{55} J. F. Jenkins, “The Ethiopian Church”, The Dawn of Tomorrow, October 18, 1924:2.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} “Garveys Black God”, The Dawn of Tomorrow, September 20, 1924.
\textsuperscript{58} Jenkins, “The Ethiopian Church”, The Dawn of Tomorrow, October 18, 1924:2.
powerhouse of geo-political relations as an independent African country was narrated as the fulfillment of a Biblical prophecy. It was widely argued that “in stretching forth her hand to the world Ethiopia thus hastens the fulfilment of the prophecy as it relates to her of old”.\(^{59}\) Rooted in Psalm 68, Verse 31, the prevailing belief by Ethiopianists of this period was that God would deliver the Black race from slavery and oppression uniting all of the children of the African Diaspora scattered across the globe.\(^{60}\) There was a political utility in Ethiopia’s historical and cultural symbolism. For a myriad of reasons, Ethiopia’s legacy as a symbol of ancient civilization and Christianity had staying power globally.

The prevailing application of the long-rooted three-thousand-year legacy throughout the twentieth century evokes prominent Canadian journalist Robert Fulford’s assessments of the power of the “Master Narrative”. In his 1999 Massey Lecture Series on “The Triumph of Narrative”, Fulford recounted the importance of “Storytelling in the Age of Mass Culture”.\(^{61}\) Of particular significance to this dissertation is Fulford’s reference to “Master Narratives” and the instrumental role of British historian Arnold Toynbee in telling them. Toynbee, Fulford asserted, sought nothing less than to tell “the meaning of collective human life”.\(^{62}\) Toynbee, often characterized as the most prolific historian of the twentieth century wrote on “the civilization of Negro Africa”.\(^{63}\) Toynbee was regularly cited in both classified Canadian government documents and popular writings throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and his quoted works on Ethiopia are integral to the proper location and interpretation of Ethiopia in the Western vernacular and imagination in the twentieth-century.

Toynbee’s articulations of Ethiopia are reflective of the uniqueness of the African nation in both the scholarly and colloquial vernacular of the west. In his 1965 monograph *Between Niger and Nile*, Toynbee encapsulated the ethos of the West and intellectuals on the African continent, with regards to the place of Africa in “world history”, more specifically within the Western political vernacular and cultural imagination. Toynbee

\(^{59}\) “Ethiopia is Admitted to the League”, *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, October 13, 1923: Cover Page.
\(^{60}\) Getachew Metaferia, “The Ethiopian Connection To The Pan African Movement”, 302.
\(^{62}\) Ibid.
asserted then that in spite of the geographical circumscription of the continent, there are really “two Africas”. In alignment with the discourses of the day, Toynbee argued that “compact Africa is fractured into separate Africas by the Sahara and the Libyan desert and the Abyssinian plateau, with the tropical rainforests of West Africa and the fens of the Upper Nile as a second barrier behind the first.”  

The northern third of Africa, he asserted was “far more closely connected with Asia and Europe than it is with the southern two-thirds of what is commonly taken to be a one and indivisible African continent.” Thus, by the mid-twentieth century Ethiopia was firmly placed within western political and social consciousness as at the crossroads of: the west and the east, Africa and the Middle East, and most importantly at the crossroads of history and modernity. Ethiopia’s geo-political and geo-historical placement is integral to interpreting both past and contemporary representations of the nation.

In the period between 1867-1967, ubiquitous representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians found in Canadian archives were premised on constructions and interpretations of Ethiopia as an ancient, historically, politically and culturally significant independent African, Christian civilization. Ethiopia’s geopolitical significance, coupled with the nation’s claim to an ancestral Christian lineage was an origins story which predominated constructions of Ethiopian identity and history for well over a century, and rooting this narrative is integral to interpreting contemporary references and contestations of Ethiopian identities. Ethiopia’s historical stature as an ancient civilization would consistently come to the fore during each historical intersection examined throughout the twentieth century. Representations and perceptions of the African nation remained almost the same for over 100 years. This Canadian case study demonstrates how this happened in a Canadian context.

Chapter one explores Canada’s relationship to the Abyssinian Crisis (1934-35) and subsequent Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-36). Both the Abyssinian Crisis and subsequent Italo-Ethiopian War were of international importance on the road to World

---

64 Ibid, 1.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
War II, and the subsequent media attention on the geopolitical crisis worldwide projected representations of Ethiopian history and culture into the modern world. With the paradigms of politics and empire influencing the potential of Canadian engagement in yet another “foreign war”, Ethiopia and Ethiopians became the cultural preoccupation of both Anglo and Francophone Canadians from coast to coast. The 1934-36 period was the first time in the twentieth century when there was a pervasive articulation of distinct Ethiopian identities across the Canadian spectrum.

Interplays of politics, history and culture are evidenced throughout the analysis of Canadian preoccupation with Ethiopia during this period. Ethiopia was of Canadian concern in the 1935-36 period, due to its geo-political relevance and the implications of the conflict in East-Africa to Canada’s domestic and international political obligations and objectives. The East African nation was the topic *du jure* from the press to the pulpit for an intense seven-month period, from July of 1935- February1936. Ethiopia’s political relevance to Canada, made the country of cultural significance to Canadians. Through the prism of an international political crisis with domestic implications, Canadians got opportunities to learn intricate details about the historical and social fabric of the East-African nation. Ethiopia’s historical symbolism as an ancient Christian civilization, and the sole uncolonized nation on the African continent influenced the country’s prominence in the vernacular of ordinary Canadians.

At the macro level, the prevailing geo-political paradigms of the world were imperialism, colonialism, race, and conceptualizations of modernity. These paradigms informed the meaning of collective security in the emergence of a post-world war ethos and global governance framework. All these themes influenced the creation and permeation of the most prevalent representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity during this period. Consideration of the prevailing paradigms was of significance to the ways in which the two Federal government leaders who were in power during the period approached the question of Canada’s potential involvement in a “foreign war”. Canadians articulated sentiments toward Ethiopia and the ongoing crisis premised on their conceptualization of a Canadian national identity relative to an Ethiopian identity. What both identifications signified during each intersection is contextualized within the geopolitical framework of the period.
At the meso level, Canadian missionaries and members of the Canadian press were imbedded into Ethiopian society generating discourses both in support of, and in a few instances against the Ethiopian case. Canadian members of the League of Nations Society tirelessly advocated for the Ethiopian cause. Trades unions, race and faith-based groups, and universities all held meetings to discuss the matter-at-hand and pledge their support or disapproval of the international crisis. The proliferation of discourses on Ethiopia and Ethiopians from the pulpit to the press brought awareness of the East-African nations historic, social, political, and geographic climates to the forefront of the Canadian imagination. At the micro-level, subject-matter experts with relations to the African kingdom were sought after for public speaking engagements, radio specials and feature editorials. Ordinary Canadian citizens weighed into the global discussion, by writing letters of protest on one side of the conflict or the other to the federal government. The widespread and sustained engagement of the Canadian public with the Italo-Abyssinian conflict and war has yet to be fully considered in scholarship.

Within current Canadian historiography, the Abyssinian Crisis and the ensuing Italo-Ethiopian are characterized as issues of collective security that warranted Canada’s involvement vis-à-vis her obligations to the League of Nations. In short, Ethiopia, being a member nation in the League of Nations had brought forward her charges against Italy’s “illegal” territorial expansion in the Horn of Africa region to the attention of the League of Nations, following the infamous Wal Wal Incident of September 1934. Thus, the Canadian historiography has primarily focused on the issue of collective security and the political outcomes of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. Historian Brock Millman’s article “Canada, Sanctions and the Abyssinian Crisis of 1935” (1997), Normam Hillmer’s and J.L Granastein’s chapter “Alberta not Abyssinia” in Empire to Umpire: Canada and The

World in The Twentieth Century (2008) and Francine McKenzie’s chapter on “The last Ditch Defender of National Sovereignty at Geneva: The realities behind Canadian Diplomacy during the Ethiopian Crisis” (2013) all speak to the political prominence of the Italo-Ethiopian affair and Canada’s response to it. 68 The historiography to date has focused on the outcomes of the so called “Riddell proposal” but has largely underplayed the fact that the broader Canadian public was captivated by the series of unfolding events, resulting in the mass permeation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians. This chapter engages with the existing scholarship, to illustrate that although the Canadian government under Prime Minister Mackenzie King ultimately chose “Alberta over Abyssinia”, Canadians were politically and culturally immersed in the world affair and made numerous impassioned and symbolic gestures toward the cause.

The research conducted for this chapter contributes new findings to the scholarship on this period of history. Premised on long-standing relations between Canadians (missionaries) and the Emperor Haile Selassie, members of the Canadian press corps were granted exclusive access to his court. The mutually beneficial cultural and political implications of these relations between Canadians and Ethiopians in this period are explored in this chapter. In many pervasive and peculiar ways, Canadians were as enamoured by the fanfare surrounding the Abyssinian Crisis and Italo-Ethiopian, as their British, American and African counterparts. For this reason, the historical scholarship reviewed and referenced for this chapter is broad. Daniel Waley’s British Public Opinion and The Abyssinian War 1935-6 (1975), illustrates the significance of the Abyssinian Crisis to the Western World vis-à-vis the British example. 69 Published in the same period, S.K.B. Asante’s Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941 (1977) captures the relevance of the Abyssinian Crisis and the subsequent

Italo-Ethiopian war to the African continent and pan-African movements worldwide.\textsuperscript{70} Robert G. Weisbord’s “Black America and the Italian –Ethiopian Crisis: An Episode in Pan-Negroism” (1972) captures the ethos of the North American Black population during this critical juncture in history.\textsuperscript{71} Fikru Negash Gebrekidan’s article “Ethiopia in Black Studies from W.E Du Bois to Henry Gates, Jr ”(2015) succinctly encapsulates the relevance of Ethiopia to an empowered Pan-African or “Black identity” renown the world over .\textsuperscript{72} More recently, Wendell NII Laryea Adjetey’s “In Search of Ethiopia: Messianic Pan-Africanism and the Problem of the Promised Land, 1919-1931”, speaks poignantly to the Canadian dimension of an international phenomenon.\textsuperscript{73} Representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians which proliferated during this period clearly spoke to matters of race and relations in the early twentieth-century. Discourses on Ethiopia from this period explicate the ways in which the history and geo-political status of the East African nation had symbolic power for the prolific Pan-African movements of the day. Through the prism of the dread of a potential Second World War, Ethiopia and Ethiopians were the objects and subjects of Western attention through multiple mediums. In newspapers, films, pulpits and school auditoriums, representations of Ethiopians were examples of what Historian Saidiya Hartman characterizes as “scenes of subjection”.\textsuperscript{74} Ethiopians were photographed, captioned and narrated as both noble warriors and noble savages. Depictions of Ethiopians from this period were laden with anthropological observations, implicitly racialized or outright racist. However, by providing restricted international press access to the Ethiopian imperial court, Ethiopians also carefully controlled and curated the image of the nation that was being broadcast to the world.

Representations and perceptions of Ethiopians from this period prevailed for more

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{footnotes}
\item[73] Wendell NII Laryea Adjetey,“In Search of Ethiopia: Messianic Pan-Africanism and the Problem of the Promised Land, 1919-1931”, \textit{The Canadian Historical Review} 102, I, March 2021: 53-78.
\end{footnotes}
\end{footnotesize}
than half of the twentieth century, until the deposition of the emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. As identified earlier in the introduction, this was not the first time that Ethiopia and Ethiopians had made the Canadian news or captured the Canadian imagination. Hence, during the early days of conflict coverage, many depictions and representations heavily relied on previous nineteenth and early twentieth-century information and testimonials about the land and its peoples. Ethiopia was imagined and narrated both visually and textually in the same manner for more than 100 years. Characterizations of the land and its peoples from this period framed and shaped a narrative on Ethiopia from Adowa (1896) to the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1932-74). The tropes of an ancient Biblical Christian Civilization, fierce loyal warriors and emperors who had a successful track record in challenging white colonial conquest and authority in their region prevailed until 1974.75

There was no doubt that the prevailing sentiment amidst Blacks in North America was that “the rape of Ethiopia is the rape of the Negro race”.76 In light of the emergence of several important geopolitical activities during the early twentieth century, Blacks in North America articulated vested interests in “the Ethiopian cause”, mostly with the objective of furthering Pan African relations and objectives.77 Decades later, Emperor Haile Selassie capitalized on this political cachet, in his highly publicized bid and subsequent win to decree Addis Ababa as the capital of Pan Africanism in 1965.78

Ethiopia’s historical legacy and political utility enticed Canadian political officials in 1967 to recruit Ethiopia as one of the key participants at Expo 67. Ethiopians in the present lament over the perceived veneration of this era, now often rendered as a lost or contested history.

Ethiopian representation at Expo 67 signifies the zenith of the East-African nation’s accrued political, cultural and historical cachet. Interplays in history, politics and culture evidenced in the recruitment process for Ethiopia to participate, as well as in the subsequent reception and representations of the Emperor Haile Selassie during his 9-day statewide visit. With the world invited to participate in Canada’s biggest birthday bash to date, Ethiopia was notably coaxed and eventually willing and able to participate in the largest world exposition of the twentieth century. Chapter 2 subsequently examines the symbols of Ethiopian identity which flourished during the world renown Canadian exhibition (Expo 67), to illustrate the continuities in narratives which existed from the late nineteenth century onwards, by contextualizing them within the prevalent socio-political and socio-cultural climates under which they flourished.

In light of the political and historical gravitas of the Abyssinian Crisis, the Italo-Ethiopian War and the subsequent Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-41), Emperor Haile Selassie’s infamous appeal to the League of Nations in June of 1936 carved him a place as one of the most renown figures of the twentieth century. Subsequently his presence at Expo 67 in Montreal garnered both political and mass cultural appeal amongst Canadians eager to see a historical icon in their own backyard. By 1967, the Emperor Haile Selassie was a quintessential exemplar of Michael Onyebuchi Eze’s assessment of African “cult personalities”. 79 Cult personalities, Eze writes, “are those national elites whose role in the early formation of the republic has turned them into cryptic symbols of national memories”.80 Haile Selassie’s return to power after the ousting of the Italian invading force in 1942 positioned him as such, both within the Ethiopian national narrative and the collective consciousness of the world.

80 Ibid.
Intermediary Canadian interests in Ethiopia had slowly been established from the 1930s onwards, largely unhampered or officially facilitated by the Canadian government. In 1967, it was argued that Canadian prestige in Ethiopia was high, primarily due to the Canadian educators who had been integral to the organization of the educational system in the country since 1943. As a result, by the 1960s an estimated 400 high and low profile Canadians had worked and lived within the East African nation, before official diplomatic relations were established in 1966. Key figures involved in Ethiopia were members of the Jesuit order and the Sudan Interior Mission, alongside several other private Canadian teachers and administrators. In 1967, there were a total of 117 Canadians in Ethiopia “made up almost exclusively of missionaries and teachers.” These individuals played a key role in facilitating the permeation of a favorable view of both the Emperor and his nation during the 1960s. Thus, findings from the research conducted for this chapter make contributions to studies of Canada-Africa relations at the macro, meso, and micro level.

Chapter two references David Austin’s, Fear of A Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal (2013) and Sean Mills’ The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties (2010) to explore Canada-Africa relations. These works are important references for contextualizing race and race relations in Canada and capturing the ethos of race relations during the period of Expo. Scholarship on the concept of the La Francophonie and Canada-Africa relations in this decade was particularly informative in situating the importance of Ethiopia within Canadian foreign


Ethiopian participation at Expo, and representations of Ethiopian modernism at the world class exhibition, are illustrative of the ways in which the nation had been imagined and narrated both visually and textually since the late 1800s. Stalwart markers of Ethiopian identity are evidenced in both the construction and the marketing of the Ethiopian pavilion. Representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians at Expo 67 attest to the steadfast nature of the long rooted historical narrative of Ethiopia outlined earlier in this introduction. Canadian exposure to Ethiopian identities during Expo 67 was vastly different from both the preceding and ensuing intersections examined in this thesis. During both the 1934-1936 and the 1984-88 period, Canadian consciousness of Ethiopia was framed through the lens of an imminent political, cultural, and human catastrophe. Instead, during Expo 67, Canadians had the opportunity to experience elements of Ethiopia’s historical, cultural and political gravitas through forms of cultural mediation at an international exhibit and through the accompanying state-wide-visits by the Emperor of the ancient civilization.


A Study of Canada’s Centennial Celebration” (1999) are useful in their analysis of the architectural landscape of Expo. In addition to several publications on Expo published in this period examined as primary sources, this chapter also engages with the scholarship on fairs and expositions such as Robert W. Rydell’s *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (1993) to illustrate both the gravitas of this exhibition globally, and the significance of Ethiopian participation.

Interplays in history, politics and culture are also evidenced in the prevalent narratives on Ethiopia and the Emperor which flourished during this particular period of historical intersection. Thus, in honor of Canada’s centennial, Ethiopian participation at Expo 67 marks the mid-twentieth century intersection in Canadian and Ethiopian history which facilitated the mass permeation of ubiquitous late nineteenth and early twentieth century representations of Ethiopian history and identity. It is also representative of the last period in the twentieth century when Ethiopians would be represented pervasively in such a venerated manner.

In September of 1974, the hallmark legacy of the Ethiopian dynasty was shattered. Mass civil unrest and student protests facilitated the path for a military coup which saw the upheaval of a legacy of monarchical rule in Ethiopia. 1974 marked the transition of Ethiopia into an era of Marxist-Leninist rule. By this period, Canada had established a name in the international stage as a middle power and a broker of peace, in a world markedly divided by a raging Cold War. Chapter three explores this crisis from a Canadian context.

In November of 1984, graphic news clips by major news channels like BBC, CBC and CNN scaled the depths of human suffering in Ethiopia and other sub-Saharan African countries afflicted by an apocalyptic scale continental drought and famine. Crisis-oriented press coverage with graphic images affirmed the dire desperation of the


situation in Ethiopia, and validated the misconception that the disaster was a major new news story.\textsuperscript{89} The packaging of famine as “a shocking and dramatic crisis” spurred the world into action.\textsuperscript{90} “Starving children became “the famine icon”, signifying “a moral clarity to the complex story of famine.”\textsuperscript{91} Representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians flourished once again during this period in the twentieth century, in light of another historic Ethiopian crisis that captivated the attention of the world.

Analysis of the discursive visual and textual construction of famine during this period is imperative to understanding the irreversible transformation of Ethiopian history and identity. Within the trajectory of representations of perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canadian history, the 1984-1988 period demarcates a significant departure from previously pervasive representations and perceptions of the East African state and its peoples. A disaster was transformed into a spectacle, and “the packaging of events into easily consumable form” determined the endurance of the narrative from this period as “a repeatable cycle of meanings.”\textsuperscript{92} As a result, more than one hundred years of discourse privileging the distinctive historical roots of Ethiopia and the ruling monarchy examined in Chapters one and two of this dissertation were forever dislodged by this one single unrelenting episode of African famine, and well-intentioned exemplars of Western altruism.

At the helm of rallying Canadian public support and delivering aid to Ethiopia and other afflicted African nations, the Honorable David MacDonald fondly recalls this period in Canadian history as “unique”, for the cross-cutting manner in which Canadians rallied together in support of a single cause with high hopes and aspirations.\textsuperscript{93} At the macro level, the Canadian government spearheaded a broad-based humanitarian rescue mission. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his Progressive Conservatives, Ethiopia was treated as an all-party matter. Political leadership and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{89} John Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, Discourse and Society, 2(2) 1991: 223- 224.
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 225.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Susan Moeller, Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death (New York: Routledge, 1999).
  \item \textsuperscript{92} John Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 223.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} Author interview with David MacDonald, 28 March 2017.
\end{itemize}
commitment set the path for the nation’s response. As a result, the optimism and determination of this period was infectious, and far-reaching.

At the meso-level, the moral imperative had broad-based appeal. Churches waged successful campaigns for “bushels of bread”, and their congregants demonstrated their faith in droves. Colleges and universities offered the government research capacities and expertise in support. Businesses donated food and medical supplies. Trucking companies donated trucks and drivers to transport the collected aid to shipping and airlift sites.94 At the micro level, thousands of Canadians gave of their time, money and expertise in the name of humanity. Canadian children and youth forwent eating lunches, coordinated spell-a-thons, bake sales, and dances. Doctors and nurses donated their medical services, and rock musicians donated their time, talent and fame.95 All of these acts culminated into acts of “humanitarian internationalism.”96 Canada was the largest per capita donor to Ethiopia during this period.97 The Ethiopian famine served as a clarion call for global citizenship and altruism for Canadians from coast to coast. Ethiopia was at the epicenter of rallying political and cultural mobilization for famine eradication.

As demonstrated by the existing scholarship, the implications of these relief efforts were far reaching, with important consequences for Canadian aid policy and foreign relations. Pertinent Canadian scholarship on this period (among others examined), includes Mark W. Charlton’s The Making of Canadian Food Aid Policy (1992), David R. Morrison’s Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance (1998); Nelson Michaud and Kim Richard Nossal’s “The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984-93 (2001); Nossal’s “Opening up the policy preference” (2001); Stephen Brown’s “Canadian Aid To Africa,” in Canada-Africa Relations: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (2013); and Mark Charlton’s The Making of Canadian Food Aid Policy

---

In tandem with the existing scholarship, this chapter historicizes a socio-political phenomenon, and illustrates the ways in which the political and cultural ethos of the period irreversibly shaped the consciousness of a generation. Canadian scholarship and Canadian mobilization during this period is situated within a global response to the event. The African/Ethiopian famine of 1984 was a geopolitical event of the decade. Alex De Waal notably cites 1984 as “an earthquake in the humanitarian world”\textsuperscript{99}, and Tanja R. Muller makes the assertion that the Ethiopian Famine was a watershed event for humanitarian action.\textsuperscript{100} The scale of mass political and social mobilization was reflective of the cultural, political, and economic ethos of the period. A long-lasting legacy from this period was the emergence of “celebrity humanitarianism”. Fueled by British musician Bob Geldof’s “Band-Aid” movement, and its American off-shoot “Live-Aid”, celebrity humanitarianism was an effective cultural aesthetic for rallying support. The ad hoc group of Canadian musical stars and celebrities dubbed “Northern Lights” were part of this global phenomenon. In an ongoing “Cold War”, the Band and Live-Aid movements facilitated mass “apolitical commitment” to the alleviation of suffering.\textsuperscript{101} Concurrently with the period of African famine and famine relief examined in this chapter, there was an influx of immigrants from the region to Canada. In the period between 1984-1996 Ethiopia consistently ranked as one of the top 10 source countries for “Convention Refugees and Members of Designated Classes”


\textsuperscript{100} Tanja R. Müller, “‘The Ethiopian famine’ revisited: Band Aid and the antipolitics of celebrity humanitarian action,” \textit{Disasters} 37, 1 (2013): 61.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibíd., 62.
immigrating to Canada.\footnote{Yielded from analysis of annual reports released by Statistics Canada in the 1984-96 period.} This chapter moves beyond the existing scholarship by arguing that thereafter, Ethiopians were simply perceived and represented as ahistorical, displaced, perpetual victims of famine and war – as refugees.

1.4 \textbf{Locating Oral Histories and other forms of Self-Representation by Ethiopian and other Interrelated East African Identities in contemporary Canadian society}

In their collaborative monograph \textit{Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in the African Diaspora (2001)}, Matsuoka and Sorensen make the argument that “refugees are often viewed as powerless, as the embodiment of bare humanity, as striped of the specificity of culture place and history”.\footnote{Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorensen, \textit{Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in the African Diaspora}, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001):3.} Consequently, the authors assert that the experience of exile is often times mistakenly perceived as a complete break with one’s past culture and identity.\footnote{Ibid.} Contrary to this wide held assumption, central to their thesis is the premise that the past continues to affect and influence the present in Diaspora populations.\footnote{Ibid.} This dissertation project builds upon their premise centralizing the past as integral to people’s perceptions of the present. However, by examining the history of Canadian and East- African socio-political and socio-cultural relations, this project contends that the histories that members of the Diaspora invoke, reference, contest or revere are more than mere “ghost stories” from a distant land and past, for they can also be traced and situated within an intersecting framework of Canadian-Ethiopian history.

university degree from “the West”. Under the auspices of the rule of the Emperor, the children of the Ethiopian elite dispersed into the world with the intent of attaining degrees and returning to their homeland to implement their learnings towards modernizing their native land.\textsuperscript{107} Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson recognized this phenomenon during his state welcome to Emperor Haile Selassie during Expo 67. Pearson asserted that “in Canada we have been pleased to welcome a number of Ethiopians who have come here to study at our universities, notably at the law school of McGill University”.\textsuperscript{108} Many of the students who had studied in Canada went on to occupy important posts in Ethiopian administration.\textsuperscript{109} The emperor’s great-grandson Mickael Mengesha was part of this small but symbolic cohort of Ethiopian youth in Canada during the 1960s. He was studying in Calgary at the time of the Emperor’s visit for Canada’s centennial celebrations.\textsuperscript{110} Ethiopians were visible in the Canadian socio-political and cultural landscape, long before they started immigrating to Canada in large numbers.

Ethiopians start appearing in Canadian immigration statistics for the first time in 1966, with 27 people recorded as having Ethiopia as their “country of last residence”.\textsuperscript{111} However, the number of Ethiopians recorded in Canada prior to the 1980s was statistically negligible, with less than 100 people recorded in the census per annum between 1966-1979. It is only after 1982 that significant numbers of Ethiopians start arriving in Canada annually, initially being classified as “Landed Immigrants” by Manpower and Immigration Canada.\textsuperscript{112} Consequently, both Sorensen’s solo and

\textsuperscript{108} Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Remarks at the Official Welcome of his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie to Ottawa Parliament Hill, Sunday, April 30, 1967”: page 2, LB Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.43. Library and Archives Canada.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Department of Manpower and Immigration, Immigration Statistics 1966, Table 10, page 20. *It is hard to discern if there were any Ethiopian immigrants to Canada prior to 1966, the data available prior to this year for the most part does not distinguish between the different African source Countries, and if so, only to highlight immigrant numbers from “British African Countries”.
\textsuperscript{112} Immigration Statistics 1982, Table 10, “Country of Birth, Sex and Age Groups”, page 12. Notably there are 571 listed as Landed Immigrants in 1983. Immigration Statistics
collaborative body of work on Ethiopia and other interrelated East Africans is imperative to interpreting both contemporary iterations and contestations of Ethiopian history. In his extensive examination of the different ethnic denominations present in the Toronto area, one of Sorensen’s primary arguments is that identity formation by Ethiopians (and other inter-related East Africans) is premised on both national and ethnic classifications which involve a fluid set of beliefs about appropriate roles and behaviours that are often contingent on the structures that are available to support their reproduction within migrant communities. Utilizing Fredrik Barth’s concept of Ethnic Boundaries and applying a mixed methods approach, Sorensen incorporates elements of statistical data and socio-historical analysis woven together by oral interviews with Ethiopian immigrants. Elements of Sorensen’s approaches are mirrored throughout this dissertation.

Section II of this dissertation utilizes concepts introduced throughout Sorensen’s works on Ethiopia, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Oromos and other interrelated East-Africans as foundational contextual knowledge. Sorensen’s germinal article “The Politics of Social Identity” is particularly instructive in deconstructing the different terms of ethnic reference (both historical and contemporary) used to identify the heterogeneous group of people collectively recognized by the Canadian government as Ethiopians until 1991. The processes of identity formation amidst various “Ethiopian” ethnic groups underscored by Sorensen in a Canadian context is essential to understanding the underlying tensions alluded to or addressed outright throughout this dissertation project.

Sorensen addresses the implications of the discordant roots of the East-African Diaspora in his 1993 article “Essence and Contingency in the Construction of Nationhood: Transformations of Identity in Ethiopian Diasporas.” Sorensen asserts that the roots of the identities which he explores within the Diaspora, stem from “the conflict between

1983, Table 10, “Age Groups by Sex, by Country of Birth”, page 12. * It is hard to tell if any from this grouping were refugees as that designation begins to be separately recorded in the Immigration Statistics publications after 1984.
ethnic and national identities in an imperial state that is multiethnic and multicultural”. Herein, Sorensen attributes conflicts and protracted struggles for independence which gained momentum in the 1990s, to the cultural hegemony created in the nineteenth-century by the Christian Amhara and Tigryan elites of the northern highland regions, who “denigrated” the culture of the most numerous linguistic group – the Oromo. Thus, through a succinct overview of over one hundred years of the East-African region’s political and cultural history, Sorensen effectively highlights the role of history and historical narratives in fueling contemporary constructions of identities within the Diaspora.

Written during a period when Ethiopians and Eritreans were among the world’s largest refugee populations, Sorensen’s works on the Diaspora collectively centered around “analyses of the renegotiation of identity in a Diaspora actively concerned with the homeland”. Sorensen’s subjects were those who fled the Horn of Africa during the three decades of “convulsive warfare and devastating famine”, a socio-historical factor which influenced his outlined arguments immensely. The perspectives of his publications shifted over time. Consequently, Sorensen’s publications mirror the shifting attitude towards Ethiopian history as hegemonic in the 1990s, versus being ancient, venerable and somewhat romantic for much of the preceding century.

During the period in which Sorensen’s works reviewed here were published (1986-2002), advocacy for the repressed groups within Ethiopia was on the rise, as many emigres, activists and scholars were drawing attention to “war, political repression, ethnic tensions, poverty and famine” creating a global Diaspora from Ethiopia. As evidenced within Sorensen’s subsequent works focused on Eritreans in Canada, as well as other

115 Ibid.
116 Ibid., 202.
117 Ibid, 201.
118 Ibid.
emergent scholarship on Oromos, Hararis and Tigrays in Canada, and Canadian census data from both 2011 and 2016, political fragmentation within the Horn- of- Africa Diasporic group has only heightened over time – often in nebulous and complicated ways. Thus, in the present, self-representations are oft subject to contestation and debate from within the diverse array of interrelated East-African ethnic identities living in Canadian socioscapes.

In addition to Sorensen’s works, other pertinent scholarship on Ethiopians and the interrelated Diaspora considered in this dissertation include Haile Fenta et al’s publications on the health of the Diaspora in Toronto; particularly “Somatic Symptoms in a Community Sample of Ethiopian Immigrants in Toronto Canada” (2010) and “Health Service Utilization by Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in Toronto.” In addition to reviewing his publications, Dr. Fente’s keynote address at “Beyond The Shelf :The Horn of Africa Diaspora Community Research Day” (2012) is referenced here. Dr. Fenta asserted that in spite of the adversity faced by a large number of Ethiopian immigrants when settling in Canada, they fare better than some other immigrant communities because of their “strong sense of history”.

Fenta’s keynote remarks alongside his published research findings are instructive in interpreting the importance of history in a Diasporic community that utilizes their sense of connection to a deep-rooted historical past as a form of resilience within the present. Fente’s findings are also echoed by Mary Goitom’s doctoral research and publications on Ethiopian and Eritrean youth in Canada.


121 Dr. Haile Fenta, “Determinants of Depression Among Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in Toronto”, Keynote address at the “Beyond The Shelf-The Horn of Africa Diaspora Community Research Day”, May 2, 2014, Toronto, Canada.

In contrast to the Canadian scholarship which has largely been centered on ethnicity and nationalism as primary focal points in identity formation, this dissertation also integrates the tenets of Elizabeth Chacko’s body of work on Ethiopian migrants in Washington D.C, alongside the works of Solomon Getahun on Ethiopian migration to the United States. In light of the large number of Ethiopian immigrants in select parts of the United States, the American scholarship has integrated spatial analysis to demonstrate the ways in which Ethiopian identities are expressed publicly. In particular Chacko’s 2003 article “Ethiopian Ethos and the Making of Ethnic Places in the Washington Metropolitan Area” merits a Canadian equivalent. 123

Moving beyond traditional examinations of ethnic institutions and into an analysis of markers such as ethnic sociocommerscapes, Chacko makes the argument that “the distinctiveness of constellations of Ethiopian enterprises in Adams Morgan and other sociocommerscapes in Maryland and Virginia is highlighted by modifying pre-existing structures and instituting them with a code of ethnic structures.” 124 Chacko argues that the strong and conspicuous presence of Ethiopian-owned and run businesses in the Adams Morgan district of Washington D.C blurs the boundaries between home and host-country. This particular area is regarded as an ethnic sociocommerscape, and Chacko forwards the argument that “the names of many of the establishments such as Addis Ababa, Merkato, Lalibela, Axum and Awash and Blue Nile hark back to toponyms of places and geographical features in Ethiopia”. 125 This same phenomenon is explored in Chapters 4 and 5 to illustrate the ways in which the aforementioned historical signifiers are integrated into self-representations by members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Canada. Lalibela, Axum, and Blue Nile are also among the most common names for ethnic

---

124 Ibid, 33.
125 Ibid.
establishments in Canada. Naming is an important element to self-representation. From her provision of socio-historical context to her to her application of geo-spatial theoretical frameworks, Chacko manages to clearly delineate Ethiopian place making in the greater Washington area, and this dissertation incorporates elements of her approach in analysis of self-representations of Ethiopians across Canada.

In alignment with Madan Sarup’s contention that there is a fundamental link between memory and identity, chapter 4 examines the ways in which negotiation of identities is a dialogic relationship between “the past-present relation and its reconciliation”. Interplays in history, politics and culture continue to influence self-representations, as individuals descended from the East-African region try to construct and reconstruct who they are within the Canadian social milieu. In this vein, chapter 4 also examines the life stories and experiences of five first-generation members of the Ethiopian Diaspora between the ages of 35 and 65, whose life histories and experiences are exemplars of embodiments of Ethiopian history present within contemporary Canadian society.

---

126 Some examples: Lalibela Restaurant, 869 Bloor Street West and Lalibela Cuisine, 1214 Danforth Avenue, Addis Ababa Restaurant, 1184 Queen St W; Addis Ababa Restaurant, 6800 Memorial Dr Ne, Calgary AB, Blue Nile Ethiopian, 707 Gladstone Ave, Ottawa; The Blue Nile East African Restaurant, 612 Head Street Victoria B.C;


128 Sarup, 40.

129 In alignment with the research data gleaned from Statistics Canada, the term first-generation utilized throughout this thesis refers to people who were born outside of Canada. Moreover, the first-generation participants in this study were all born in Ethiopia and had lived there for more than two decades. The Definition of First-Generation as defined by Statistics Canada. Accessed here: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011003_2-eng.cfm, first accessed on March 30, 2012.
The oral histories featured in chapter 4 are case studies illustrative of the continued prevalence and coalescence of macro, meso and micro factors influencing the life trajectories and representations of individuals. Findings from the narratives featured in this chapter are in dialogue with scholarship on the Ethiopian diaspora globally. The international scholarship available on the Ethiopian and interrelated East African diaspora is of relevance to this dissertation project, as there are similarities in self-representations and the construction of historical narratives, as well as similarities in the ways in which East Africans dispersed into a global diaspora. Works of relevance include Solomon Getahun’s collaborative monograph *Little Ethiopia of the Pacific Northwest* (2013), and *The History of Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in America, 1900 – 2000: Patterns of Migration, Survival and Adjustment* (2007).\(^{130}\) It is through an understanding of the existing scholarship that this project engages with Ethiopians and other interrelated East-Africans in the diaspora to illustrate the continuance of interplays in history, politics and culture.

Deeply immersed in the idiosyncrasies of the cultures, the languages and the history of their region of origin, the life-stories and perspectives of a generation of Ethiopian immigrants are reflective of the multiplicity of distinctly Ethiopian and transnational experiences quietly imbedded within the broad Canadian milieu. The personal narratives and reflections of Tye Esther Tsegaye, Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Ato Omar Osman, Ato Mengesha Beyene and Elias Omer are all testament to the fact that for many Ethiopians, concepts of memory and identity are interrelated, and shaped by continuous interplays of history, politics and culture. Members of this cohort interviewed argued that migration did not change the essence of their historical and cultural identity.

In the summative words of Tye Esther “I don’t believe that who you are, change by where you are”.  

Interplays in history, politics and culture both shape the tenor of self-representation by the Diaspora, as well as inform the manner by which members of the diaspora engage with prevalent mainstream perceptions and or misconceptions of their cultural and historical identities. Irrespective of their length of time living within Canada, first-generation Ethiopians in Canada assert that knowledge of Ethiopian history and culture is integral to who they are. Indelibly influenced by their memories of Ethiopia under the reign of the Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1975) and impacted by the political and social transformation of Ethiopia under the Marxist-Leninist Derg Military regime (1974-1991), the generation of migrants featured in this chapter lived in Ethiopia through facets of these historic times and experiences. Subsequently, the lives and life stories of these Ethiopian immigrants embody these particular histories and illustrate the continued interplay of history, politics and culture in contemporary representations of Ethiopian identities.

In the present, to be an Ethiopian or an East-African in Canada is also to simply be “Black”, often devoid of any historical contextualization. Hence, historical rooted, politically and culturally charged conceptualizations of Blackness and Africaness inherently permeate the construction of both representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identities in Canada. Consequently this dissertation engages with works on the African Diaspora in Canada as a whole, particularly the edited collection *The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging* edited by Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu (2005) and Gillian Creese’s *The New African Diaspora in Vancouver: Migration, Exclusion and Belonging* (2011). To that end, chapter 5 highlights the formation and development of a Canadian-born generation of East-African descent.

131 Author interview II with Tye Esther Tsegaye, July 1, 2013.
132 In their introduction to the edited collection *The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity & Belonging*, editors Wisdom J. Tettey and Korbla P.Puplampu address both the complexities of and the distinctions to be made amidst the variations of both historic and contemporary African and other Black identities which exist within Canada.
signifies the final intersection in Ethiopian and Canadian History which has influenced both the existence, and the perpetuation of representations of twentieth-century Ethiopian identity (ies), examined within the purview of this dissertation. The lived experiences of youth of the East-African Diaspora in Canada signify intersections in national histories which are particularly visible in the formation of sizeable diasporic communities within metropoles such as Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Ottawa. The youth featured in this chapter have engaged to some degree or another with representations and perceptions of Ethiopian culture, history and identity through their daily lived experiences.

Subsequently, within chapter 5, the politics of self-representation by youth are examined to illustrate the ways in which the youth are equally influenced by their micro(histories in-so- much as they are influenced by the Canadian social/ geographical milieu in which they were raised.

Twentieth century developments in Ethiopian history have had profound explicit and implicit effects on the lives of youth of the Diaspora born and raised within Canada. The micro histories of the families of the youth featured in this chapter mirror the trajectory of Ethiopian, and or East-African migration to, and settlement in Canada; inextricably infusing the individual stories and experiences of the youth into the historical framework of both their country of citizenship and the region of origin of their ancestry. For the purposes of this research, discovery focused interviews were conducted with second-generation youth from the cities of Toronto, Ottawa and London, Ontario. Reinforced by findings from other available scholarship on Habesha, the voices and life experiences of six Habeshas aged between 20-32, are reflective of the continued influences of the roots of the East/ Horn-of-Africa diaspora. The youth featured in this chapter engaged with representations and perceptions of Ethiopian culture, history and identity through their daily lived experiences. The life experiences and perspectives of Tsegereda Yohannes, Selam Meles, Aida Abdella, Hannah Haile, Miriam Abebe and George Lencho are prisms through which representations of historically rooted Horn-of-Africa identities can be located and contextualized within contemporary Canadian societies.\(^{134}\)

\(^{134}\) Pseudonyms were applied for all participants from this demographic.
Subsequently, through the voices and life experiences of four-female second-generation Ethiopians, one female Eritrean-Canadian, and one self-identified Canadian male of mixed Ethiopian and German ancestry or Habeshas, chapter six deals with some of the continued influences of the historical roots of the East-African Diaspora within contemporary Canadian society. On the one hand, children of the Diaspora embody the cultural influences of their ancestral heritage and are profoundly affected by historical influences which have often been transcribed unto them by their families. However, born and raised within Canada, the narratives of the children of the East African Diaspora are equally reflective of the socio-historical climate of their birthplace, truly exemplifying a manifestation of the final intersection in Canadian-Ethiopian history examined within the purview of this thesis.

Contrary to contemporary misconceptions, this thesis instead elucidates the fact that Ethiopia and Ethiopians have had a long and historical relationship with Canada and Canadians, a relationship which preceded the migration and settlement of émigrés from the African region in Canada. Over the course of the twentieth century, it was both the sustained and pervasive nature of the attention on Ethiopia during each of the historical intersections examined, which determined the longevity and ubiquity of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity in Canada. The political relevancy of Ethiopia during each period examined afforded the East African country and its peoples the cultural cachet required to captivate the imagination of the general Canadian populace during each period, shaping the tenor of representations and perceptions of the country and its peoples. Throughout each of the sustained periods of representation examined throughout this dissertation, it was in congruence with Canadian interests that representations and symbols of Ethiopian history and identity became ubiquitous. As such, evidence of the political, historical and cultural resonance of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during each period of intersection examined within the purview of this dissertation is found imbedded within the editorial reflections and memoirs of Canadian politicians, journalists, authors and other celebrities, ordinary citizens, and or buried within the footnotes of historians’ works decades after each intersection examined has passed.
CHAPTER 1: Of Canadian Concern: Peace, War, and Sanctions and the Role of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis (1934-36) in Framing Venerable Representations of Ethiopia From Adowa To Haile Selassie

The attention of the world is now directed toward Ethiopia with eyes that are tender and kind out of sympathy for a nation that is being attacked by a larger and stronger race. The name is not familiar to a generation that was taught at school to call the country by its old name of Abyssinia.

George Morehead

When conducting an analysis of the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopians in Canada over the course of the twentieth-century, 1935 serves as a benchmark year. Interchangeably referred to as Abyssinia and Abyssinians, Ethiopia and Ethiopians made Canadian news headlines consistently in 1935, due to a localized territorial dispute between Italy and Ethiopia in the East-African region. Triggered by the infamous Wal-Wal incident, December 5, 1934 marked the start of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute, often referred to as the “Abyssinian Crisis”. The skirmish between Italian and Ethiopian troops in the small oasis town of Wal-Wal, was the result of Italian violation of a boundary agreement made between the two countries in 1928. Italy’s conquest in Ethiopia in the 1934-35 period was closely monitored. Canadians, alongside citizens of several nations across the world were captivated by the global political affair, and eager to learn more about the East-African nation and its people at the center of a ramified situation. “Accompanied by the lurid glare of newspaper headlines,” Kenneth R. Wilson contended, every little detail of Italy’s march to war against the “last remnant of native Africa” was widely documented and consumed.

---

Canadian engagement with the Italo-Ethiopian affair created a space in the Canadian cultural and political milieu for the permeation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian culture and history. The frenzy over the potential of another world war generated virulent debates about the potential for direct Canadian involvement in a locally contained war in East Africa. Politicians, intellectuals, leaders of various organizations (including churches, missionaries and civil societies), and ordinary citizens all contributed to the discourses of this period. For seven consecutive months (December 1934 to January 1936), the Italo-Ethiopian affair and Ethiopia were the topic du jour in Canada. From the press to the pulpit the information disseminated about Ethiopia and Ethiopians was prolific and entrenched into the vernacular. “Ethiopia, the last stronghold of independency in Africa” The Petrolia Advertiser proclaimed, “has the eyes of a waiting and sympathetic world focused upon it, thrusting the nation from its former comparative obscurity into the arena of international intrigue”. Ethiopia and Ethiopians garnered significant political and cultural cachet the world over.

The Italo-Ethiopian conflict provoked widespread debates on the meaning of collective security, the efficacy of the League of Nations as an instrument of maintaining peace, and the true costs to Canada and Canadians taking sides in “foreign” conflicts. The failure of the Disarmament Conference (June 1, 1934) and the League of Nations in abating Japanese aggression toward China weighed heavily onto discourses on the Italo-Ethiopian affair. As the so-called “test-case”, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis pierced through the widespread hope that “progress might be made toward peace and security by collective action through the League”. The immorality of the Italo-Ethiopian situation elicited widespread reflection and raised questions about Canadian values and principles, particularly on matters of foreign policy and race. In the process, the Italo-Ethiopian affair reintroduced Canadians to the stalwart and historic symbolic value of the East

138 “Ethiopia is as large as British Columbia”, The Petrolia Advertiser, Thursday, October 16, 1935: 2.
African kingdom. Ethiopia’s history as ancient and uncolonized regained significant traction during this period. The Battle of Adowa (1896), also known as the first Italo-Ethiopian conflict resurfaced as an emblem of Ethiopian exceptionality. The Emperor Haile Selassie enamored the world; his representation of an ancient legacy juxtaposed with his commitment to bring his country and his peoples into the modern era. To Canadians, Ethiopia and Ethiopians were positioned at the crossroads of antiquity and modernity; barbarity and civility. The liminal position of the East African kingdom within several paradigms of knowing and interpreting the world, fostered a long-term connection to the nation and its peoples.

This chapter examines the proliferation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity from 1934-36 to situate contemporary veneration for Ethiopia’s now lost historical symbolism. Ethiopian relevance during this period of the twentieth century hinged literally and metaphorically upon interplays in politics, history, and culture. One cannot understand the political relevance of Ethiopia from 1934-36 without understanding Ethiopia’s historic and cultural significance. As such, this chapter begins by overviewing the concept of “Ethiopia unbound” and its significance to Canadians in the early twentieth century. Next, the chapter examines why and how the Italo-Ethiopian affair was a cause for Canadian concern, through an examination of the socio-political and cultural contexts for the proliferation of perceptions and representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in this period. An overview of Canadian concerns for collective security, the global economy, peace, war and sanctions all demonstrate the relevancy of the East African nation to the populace of the day. Ultimately, the representations and perceptions which flourished during this period attest to the cultural and political symbolism of the Emperor Haile Selassie, his Ethiopian warriors, and the legacy of Adowa throughout the twentieth century. The narrative of the impenetrable Ethiopian Fortress and the Biblical likening of Haile Selassie and Mussolini to David and Goliath are testament to the firm hold of a historical vestige. Both Canadian missionaries and the Canadian press played a key role in promulgating these narratives, ultimately perpetuating the preceding and steadfast historical legacy of a Christian civilization. The long-term outcome of the proliferation of representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during the 1934-36 period was a continuation and entrenchment of Ethiopian symbolism from the nineteenth century to
the twentieth century.

Collectively, the wide array of human interest, political, economic and visual archival materials available with regards to the Abyssinian Conflict or Wal-Wal incident of 1934-35 and the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-36 illustrate the ways in which macro, meso and micro societal forces and agents coalesced in a fluid manner to generate and perpetuate particular types of narratives and counter narratives about Ethiopia and Ethiopians within Canadian society. The arguments posed against war by macro actors in Canada (particularly politicians) spoke to the political and economic gravitas of the affair. The reminiscences and gestures made by these same actors in the aftermath of the affair speak to the romantic stronghold that Ethiopia and Ethiopians had on Canadian society for much of the twentieth century. The widespread engagement of meso structural actors such as churches and trades unions created a space for the proliferation of narratives of Christian kinship and demonstrated the engagement of Canadian citizens across the milieu. Micro agents such as missionaries were instrumental in forging Ethio-Canadian relationships. Ultimately, the dialogues generated during the peak of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in 1935, informed and shaped the trajectory of the representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada during this period, and beyond. Interplays in politics, economics, history and culture allowed for the proliferation of interest in the East-African nation during the 1934-36 period. The political and historical relevance of Ethiopia during the inter-war period predominated discourses and made Ethiopia and Ethiopians of political and cultural significance to Canadians in the 1934-36 period. “Four hundred years ago the civilized nations of the world first penetrated the dark continent” Kenneth R. Wilson declared in The Financial Post. European penetration into the African continent had continued apace until the turn of the twentieth

---

century. By 1935, “97 percent of Africa’s eleven million square miles” was inscribed with an allegiance to a foreign flag.\textsuperscript{142} The glaring exception or political anomaly was Abyssinia, or the Ethiopian empire.\textsuperscript{143}

The Italo-Ethiopian affair set the stage for the permeation of a venerable Ethiopian identity tied to Ethiopian victory at Adowa (March 1896) and inextricable from the legacy of the Emperor Haile Selassie for more than half of the twentieth-century (1935-1974).

2.1 \textbf{“Ethiopia Unbound”: Contextualizing Ethiopia’s Cultural and Political Symbolism Preceding 1935}

Ethiopia’s symbolic historical significance was the cornerstone of the East African nation’s political and cultural cachet for much of the twentieth century. The existence of a venerable Ethiopian identity in the early twentieth-century is only discernable with contextual awareness of the historical symbolism of Ethiopia and Ethiopian history both preceding, and during the 1934-36 period. Interchangeable and

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
symbolic references to the East African nation were sustained for well-over two centuries preceding the Italo-Ethiopian affair of the early twentieth-century. From the 1700s onwards, travelers, philosophers, scholars, writers and pundits familiar with the King James Bible interchangeably referenced the East African kingdom as both Abyssinia and Ethiopia.144

For a period after the First World War, the official name of the country was Abyssinia, but by 1935 that period had passed.145 In spite of the Emperor’s insistence, the use of Abyssinia still proliferated in 1935. Some discussants distinguished Abyssinia as the geographic name and Ethiopia as the ethnological term of the country.146 During the 1934-36 period, the etymology of the name Ethiopia was widely invoked to contextualize the place of the East-African nation within the literary and scriptural canons of the West. “Ethiopia is the old name, as well as the present name”, declared Uncle Ray’s popular scholastic facts column in the *Halifax Herald*.147 The name Ethiopia was widely identified as originating from the Greek word *Aithiop* – meaning sun-burned face.148 The appearance of the name in Homer’s classic *Iliad* was referenced as a means of dating the name and the nation. Ethiopia’s figurative presence in Western scholarship for

148 Ibid.
a long *durée* shaped the venerable nature of representations of the East African country in the twentieth-century.

Ethiopia also held a particularly special and symbolic place in the (African) American political and cultural imaginary from the eighteenth-century onwards. In a “vexed relationship between mythopoeia and historicity”, Dagmawi Woubshet, Salamishah Tillet and Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis argue that Ethiopia was effectively extracted out of Africa and recast within the anti-slavery and anti-segregation political rhetoric of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For eighteenth-century African American writers versed in the Bible and Greek and Roman texts, Ethiopia was the “name of the East African country also known as Abyssinia and the entire African continent South of Egypt”. Hence, African American poets and writers such as Phillis Wheatley proudly established links to their African heritage by referring to themselves as an “Ethiop”. The fluidity of the physical / geographic perimeters of the kingdom in literary and political references from this earlier period enhanced the mythical status of the kingdom, and cemented the symbolic value of the nation as a beacon of an alternate Black reality- an African utopia in the early twentieth century.

Ethiopia was a source of empowerment. African American scholarship of the

---

149 Woubshet et al provide evidence of African American poets and authors referencing Ethiopia from the 1700s to the 1970s in their critical examination of the “Romance of Ethiopia: A Critical Introduction”, *Callaloo*, Volume 33 (1) 2010.

150 Ibid,12.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.
period was replete with references to Ethiopia’s legacy.\textsuperscript{153} Pan-Africanist Edward Wilmot Blyden asserted that the Ethiopians of antiquity were “the most creditable of ancient peoples” and that they had achieved the “highest rank of knowledge and civilization”.\textsuperscript{154} Ethiopia’s esteemed place in antiquity and relativity to Western conceptualizations of modernity was widely emphasized. In 1935, the prevailing argument was that few modern nations had had such a long history as Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{155} China and Egypt were frequently referenced as older and more established civilizations, but most nations in Europe and all of the nations in both North and South America were said to be “young” when compared to Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{156} The widespread comparisons made between civilizations, and the relativities underscored between Ethiopia and other foundational civilizations spoke to the ubiquity of the esteemed place of the country in the scholastic and cultural vernacular of the period. Newspapers perpetuated the narrative of Ethiopia as ancient by providing their Canadian readership with images of ancient historic places, events and people.

In alignment with prevalent characterizations of the country as an ancient civilization, the typical Abyssinian was described as Christian, with ancestors having embraced Christianity as far back as 330 A.D.\textsuperscript{157} In his best-selling book of the period, \textit{The Last of Free Africa} (1928) American professor Gordon Macreagh introduced Abyssinia as: “the ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia; The land of “Prester John”; of the Queen of Sheba; The Unconquered; Free since before the beginning of history”.\textsuperscript{158} Reflective of the convention of writing about Ethiopia in this period, (and for the next four decades), Macreagh introduced the country as “governed by its own hereditary ruler, his Imperial Highness Tafari Makonnen, descendant of King Solomon.”\textsuperscript{159} By 1935,

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Ethiopians had successfully disseminated and interpolated their self-representations as a biblical nation, and “the chosen people of God descended from the world’s most powerful ancient ruler and the world’s most famous ancient queen” across the globe.

Ethiopia’s strategic placement at the precipice of cultural and political paradigms *du jour* preceded the 1934-5 period. In the mid nineteenth century, Ethiopia had transformed from a “nostalgic place of origin for enslaved African Americans”, to a site of “black solidarity”. Renowned abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and William J. Wilson equated Ethiopia with the anti-slavery movement. W.E Du Bois described Ethiopia as the “sunrise of human culture” and as the “cradle of Egyptian civilization”. After an unprecedented Ethiopian victory over Italy in the Battle of Adowa (March 1896), Ethiopia fulfilled its long standing mythical status. More than a country, Ethiopia became a “source of pride and lineage sometimes indistinguishable from Africa itself”. The post-Adowa representation of a strong and independent Ethiopia added to the steadfast allure of the kingdom worldwide. Ethiopian symbolism both before and after the battle of Adowa is critical to understanding the political and cultural significance of Ethiopia in the 1935-36 period.

Historic representations of Ethiopia by African Americans (and by extension African Canadians) were inherently political. In his seminal monograph *Black on Black* (2001), John Cullen Gruesser underscores the significance of Ethiopia to understanding the relationship between Blacks in North America and the African

---

161 Ibid, 12.
162 Ibid. In 1852, Frederick Douglass declared in his speech “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” that “Africa must rise and put on her yet unwoven garment. Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God”.
165 Ibid.
166 This argument is reinforced by the assertions of Wendell NII Laryea Adjetey, in “In Search of Ethiopia: Messianic Pan-Africanism and the Problem of the Promised Land, 1919-1931”, *The Canadian Historical Review* 102, I, March 2021: 53-78.
continent.\textsuperscript{167} Gruesser argues that African American literary depictions of Africa published between 1902 and 1982 either invoked or reacted to one or more aspects of \textit{Ethiopianism}. Defined as teleological and uniquely African American view of history, Ethiopianism was inspired by the Psalms verse “Princess shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God”.\textsuperscript{168} A critical element to this prophecy was the inexorable redemption of the continent of Africa. By the 1920s many proponents of racial uplift focused on the redemption of Africa by African themselves.\textsuperscript{169} By extension, Ethiopia’s admittance into the League of Nations in 1923 was viewed as “fulfillment of the prophecy of old”.\textsuperscript{170}

The fact that Ethiopia held a seat within the most prestigious intergovernmental organization of the early twentieth century warranted special consideration in the 1934-36 period. When Ethiopia was admitted into the League of Nations in October of 1923, the significance of the admittance reverberated throughout the Black world. In North America, it was argued that it was in the best interest of the African American populace to learn more about the “rich” east African nation. The ways in which the world would deal with the new relationship had implications to the “American Negro” culturally, politically and economically.\textsuperscript{171} Thus it was not surprising that Benito Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia in October of 1935 stirred up deeply seethed emotions in those of African descent across the globe.\textsuperscript{172}

Historian Robert G. Weisbord argued that Ethiopia victory at Adowa (March 1896) fueled a phenomenon across the United States which both reflected and enhanced Ethiopia’s position within the African political and cultural ethos.\textsuperscript{173} Black churches in

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid, 1.  
\textsuperscript{169} “Africa May Be Redeemed”, The Dawn of Tomorrow, London, Canada, Saturday December 1, 1923: front page.  
\textsuperscript{170} “In stretching forth her hand to the world Ethiopia thus hastens the fulfillment of the prophecy as it relates to her of old”. Associated Negro Press, “Ethiopia is Admitted to the League”, The Dawn of Tomorrow, London, Ontario, Canada, October 13, 1923: front page.  
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{172} Weisbord, “Black America and the Italian –Ethiopian Crisis: An Episode in Pan-Negroism”, 230.  
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 230-31.
the United States and elsewhere were established with names such as “Abyssinian,” “Ethiopian,” and “Kush.”

Weisbord asserted that Ethiopia as an independent African nation with an independent Christian church had widespread appeal to African-Americans and other Blacks in the early twentieth-century confronted with deteriorating rural economies and the hardening of white racism. African-Americans embraced the theory that their ancestry could be traced to a glorious past, with additional impetus and rationalization for “Ethiopian-ism” provided by the scriptural prophecy: “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God.”

African-American interests in Ethiopia had Canadian applicability. The Italian infringement upon these interests was a cause for serious concern for many Blacks across the continent and the world who were invested in Ethiopia as their symbol of hope for an alternate reality.

2.2 The Question of Ethiopian Slavery

Making the claim for a once venerable Ethiopian identity is not uncomplicated. The existence of slavery in Ethiopia was a preeminent question regarding Ethiopia’s eligibility for admittance into the League of Nations in 1923, and a stain on the country’s revered status. Arguments regarding Ethiopia’s ineligibility for admittance were predicated on the claim that a country which still harbored slaves and slave-traders could not meet the “civilized standards” required for membership into the League of Nations. Discourses on civilized standards conveniently hid the fact that colonialist nations like Britain, France and Italy all had control over domains where slave trades flourished during the period in question.

The blemish of the active practice of slavery in the country did not fade after Ethiopia’s admittance into the League in 1923. In the 1920s the British Press conducted a vigorous campaign against Ethiopian slavery. Consequently, the subject of slavery in

---

174 Ibid, 231.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
178 Ibid, 94.
Ethiopia was also a topic of periodic discussion in Canada between 1922 – 1936. In December of 1930, Dr. Samuel A.B. Mercer proclaimed to his audience gathered at the Canadian Institute that the abolishment of slavery in Ethiopia was “only coming about slowly” Mercer, a Research Professor in Orientals and Egyptology at Trinity College had travelled to Ethiopia in search of “Ethiopic manuscripts of the Bible”. By 1931, the newly crowned Emperor Haile Selassie had bestowed upon Mercer the prestigious title of “Fiturari” – an honor “similar to that of a viscount”.

Canadian scholars like Mercer who were engaged in studies in Ethiopia were prominent sources of information on matters beyond the scope of their scholarly field. A native of Newfoundland, Mercer was considered a subject matter expert on all matters pertaining to the East African country. Mercer did a handful of featured speaking engagements on the country and its peoples throughout the 1920s and 30s.

Publications and speaking engagements on Ethiopia during the early twentieth century were demonstrative of Canadian interest in Ethiopia, long-before the Italo-Ethiopian affair took the world by storm. Ethiopia, much like the rest of Africa, was a source of intrigue and recreational interest to White middle-class Canadians. The topic of “Ethiopian Slavery” fit within the paradigm of White-Canadian worldly intrigues.

A crowd gathered at the Canadian Institute in the winter of 1930 to hear Mercer

181 Ibid.
speak about the ancient customs of the nation, and view his slides filled with images of the people of Abyssinia “ranging in color from jet black to light chocolate”.\footnote{61} In tandem, Mercer was obliged to provide his opinion on the condition of slaves in Ethiopia. Mercer’s assessment in 1931 was that the great mass of the slaves in Ethiopia were perfectly content.\footnote{186} This same argument was made again by several other Canadian experts in the 1935-36 period. To prove his point, Mercer shared an illustrative story of a French official in Ethiopia who compensated and liberated 200 slaves that he received as a gift. The slaves reportedly returned to the Frenchman within three-months of their liberation “begging to be taken care of again”.\footnote{187} His allegorical narrative raises several questions about the state of the Ethiopian political, economic and cultural infrastructure in the 1930s; particularly about the extent to which the practice of slavery in this period afforded the victims protection from further destitution. Most relevant to this thesis chapter, Mercer’s explanation for the persistence of Ethiopian slavery coupled with the emergence of similar narratives from other Canadians in the 1935-6 period demonstrates the lengths at which Canadians tried to make sense of and justify the existence of a practice that they had come to understand as “uncivilized” and anti-modern.

Historian Bahru Zewde argues that whilst slavery and the slave-trade had been endemic in Ethiopian society since early times, what gave the practice renewed currency in the early twentieth-century were the new opportunities created for the acquisition of slaves by Emperor Menelik’s extension of the Ethiopian frontier in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.\footnote{188} Zewde asserts that the expansion of the Ethiopian frontier coupled with the absence of effective administration led to the proliferation of the slave trade. Consequently, Zewde argues that the ruling classes and the soldiery turned South-Western Ethiopia into hunting grounds for humans and animals; with both humans and ivory emerging as the two most precious commodities that traders returned with.\footnote{189} With admittance into the League of Nations, the widespread expectation was that Ethiopia

\footnotetext{61}{“Slavery’s Abolition Gradual in Ethiopia”, \textit{The Globe and Mail}, December 15, 1930: 15.}
\footnotetext{186}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{187}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{188}{Zewde, \textit{A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974}, 93.}
\footnotetext{189}{Ibid.}
abolish the system overnight, in spite of compelling evidence that the abolishment of slavery would not be simple, particularly without any alternative means of livelihood and protection afforded to the bonded. As one British observer of the period noted “to demolish the capitalist system in England would be a less radical measure”.  

Subsequently, during the period of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis (1934-36), the question of Ethiopian slavery was an internal and international political quagmire for the Emperor Haile Selassie. Aside from rebellions by “haughty chiefs in distant parts of the country”, slavery and Islam were cited as two preoccupations of Haile Selassie as ruler in Ethiopia. Slavery in Ethiopia perpetuated internal insecurity because it disrupted agricultural production and accentuated differences between the central and peripheral ethnicities of Ethiopia. However, disrupting the practice of slavery also posed clear challenges to the effective unity of the empire, and forced the emperor to tread slowly and carefully in eradicating the practices of the ruling classes. When Mussolini broadcasted to the world that Ethiopians were “backward negroes”, the official response from Ethiopian authorities was: “we are living under the laws of God and we must modernize our country slowly or the masses will rebel.”

Yet, indisputably, it was not the immorality of the practice of slavery in Ethiopia or the denial of human rights which upset the European powers the most. Instead,

---

190 Ibid.
international focus on the problem of Ethiopian slavery during this period is reflective of Anne McIntock’s assertions that “colonials carped rancorously at the African habit of making off with property that did not belong to them”. The under-publicized international ramification of the Ethiopian slave trade was that it significantly impacted effective colonial administration in the neighboring countries. Slave raids entailed frequent boundary violations in the region, creating justification to place international pressure on Ethiopia to abolish the practice.

The question of Ethiopian slavery and the tenets of Italy’s so-called civilizing mission are integral to understanding the arguments posed by detractors from the Ethiopian cause during the period of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. Italian aggression in 1935-36 was in part justified as a civilizing mission which would eradicate heinous customs such as slavery. The arms blockade imposed on Ethiopia for the alleged purpose of curtailing slave-raids in the 1920s, eventually rendered Ethiopia defenseless in the face of Italian aggression in 1935-36. As a consequence of European malcontent, a series of proclamations were issued against slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia. The first proclamation in September of 1923, decreed a ban on the slave trade. The second, in March of 1924, called for the gradual emancipation of slaves. Under British direction a bureau to implement the decree and a school for the freed slave children were established. Administration of the school was given to an ardent campaigner against

197 Ibid, 93-94.
199 “Italy’s Case Against Ethiopia “God’s Case Against World”, The Toronto Star, September 10, 1935.
201 Zewde, Ibid., and “Slave Trade in Africa is Halted”, The Dawn of Tomorrow, Saturday August 25, 1923: 3.
203 Ibid.
slavery Hakim Warqenah Eshate (also known as Dr. Charles Martin). Hakim Warqenah Eshate was pictured in the Canadian Press in the 1935-36 period as a representation of Ethiopian modernity and civility. Often referred to as Dr. Charles Martin, prominent Ethiopians like Hakim Warqenah are integral to understanding contemporary reverence for representations of Ethiopians from this period. Warqenah’s eminence in the international press speaks to the distinct opportunity for Ethiopians to represent themselves on the international political stage, in a period when almost all other African nations were spoken for by their colonialists.

Warqenah is reflective of the effective engagement of the Ethiopian Intelligentsia during the period of the Italo-Ethiopian war and occupation (1935-41). Representatives like Warqenah also illustrate the long-rooted and multidimensional links of European colonialist nations like Britain with Ethiopia and Ethiopians.

Within a Canadian context, the existence of Ethiopian slavery continued to be an implicit undercurrent in the overarching public discourses on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

---

204 Ibid. Bahru Zewde provides important context for the relevance of Warqenah Eshate (later renowned as Hakim Warqenah or as Dr. Charles Martin). Found after the Battle of Maqdala at the age of about four by one of the British officers in the Napier Expedition, Hakim Warqenah Eshate was trained as a medical doctor in India and Scotland. Returning to Ethiopia in the early twentieth century as Dr. Martin, Hakim Warqenah recovered his family and his name, and served in various capacities: as superintendent of the Tafari Makonnen school, director of the school for freed slaves, negotiator with a United States Company for the construction of a dam on Lake Tana, governor of the model province of Charchar (in Harar), and Ethiopian minister to London during the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war.” In Zewde’s *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974*, 105. Focus on Charles Martin in the Press during the conflict exemplifies the public fascination with complex historical linkages of the West/ particularly Britain to Ethiopia.


However, discussions on the existence of Ethiopian slavery were subsumed by discourses on sanctions, war, peace and other human-interest pieces on Ethiopia and Ethiopians. Yet, the topic was ubiquitous enough that it became an effective marketing tool for new Canadian commodities and luxuries such as washing machines. Through the marketing of “commodity spectacle”, any information pertaining to the Italo-Ethiopian war had the capacity to affect the general populace “beyond the literate, propertied elite”. Public consumption of the Italo-Ethiopian affair made elements of the conflict like the existence of slavery effective marketing tools. Over time, questions surrounding Ethiopian slavery fade from prominence in the social memory of this period.

### 2.3 Socio-Political and Cultural Context for the Permeation of Perceptions and Representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in the 1934-36 period

At the crux of the broader Canadian interest in, and concern over a “foreign war”/“African war” were underlying assumptions and interpretations about race and racial hierarchy within the emergent global order of the early twentieth century. In tandem with the political and economic implications of a war between the two nations to the world, discourse on the conflict in East Africa was rife with contemporaneous matters of race. Many sophists perceived and narrated the situation as “turning back the hands of the

---

clock of progress to the rampant imperialism of the last century.” As war drums grew
louder in East Africa, so did the opinions of Canadians compelled to express a sentiment
for one side of the conflict or the other. What emerges in the Canadian archives is a
“David and Goliath Narrative”. Sympathizers with Ethiopia expressed and solicited
support for the Ethiopian cause, often with arguments predicated on philosophical
commitments to the League of Nations, or deep-rooted Christian based tenets of right/
wrong and world supremacy. Sympathizers with Ethiopia elicited empathy from their
audience. They reinforced the existence of a widespread, nostalgic, reverence for the East
African nation. Detractors from the Ethiopian cause on the other hand, took opportunity
to validate the tenets of Italy’s civilizing mission, often spouting arguments premised on
white racial superiority. It was widely believed that Italy was “determined to civilize
Ethiopia” even if it meant “administering the last rites.”

Detractors from the Ethiopian cause tended to be apathetic to the historical
significance of the East African nation. They tended to be focused on upholding a black

209 Kenneth R. Wilson, “Ethiopia: Why it Challenges World Security”, The Financial Post,
August 31, 1935: Front page, second section.

210 A strong articulation by Ernest Work in his plea (book) for the Ethiopian cause. Work argued:
it is to be hoped that the Christian nations will recognize though thus tardily, the justice and the
necessity of permitting this last bit of independent territory in Africa to keep alive and to develop
to its highest possibilities the culture of the black man, Ethiopia: A Pawn in European
include: “My sympathies are most decidedly with Ethiopia Dr. A. E. Wadell of Halifax told the
herald last night…”, “Sympathies with the Ethiopian Cause”, The Halifax Herald, Monday
September 16, 1935:18. “Canada should back league in war, Sons think”, The Leader Post
(Saskatchewan), August 22, 1935: front page. “Sees Cruelty in Invasion of Ethiopia”, The Leader
Post, November 7, 1935.

211 A poignant example: “Mussolini’s alleged statement calling Ethiopians “backward” negroes
has been widely broadcast arousing great indignation. An official of the Ethiopian foreign office
is the authority for the following reply to Il Duce: “We are living under the laws of God and we
must modernize our country slowly or the masses will rebel.” Excerpt taken from Jean
Alloucherie’s article: “Recruits Flock To Colors In Ethiopia: Country Is Aroused From Lethargy
of Centuries by Threat of War- Men Drill Barefoot, Trained By Foreign Instructors”, The
Winnipeg Free Press, August 2, 1935, 3.

Ethiopia Expected: Italy Held Likely to Continue Advance Until Country is Conquered”, The
Gazette, Montreal, October 7, 1935: 7.
and white world purview, wherein White rule is always favorable to Black ascendancy. Discussants who addressed the looming “African War”, “peace talks in Geneva” or the implications of “sanctions” both in the press and on the podium were forced to be reflexive, and to ruminate upon the value system within which they operated. Most definitive stances articulated for one side of the conflict or the other, were predicated on prevailing perceptions of a hierarchical world. White, Christian, political and cultural domination over the millions of Brown and Black Muslims or “Mohammedians” across the globe was imperative. Discourses on Ethiopia and Ethiopians frequently disrupted clear delineations and frameworks for interpreting the world order in the 1935-38 period.

2.4 Of Collective Security and Canadian concerns

The Abyssinian Crisis lasted from December 1934 to October of 1935 and was soon followed by the Italo-Ethiopian war which effectively lasted from October 1935-May of 1936. Through the prism of an ardent and copious global political crisis, with domestic political and economic implications, Canadians were re-introduced to the African nation in the 1935-36 period. With both Ethiopia and Italy being member states of the League of Nations, the territorial dispute over the Wal Wal region in East Africa between the two countries, drew in other League member states (like Canada) raising imminent concerns about collective security, political allegiances (both old and new), and the potential for renewed economic turmoil in a post- Great War, and Great Depression world order. Representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians were inherent within the discourses and considerations of Canadians in the period.

It was evident to many Canadians living through the period that the outcomes of a dispute between Italy and Ethiopia had “implications effecting at once the two great powers, Great Britain and France”, and the potential “to stir up the whole European hell-pot” which had subsided after the First World War. Widely construed as a “Pawn in European Diplomacy”, Ethiopia was likened to Sarajevo on the eve of World War I in 1914. The proverbial “dude in the show”, Ethiopia was relevant within the context of the

imminent conflict, but it was expected that it would soon be relegated to the background with more consequential calamities for the white Western nations looming on the horizon. Outside of the localized implications for East African region, Italy’s aggression toward Ethiopia in 1934-35 was perceived as a challenge to British power in Africa, the Mediterranean and the Far East. With talks in Geneva regarding sanctions captivating the world, Italy’s strategic movements in the Mediterranean sea were also noticed.

By late October 1935, it was clear that “Italy’s air and submarine supremacy in the Mediterranean” rendered British naval and military presence in those waters precarious. The threat of Italy closing the Suez Canal jeopardized Britain’s position in India. Coupled with Italian presence in Libya, “Britain’s interests in Africa, including Egypt,

---


215 Ernest B. Roberts poignantly articulated this perspective in Saturday Night. He wrote: “Just as in 1914, Sarajevo, where that Austrian archduke was assassinated, was soon forgotten in the grimmer events on the French and Russian frontiers, so will this piffling little black-fence squabble about some grazing lands and a few wells in an arid no man’s land between Abyssinia and an Italian colony may soon yield in concern to the Mediterranean sea.” Full Citation: Ernest B. Roberts, “The World Draws Near The Abyss In Abyssinia”, Saturday Night, August 24, 1935, 2.


the Soudan, Kenya and South Africa, were all subject to Italy’s ambition.” Maps were certainly essential to understanding both the nuances and the ramification to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

Discourses on Ethiopia, Ethiopians, the morality of Italo-Ethiopian affair, and the cost and meaning of peace were pervasive during this period. These discourses shaped the nature of representations of the East African country for more than half of the twentieth century. The consensus amidst commentators was that if Italy were to “down” the “only Black Christian people on the Dark Continent”; that act alone would reverberate as “a bad blow to British influence among millions of Mohammedans in Africa, Arabia, India, Afghanistan, and other parts of Asia”. At the heart of British and French concerns pertaining to Ethiopia was the very real prospect of losing their colonial influence in key parts of the world. In addition to its apparent economic value, colonial influence was also key to maintaining Christian supremacy across the globe. The threat of a “revival of Turkey’s claims to Mohammedan religious leadership” recast by Britain during the Great War was as imminent a threat as “the million pilgrims from the four quarters of Mohammed’s world who cross over”. It was within this geo-political paradigm, that the squabble between Ethiopia and Italy captivated the world. Represented as a conflict of biblical proportions with a true potential of “upsetting the whole post-war apple cart of “pacific internationalism”, it was of “little wonder” that the name Ethiopia and Abyssinia were interchangeably “on every lip” during an intense 7 month period.

In addition to the cultural cachet associated with following an avant-garde global political story, the ensuing crisis was equally absorbing to many Canadians during the 1930s, because it took place during a pivotal Canadian Federal election year which ushered in a change in government from R.B Bennett’s Conservatives to Mackenzie

---

220 Ibid.
221 Kenneth R. Wilson, “Ethiopia: Why it Challenges World Security”.
King’s Liberals. During the peak of the League of Nations discussions in Geneva, Canada was a member of the Committee tasked with finding a peaceful resolution to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, and Walter Riddell was Canada’s representative at the League. What transpired in Ethiopia and Geneva was of broader Canadian concern for a variety of reasons, the critical one being the prospect of Canada being lured into another foreign war in support of maintaining the interests of the British Empire. Canadian interest in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict was primarily fueled by this prospect, and there was a widespread call for information regarding Canada’s position on the matter to be “plain” Electoral candidates across the country capitalized on the issue.

---


223 Ironically, the Committee of Thirteen was struck after the three Power Conference of the United Kingdom, France, and Italy at Stresa – under Italy’s sponsorship. On April 15, 1935, The League Council Created a committee of Thirteen “to examine how economic sanctions could be best applied against a violator of the peace in Europe. This committee, of which Canada was a member, was to restrict its examination of sanctions to Europe, owing, it was alleged, to a Franco-Italian deal by which Mussolini would have a free hand in Ethiopia in return for joining the United Kingdom to protect France against Nazi aggression in Europe.” The irony lies in the fact that these discussions took place at a time in which Italy was threatening another member of the League. Excerpt and insights taken from: Lester B.Pearson’s Mike: The Memoirs of The Right Honourable Lester B.Pearson. Volume I 1897-1948, (Canada: A Signet Book, The New American Library, University of Toronto Press: 1972): 87.

224 Christopher C. Robinson, “Canada and Britain’s Foreign Policy”, Saturday Night, August 17, 1935:2.

*Albeit, Canadian historians argue that some of the Dominion nations (Canada, South Africa and Ireland) “were more reluctant than others to commit themselves to deeds as well as words in the defence of the status quo or, as the phrase of the day had it, ‘to collective security’.” Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, Canada, 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987): 306.

225 A poignant example was addressed to the editor of the Halifax Herald: “the world is on the verge of another war. What part will Canada take in the war? Will she support Britain or will she withdraw from the British empire and live unto herself? we are about to have a Dominion election. It is the right of the electors to know what their electors propose doing should Canada be compelled upon to decide for, or not, for war. I challenge you the editor of a responsible and influential newspaper, to in turn challenge each and every candidate in the forthcoming election to state in clear and unmistakeable language what he proposes to support re war or non-war for Canada”. Excerpt taken from “Canada and War”, The Halifax Herald, Saturday, August 21, 1935: 6.

226 “the difference between the Reconstruction and Conservative and Liberal, platforms on such important questions as war and immigration is immense, Louis Francoeur Sevens’ candidate in
October of 1935, *The Montreal Gazette* reported that “the spectre of conscription following hard on the heels of a union government was thrust before electors of Mercier division as a bogey.” 227 Canadians of all political allegiances were charged to take the golden opportunity on October 14, 1935 to “instruct the government as to the course in the present crisis”.228 The sentiment was that a nation-wide plebiscite had to be taken on the issues at hand. 229

Widespread Canadian engagement with the Italo-Ethiopian conflict between July and October 1935 hinged upon the prospect of Canada being pulled into a war. In this vein, how the ensuing events in East- Africa and Geneva were understood and articulated by political pundits, policy makers, influencers, and ordinary citizens is important to understanding why Ethiopia was of relevance to Canadians in this period. Historian Francine McKenzie asserts that Canadian responses to the ensuing disaster in Geneva and East Africa ultimately “had little to do with the specific circumstance surrounding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict”, but rather with “the underlying issues and concerns that the crisis elicited”.230 The domestic pressures referenced by McKenzie, and felt by both Bennett’s Conservatives and King’s Liberals, were direct consequences of recent Canadian historical experience, primarily the nation-wide divides caused by Canadian participation in World War I and the effects of the Great Depression.231

On August 17, 1935, in his assessment of current affairs political pundit Christopher C. Robinson surmised in *Saturday Night* that “England holds, for a large part
of the world”, and “the keys of peace”. The sentiment for many English Canadians who contributed to the discourses of this period was that they had a “great stake” in British foreign policy, and that “there can be no true prosperity for Canada except in a peaceful world”. It is well established in the historiography that “Canada was one of those countries that Great Britain could turn to, if indeed war broke out.” For these reasons alone, Canada and Canadians had “both the right and duty” to concern themselves “with England’s attitude towards the principles embodied in” the instruments of peace. It is in the space created for debates on the extent of Canada’s international obligations that Ethiopia and Ethiopians entered the Canadian vernacular across the vast milieu. The tenets of these debates would resurface periodically throughout the rest of the twentieth century, and beyond.

In alignment with McKenzie’s assertions, the perimeters of Canada’s concern for Ethiopia, and the official response to the conflict by the two Prime Ministers in this period (R. B. Bennet and William Lyon Mackenzie King) were influenced by prevailing domestic and international pressures. The relationship that the Dominions (like Canada) had with Britain had ramifications to their own future security needs, and Canadians were

---

232 Robinson, “Canada and Britain’s Foreign Policy”, Saturday Night, August 17, 1935:2.
233 Ibid.
234 Bothwell et al., 306.
236 Poignantly Eric Morse’s assessment of the Russia vs Crimea discussions at the United Nations in 2014 demonstrates the historical relevancy of this period. Morse wrote: “New situation in 2014, Russia- we are left with the eerie feeling that this may be the last meeting of moment that the Security Council ever has; Abyssinia 1935 and the ghost of the League of Nations revenant. In front of the gathering the Russians tore up the playbook and effectively removed themselves from the international order except to retain a disruptive role as spoilers wherever they can. (Incidentally Abyssinia 1935 has unhappy Canadian echoes. Canada’s adviser to the League of Nations, Walter Riddell suggested an energy boycott against Italy, who promptly threatened war — how, without oil, they didn’t specify. Riddell was promptly disowned by Mackenzie King. There were no sanctions. It does underscore the risks of Canada getting out ahead of the pack in a crisis with zero effective clout.)” At the time of this publication, Morse was a former Canadian diplomat serving as co-chair of the Security Studies Committee of the Royal Canadian Military Institute in Toronto. The excerpt was from: “Putin grabs his chance”, Ottawa Citizen, 4/14/2014. http://ottawacitizen.com/news/putin-grabs-his-chance.
invested in learning about the implications of the international conflict to them.\textsuperscript{237}

“Canada believes “that the league of Nations is an indispensable agency for world peace”, the Hon. J. Howard Ferguson declared before the League Assembly in Geneva.\textsuperscript{238}

The expressed hope of the Canadian delegation was that a peaceful and honorable solution would be reached to the “Ethiopian controversy”.\textsuperscript{239} However, if no such resolution could be reached, Ferguson declared that “Canada will join with others members of the League in considering how, by unanimous action, peace can be maintained.”\textsuperscript{240}

Therefore, between December 1934 and October 1935, the concern for many Canadians was that there was a high probability that if England was to be involved in the war in East Africa, Canada could soon follow suit as “a party to the Covenant of the League and the Kellogg Pact”.\textsuperscript{241} It was on this point, Historians Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English argue, that “Ethiopia first impinged on Canada”.\textsuperscript{242}

\textsuperscript{237} Neville Sloane, “The Paradox of Peaceful Co-Existence: British-Dominion’s Response to the Italo-Abyssinian Crisis 1935-36”, \textit{In Collision of Empires: Italy’s Invasion of Ethiopia and It’s International Impact}: 186. *It is noteworthy that Sloane argues that “since there were definite limits to the moral influence that Dominions could exert on foreign countries the Dominions had to fit into Britain’s larger diplomatic objectives”.


\textsuperscript{239} “Delegate Says Canada Behind Nations League: Dominion Criticized For Calculating Stand”, \textit{The Sudbury Star}.

\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{242} Bothwell et al., 305-6. *Arguably, Ethiopia had already impinged once before. On the front page of the \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}, Tom King wrote the following in February of 1935: “Many years ago I happened to read in the Canada Gazette a proclamation issued by the Governor-General-in-Council. It began by saying that “unhappily a state of war exists between His Majesty the King of Italy and His Majesty and Emperor of Abyssinia and their subjects.” Then followed a strict injunction to the citizens of Canada to take no part in the contest in favor of either belligerent. The injunction seemed at the time unnecessary because Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) as so far away and the interest of Canada in the conflict seemed so remote. For obvious reasons no such proclamation could or would be issued today by the government of Canada. Canada belongs to the League of Nations, and so do Italy and Ethiopia.” Tom King. “The War in Africa” \textit{The Winnipeg Free Press}, February 17, 1935, Front Page.
2.5 Canadian Interest in Foreign Policy and the Interpolation of the Italo-Ethiopian Affair

Canadian interest in foreign policy during the 1930s, Heather Metcalfe argues, was a prominent public and political affair due to its international implications and internal consequences. With the threat of another world war and questions regarding the efficacy and extent of sanctions hanging in the air, newspapers and radio stations across the Canada featured some variation of news related to the international conflict on-a-daily basis for seven consecutive months.

Early on in September of 1935, the Regina Leader-Post proclaimed that the local library kept “files to cope with interest in Ethiopian crisis”. By mid-October, the headline was that the “Ethiopian war sells books in Regina stores”, as libraries, newspapers, and merchants all struggled to keep up with the public demand for information about Ethiopia and the conflict. Public interest in the conflict was sustained across the country, and it was clear to many that the Ethiopian war “had commercial possibilities for merchants”. “Start a scrapbook today and follow the Ethiopian trouble with pictures” read a sign over scrapbooks displayed on the counter of a Regina store. A model scrapbook with news and pictures pasted in it demonstrated how this could be done. Merchandise and information on Ethiopia had widespread appeal. Within the perimeters of the conflict, ordinary Canadians were eager to learn

---

244 “Library Keeps Files To Cope With Interest In Ethiopian Crisis”, The Leader-Post, Monday September 9, 1935: 3.
245 “Ethiopian War Sells Books In Regina Stores”, The Leader-Post, Wednesday October 9, 1935: 3.
247 “Ethiopian war sells books in Regina stores”, The Leader-Post, September 1935:3.
248 Ibid.
about Ethiopia’s history and contemporary geopolitical significance. As a result, forms of “commodity jingoism” proliferated across the country.

The Italo-Ethiopian conflict coincided with a period of prolific interest in travel and expeditions. In addition to maps, encyclopedias and travel books - hard news features, editorials, photographs and comics introduced Ethiopian culture and peoples to the Canadian public. Newspapers and radio stations sought out to meet the insatiable appetite for information about the East-African nation, its emperor and its peoples. The Emperor’s addresses to the world were advertised and reported widely. On September 13, 1935 one of the Emperor’s appeal to the world regarding the impending invasion of his country by

---

249 Prices of items on the Eaton’s department store recommended reading list advertised in the Montreal Gazette varied; undoubtedly appealing to collectors and enthusiasts across the social spectrum. To start, consumers could purchase a pamphlet on “Abyssinia and Italy” from the Royal Institute of International Affairs for 60 cents. Characterized as a “wonderful description of a pioneer journey through the Ethiopian barren lands”, L.M. Nesbit’s “Desert Forest or Hell-Hole of Creation” retailed for $4.00. Of equal value, “The Last of Free Africa” by Gordon MacCreagh promised “up-to-the minute descriptions of the country and people and Abyssinia”. Maps of Ethiopia were more affordable, with London Times maps of Abyssinia available for 10 only cents. Eaton’s Advertisement For The Literary Log From The Book Room, The Gazette, Montreal, October 5, 1935: 18. Pricing is important to denote here, given the fact that a single Canadian dollar in 1935 held purchasing power equivalent to $18.43 in 2020; a particularly significant point when considered in relation to the median wages of the period. For more information see: https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1937/acyb02_19370783002a-eng.htm https://www.in2013dollars.com/canada/inflation/1935?amount=4

250 McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality In The Colonial Conquest, 209.

251 In addition to an analysis of the press coverage of the day, Gordon MacCreagh affirms this claim in his assertion that: “we are living in an era of expeditions. Not a month passes that we do not see photographs in the Sunday magazine sections of So-and-so’s expedition to Such-and-such a place.” MacCreagh, The last of Free Africa, (New York: The Century Co. 1928): 36.

Italy was captured by the *Sudbury Star*. “Haile Selassie, The Lion of Judah, emperor of the world’s oldest empire, has turned to the modern radio and “talkie” to broadcast his appeal to the world” reported the paper.\(^{253}\) The emperor was heard over CKSO Sudbury speaking in French.\(^{254}\) The emperor Haile Selassie was the most prominent face of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. His representations from this period left an imprint on the memories of a generation across the globe.

In addition to radio features and news correspondences from Geneva, a handful of Canadian journalists from across the country were deployed to the impending theatre of war to ensure that Canadians would have access to information about the nation that was in the proverbial eye of the storm.\(^{255}\) During the peak of the pre-war conflict between Italy and Ethiopia (July -October 1935), there was no dearth of interest in getting to the news first. With two journalists on site and the promised contributions of several correspondents from newspaper associations, *The Toronto Star* pledged to bring the fullest coverage to its readers in August of 1935.\(^{256}\) The prospect of an international war spurred wide-spread and all-encompassing interest in the African nation. On August 7, 1935, an open call was put out to any readers of *The Toronto Star* who had photographs of Abyssinia.\(^{257}\) As it turns out, Canadians had historic materials of relevance from Ethiopia in their


\(^{254}\) Ibid.


\(^{256}\) “Star is providing Full war Coverage”, *The Toronto Star*, August 7, 1935: Cover Page.

\(^{257}\) Ibid.
possession to contribute. The private collection of Finance Commissioner Geo. Wilson of Toronto was one such featured compilation. Gathered by his father Captain Augustus Nicholas Wilson, during his time served with the 85th infantry regiment in the campaign of Sir Robert later Lord Napier of Magdala in 1863, Wilson had in his possession notably an Abyssinian war club and a priest’s pillow photographed by *The Toronto Star*. The Abyssinian war club was described as “a beatifully viscious weapon of some 29 inches in length with arounded striking end of close to 10 inches in circumference”. A wooden pillow “used by the Abyssinian priests in their travels through the land”, was showcased along with the weapon.258 The Royal Ontario Museum’s collection of war artifacts from the Napier Expedition in Ethiopia was also featured in the press, as it was surely bound to increase foot traffic from both enthusiasts and gawkers.

The Ethiopian Coptic Church and its rituals also drew interest from Westerners, marking them integral components to representations of the nation for much of the twentieth century. Human interest stories and lectures on the country, both preceding and during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, frequently referenced and described in great detail the worship practices of Ethiopians. Images of Ethiopian priests and religious ceremonies graced the pages of several major dailies printed in the 1935-36 period. Characterizations of the Ethiopian Church and the Clergy captured the veneration of both critics and admirers. A denigrator of the Ethiopian church as an archaic institution, Gordon MacCreagh still found praise for the “pomp and ceremony of age-old rituals” in *The Last*

258 “Ethiopian Oddities” (Photo Caption), *The Halifax Herald*, Friday October 18, 1935, 15.
of Free Africa. 259 MaCreagh lamented that the age old rituals and ceremonies were “particularly, almost orientally, gorgeous” by their splendor. 260 The widely held perspective was that the splendor of the ceremonies had equal effect to: the “superstition the church holds to heel a fiery people who might otherwise with Oriental abandon overstep all bounds of human law and order.” 261 The famed pomp and ceremony of the Ethiopian church was juxtaposed by the simplicity and humility of a populace worshiping in the “open-air.” Ethiopia and Ethiopians were frequently framed as Christian kin steeped in traditions from antiquity, often times defying White Western Christian sensibilities and notions of civility. Any reverence that was expressed for Ethiopia and Ethiopians during this period was firmly situated within the prevailing paradigms of the time. Ethiopia was at the cross-roads of civilization. Thus, Ethiopians were venerated for their historicity, admired for their nobility and often denigrated for their “Africanity”.

Fueled by the pervasive press coverage, churches and social clubs continued to parley about the African continent. On December 28, the Centennial United Church in London, Ontario hosted an “adventure sermon” entitled “the Heart of Africa”. 262 Illustrated with colored pictures taken in Africa, the continent was the topic de jour, in light of the fact that it was in both the mind and prayers of the world at that time. “The tragedy” it was observed, was that Canadians knew so little about “the work of the church

260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
in this great continent”. At issue here too, is what Sadya Hartman characterizes as the: “precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator”. The lines between empathy for the predicament of the Ethiopian peoples, and the enjoyment of the spectacle by the Canadian populace were frequently blurred. Some comparative articles found in the women’s section of the daily newspapers were particularly reflective of this phenomenon. In one such example, Ethiopia was described as a “Paradise for Low-Cost Living” because Miss Canada could “find bargain prices for cosmetics hairdressing and articles of personal adornment.”  Hairdressing in the fluffy African style cost only 10c, and with “little demand among Ethiopian women for lipsticks, rouge, cold cream and powder” these articles were available to purchase “for almost nothing”. Illustrating the confluence of political matters with cultural interests in Canada during the period, several cartoon strips across Canada also featured obscure facts about Ethiopian history, culture and peoples.

The Canadian Press was committed to satisfying the appetite for one of the biggest human-interest stories of the year. Another Toronto newspaper, The Toronto Telegram proclaimed that Ethiopia was “just a few hours away from the Telegram

263 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
office”, with staff correspondent Robinson Maclean reporting back daily.\textsuperscript{267} The Toronto Telegram provided the most expansive coverage of Ethiopian life and culture in Canada. Jean Alloucherie of the Winnipeg Free Press was touted to be the first special war correspondent of any Canadian newspaper to reach Ethiopia since war had become imminent. Alloucherie also held an officer’s commission in Emperor Haile Selassie’s court.\textsuperscript{268} In the early days, The Winnipeg Free Press bragged that it had arranged lines of news correspondence which would “more than adequately meet any contingency of war in Africa”\textsuperscript{269} Pierre Van Passen, resident staff correspondent for the paper in Paris, had been “instructed to proceed to Africa and to report on the general scene”.\textsuperscript{270} By August of 1935, Van Passen was returned to Ethiopia “with orders to stay there indefinitely.”\textsuperscript{271} It was subsequently lauded that Free Press readers had “the benefit of the cabled despatches from two highly experienced special and staff war correspondents, as well as press services and many other special writers.”\textsuperscript{272} Each feature story ran about the East-African conflict was written with dramatic flare. In early August, shortly after the mass influx of Western Press Corps arrived in Ethiopia, Edward Beattie a United Press Correspondent deployed to Ethiopia for The Winnipeg Free Press and declared that “Ethiopia’s preparations for war are gathering momentum”.\textsuperscript{273} The drama on both the warfront in Ethiopia and the peace talks in Geneva unfolded like a drawn-out game of chess in the Canadian press.

Every single representation of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during this period was

\textsuperscript{267} “Ethiopia just a few hours away from the Telegram office”, The Evening Telegram (Toronto), August 7, 1935: Front page.
\textsuperscript{269} “Free Press Writers Are in Ethiopia”, The Winnipeg Free Press, August 2, 1935, 3.; “Sinclair Off to Ethiopia to Size up War Outlook: Footloose Reporter Turns “war correspondent” – expects Armageddon to be definitely on or off by the Time he reaches Mountain Gorges of Abyssinia”, September 24, 1935.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid.
imbibed with sensationalism and a deep-seated sense of colonial adventure. Irrespective of whether they were on the Italian or Ethiopian side of the conflict, Canadians were enamored by any news of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. “The Story will be one of perilous adventure and hardship, and of the race by every available means to rush the pictures to America” proclaimed The Halifax Herald. It was speculated that “Photographers at the front, especially the cameraman travelling through the mountains and jungle with Haile Selassie’s half wild warriors” would have “no easy time of it”. It was also smugly declared that they would still be “better prepared and equipped than skin-wearing raw-meat eating tribesmen.” Reporting on the other side of the conflict, The Halifax Herald also boasted that “thrills are dime a dozen to the Herald’s Staff Photographer on Italian Battlefront.”

275 Ibid.
276 Ibid.
277 “Thrills are dime a dozen to The Herald’s Staff Photographer on Italian Battlefront”, The Halifax Herald, October 14, 1935:7. * The concept of war as a source of colonial adventure was not unique to the period. These themes are explored in Roy Maclaren’s Canadians on the Nile, 1882 -1898: Being the Adventures of the Voyageurs on the Khartoum Relief Expedition and Other Exploits., Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978.
Figure 12: Telegram Pictures From The Ethiopian Front
2.6 Peace, War and Sanctions

In tandem with frontline coverage, the Canadian Press also extensively covered elements of Canadian engagement with the discussions in Geneva. Broader Canadian interests in foreign policy both informed and facilitated a space for dialogue pertaining to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. The countless immersive discussions and debates which ensued in Canada related to war, peace, and sanctions during this time were catalysts for the permeation of representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during this period and beyond.

On the road to war in East-Africa, the prevailing philosophical underpinnings of widespread debates amidst Canadians were premised on the argument that “one of the plainest lessons of the Great War” was “that if you want peace and cannot escape being involved if there is a war, the most futile of all policies is to avoid commitments”. Discussions on the value of keeping the peace were inextricably linked to the symbolic and political value of Ethiopia’s membership to the collective body of the League of Nations. If Canadian international commitments were skirted, there was a general consensus amidst the debaters and discussants that “you are no less forced, in the end, to fight”, but “your power has no value in keeping the peace precisely because it is not committed beforehand to that purpose”.

Maintaining peace was top of mind for the majority of Canadians engaged in discussions on the Italo-Ethiopian war. Alongside Canadian debates on obligations to Britain, and maintaining the tenets of the League, Pacifism was the underlying principle guiding the discussions of many Canadians. During the First World War, the term Pacifist had arguably lost its true meaning and become a synonym for treason in the minds of many. In 1935, Canadians evoked the term in a more tolerant climate to recall it’s “true meaning” of: “advocating the reference of international disputes to a permanent tribunal, an opponent of militarism.” To this end several meetings, church

---

278 Wilfred Bovey, “We Need a Foreign Policy”, Maclean’s Magazine, October 15, 1935: 19.
279 Robinson, “Canada and Britain’s Foreign Policy”, 2.
280 Ibid. *A point also reinforced by Eric Morse in 2014.
282 “Student Thinking”, The Halifax Herald, Friday October 18, 1935, 6.
283 Ibid.
sermons and campaigns dedicated to “peace” took place in 1935. 284 In Montreal, in response to the “threat arising from the outbreak in Africa”, an emergency anti-war conference was called for Sunday October 6 to “discuss plans for an organized campaign for the defence of peace”. 285 Adopting the slogan “Keep Canada at Peace”, the impromptu conference at the Central Y.M.C.A attracted a total of 200 people, including 85 delegates representing 35 trades unions. The other 115 people in attendance represented professional associations, women’s and young people’s organizations, and churches. The sizeable group left the meeting with an agreement to form a permanent body and approving a plan of action calling for the fullest support of the League of Nations Covenant and all collective measures aimed at enforcing peace.286

Representations and perceptions of both Ethiopia and Italy were at the core of these discussions. Whilst it was not always openly articulated, supporting “peace” during this period meant that a side would have to be chosen.

The “hope for peace” secured headlines several times between July-October 1935, unions initially urged their members to adopt an industrial and economic boycott “to cultivate the spirit of a general strike and refuse to handle any goods or equipment destined to any of the belligerent nations in the event of hostilities”. 287 The Canadian government was resolved to dealing with inquiries from Canadian businesses unsure of how to proceed. The League of Nations whilst emphasizing the need for conciliation and peaceful settlement, took a strong position against Italy’s right to use force in pursuing its claims.288 The League established a committee of the Council on 3 October 1935, to


determine the facts. A political game of chess ensued at the talks in Geneva. Britain pressed for action against Italy under the covenant, whilst France was more hesitant.\(^{289}\)

On 7 October, the council, with the exception of Italy, unanimously agreed that Rome’s actions had brought about a state of war in violation of the covenant.\(^{290}\) Lester B. Pearson was appointed secretary and adviser to the Canadian delegation to this meeting, which took place during the last stages of the Federal election campaign of 1935 in Canada.\(^{291}\)

Pearson’s recollection of this period in his memoir speaks volumes to the imprint the Italo-Ethiopian affair left on a generation of Canadian diplomats and public servants. As examined in the next chapter of this thesis, Pearson’s experiences with the Italo-Ethiopian affair shaped his treatment of the Ethiopian state and Emperor in his role as Prime Minister of Canada (1963-1968).

During the discussions of the Committee of Thirteen sponsored by Italy earlier in the Spring, Walter Riddell’s instructions from Bennett’s conservative government were to place an emphasis on the fact “that the League of Nations should be more concerned with conciliation and arbitration than with sanctions and collective action”.\(^{292}\) Canada was notably criticized for taking a calculating stand a few times throughout the year.\(^{293}\) In light of Italy’s interests in Africa, the Canadian government granted Riddell permission to be more constructive in the discussion of sanctions.\(^{294}\) By August 1935, Pearson asserted that Italy’s intentions in Ethiopia were clear to the delegates in Geneva, and the rest of the world. As aggression towards Ethiopia escalated and further fighting commenced, the League maintained the need for conciliation and peaceful settlement but took a strong position against Italy’s right to use force in pursuing its claims. The League established a Committee of the Council on 3 October 1935, “to determine the facts”. A decision was made co-ordinate action against Italy under Article XVI of the Covenant,

\(^{289}\) Ibid.
\(^{290}\) Ibid.
\(^{291}\) Ibid.
\(^{292}\) Ibid.,87.
the sanctions article and a meeting of the assembly was called for the 9th of October.\textsuperscript{295} The “hope for peace” for Ethiopia had dissipated by October of 1935. But the hope for “peace” for other countries implicated by the conflict (like Canada) still lingered. This fact meant that Ethiopia, Italy, peace and sanctions were still at the forefront of Canadian public discourses.

The question of maintaining peace permeated across the university, high school and elementary school curriculums throughout the nation. Students at Dalhousie University in Halifax conducted a straw peace ballot in late October.\textsuperscript{296} The conclusion was that Canada’s safest position lay in adopting “strict pacifist ideals”.\textsuperscript{297} McGill University debaters won over the University of Saskatoon debate team in support of the premise that a withdrawal from the League of Nations would not be a good move for Canada.\textsuperscript{298} The revival of the intercollegiate debate team at Acadia University also featured a marquis debate with “Upper Canadian” students. Under the auspices of the National Federation Canadian University Students, the topic \textit{du jure} was “this house declines to take up arms under any circumstances”.\textsuperscript{299} Canadian desires for peace in this period were deeply entangled with Canadian considerations of the Ethiopian “test-case”. In alignment with this assertion, Remembrance Day services and editorials across the nation were also imbued with hopes for peace, in light of the ongoing “African war”.\textsuperscript{300}

2.7 The Economics of War

The end result of a period of prolific moral debate and consideration was the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in May of 1936. Given this outcome, one cannot help but wonder if the underlying tenets of the prolific moral debates were fundamentally hinged upon valuations of Ethiopia’s economic and political worth to Western nation states,
including Canada. Ultimately, the resolution that Canada would be morally justified in supporting the application of military sanctions against Italy was effectively defeated. Overall, Canadian opinions on the Italo-Ethiopian situation were influenced by individual commitments to the principles and efficacy of the League, as much as they were influenced by the extent and cost of Canadian commitments to maintaining peace. “If we were asked for an epitome of Canadian opinion on the Italo-Ethiopian situation”, The Halifax Herald surmised, “we could do no better, we believe, than quote from a letter recently written to this newspaper by Professor Gilbert Douglas”. Douglas wrote:

*we hear suggestions about seeing how much Ethiopian territory should be given to Italy if Italy will cease hostilities. Such a preposterous idea should be scouted by all decent people. The conception that this aggressor state should receive a slice of the land of the nation attacked is absurd. The question should rather be what indemnity should Italy pay to Ethiopia for the violation of the frontiers.*

Like many Canadians publicly engaged in the matter, Douglas espoused a particularly strong stance against Italian aggression. In principle, many pundits expressed a definitive moral stance on the conflict, often seemingly in favor of protecting Ethiopian sovereignty. Some public figures also called for stronger Canadian commitment and action. Earlier in October, Rev. Charles Este, of Union United Church in Montreal called for the application of sanctions “to bring Mussolini to boot”. P. Carlo representing the Italian workmen’s and Anti-Fascist groups, declared that “Italy could not talk only about murder” as “Italy’s aggression in Ethiopia was criminal.” The Canadian government

---

301 “Emphasizing Canada’s vital interest in economic and political stability throughout the world, Hon. Newton W. Rowell the Dominion’s delegate to the first assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva in 1920, told the Canadian Club yesterday that should efforts of Great Britain fail to avert war between Italy and Ethiopia, Canada cannot be indifferent to that issue. Without world stability, Mr. Rowell said, Canada’s economic system, built on the theory of satisfactory markets for primary products of forest and farm, mine and sea, cannot function. Mr. Rowell also pointed out that Canada as a member of the League has certain obligations under the covenant. “Interest of Canada in Crisis Stressed”, The Toronto Star, September 7, 1935.


304 Ibid.


306 Ibid.
ultimately effectively muted these voices with insufficient action to stop Italian aggression as a member of the Committee of Thirteen. Yet, the broader engagement of ordinary citizens in the issues *du jour* had lasting implications that would come to the fore at the next major intersection in Canadian and Ethiopian history examined in this thesis. As illustrated in the next chapter, several Canadians addressed the imprint of this period on their personal and political perspectives during the Emperor Haile Selassie’s visit to Canada during Expo 67.

However, the morality or immorality of the East-African conflict was not the only driver for prolific conversations regarding Ethiopia in the 1934-36 period. At the same time as reports of a war in East Africa were dominating the presses, so were reports of domestic pressures resulting from high unemployment. The Conservative government under the leadership of R.B Bennett was engaged with issues of appeasement in matters of both foreign diplomacy and domestic stability on the road to a much-anticipated Federal election in 1935.307 When the tensions in Geneva escalated in early August of 1935, alongside headlines screaming of imminent threats of war, were headlines regarding unemployed trekkers marching to Ottawa and estimations of up to 200,000 men out of work in the whole country. There was already internal discord for the Bennett government to contend with, without the added impetus of contributing to a war abroad.308 The economic implications of any sanction measures implemented in Geneva, and applied globally, had multivariate domestic ramifications for the member nations.

By November 1, 1935 letters were flowing from major business stakeholders across Canada addressed to O.D Skelton in Ottawa (then Under-Secretary of state for External Affairs), earnestly seeking clarity and copies of any decrees or government bulletins with official government information with regards to their company’s

obligations “both national and contractual”. Companies that were engaged in both large and small international transactions were interested in being kept apprised of all developments with regards to the positions of the foreign office and the Canadian government on the matter of sanctions.

The interrelated socio-economic and socio-political implications of the conflict to Canadians explains why Ethiopia and Ethiopians became a cause for broader Canadian concern in the 1935-36 period. It also explains why the porous discussions had long-lasting effects on the social memories of the period. In tandem with discourses on peace and upholding the tenets of the League of Nations, the economic implications to enforcing peace through sanctions resonated with Canadians across the country. “Bonds weaken on war scare over Ethiopia”, screamed a headline in The Financial Post on August 24, 1935. A “breakdown of negotiations aimed to mollify Italy’s truculent attitude towards Ethiopian matters”, precipitated widespread declines in Italian securities which in-turn “weakened glit-edged bonds in London and New York” the newspaper reported. Incited by “pressure of international disturbances”, the effect was then promptly transmitted to declines in Canadian glit-edged bonds. Canadian federal government bonds saw losses of up to a full-point and Western provincial bonds recorded losses of up to two points immediately following the Italo-Ethiopian breakdown. Canadian loans were subsequently sold in New York at a substantial discount, and another effect “was to retard distribution of the recent Nova Scotian loan”. The financial economic implications to the ensuing conflict were spelled out clearly. Sanctions meant war.

Consequently, the raw memories of both the Great War and the Great Depression weighted heavily into the framing of the discourses and considerations of the Canadian populace in the months leading up to outright war in Ethiopia, and a federal election in

311 Ibid.
312 Ibid.
Canada. The underlying representation and perception in Canada was that backing Ethiopia could have too high of a cost to Canadians. “All Canadians agree that Canada wants peace” argued Christopher C. Robinson. However, not all Canadians agreed on whether or not they could get peace “without paying for it”, or that they wanted it enough to pay the necessary price, or even what the price was. Robinson’s piece in *Saturday Night* encapsulated the tenor of most of the public debates on the Italo-Ethiopian Affair that had impinged on Canadian life. “Most of us”, Robinson argued, “in fact, probably feel that, however strongly Canada wants peace, there is not much that she can do about it all.” Canada’s geographic position relieved Canadians from the imminent concerns about peace felt by countries less fortunately situated. He maintained that Canadian interest in peace was remote enough to justify and deliberate thoroughly “any substantial risk, sacrifice or entanglement for the sake of it”. Most poignantly, Robinson underscored the less desirable economic implications to Canadian potential engagement in war. He reasoned that Canadian engagement in war would lead to: “unbalanced budgets, unstable currencies, repudiation of debts, and general uncertainty, as well as in exchange dumping and export subsidies in order to import war materials.” In many ways the Italo-Ethiopian affair became the barometer for the country’s economy, with materials to be included or excluded as a litmus test of the commitment of the government and the masses to the principles of the League.

Yet, the reality was that the costs or economic implications of the war in East Africa were not all negative for Canada, or the stock market. Moral debates

---

315 Ibid.
316 Ibid.
317 Ibid.
318 Ibid.
underscored the principles on which Canadians should participate or abstain from war, but economic reports of the period also provided compelling evidence of what Canadians stood to gain or lose from a distant war. At the macro-economic level, the so-called Ethiopian war facilitated the flourishing of Canadian wheat and spurred existed debates regarding wheat board regulations out west. Rust, frost, hail and threats of a drought in Argentina had reduced marketable wheat production by over three hundred million bushels, placing Canada in a favorable position to be a leading supplier. With war prospects between Italy and Ethiopia imminent, the effect on international markets was bullish, resulting in an upward movement in world prices. Italy being a major trade partner was no small matter of debate. Concurrently, in July of 1935, as war drums strummed louder, nickel exports were valued at $2,292,548. Competitive armaments were a stimulus to international trade and to domestic employment. Nickel was a key mineral used in the production of munitions, and it was evident that pursuit of sanctions against Italy “would Cost Dominion Nickel Sales”. The economic perks of the foreign war were very real, and hard to ignore.

In spite of the economic cost to their nation, some very vocal critics were of the opinion that “Canada’s contribution to world peace” should have been in participation “in

323 Ibid.
the imposition of metallic sanctions, especially in the case of the export of nickel”. In this vein, organizations such as the Canadian League against War and Fascism branch in St. Catherine’s Ontario wrote to the Prime Minister’s office protesting the refueling of the British freighter “Farnham” at a Nova Scotia Port. Indignation stemmed from the fact that the Farnham was headed for Genoa, Italy, loaded with Iron and Steel, after sanctions had already been imposed. When asked about the matter in advance, officials in the Canadian government were notably mum about any ensuing action that might be taken.

Public debates and questions surrounding the morality of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict hinged upon underlying economic considerations. Some argued that the extent to which American and Canadian producers and exporters stood to profit by a “European war” was adequately measured by “the completeness of their failure to remain out of entanglements by simply refusing to sell munitions to the principal parties involved therein”. During the month of August, one-fifth of Canadian steel and iron exports went to Italy, along with 1,000 trucks and busses, and large quantities of benzole used for mixing with gasoline or explosives- all raw materials and not subject to embargo. The rationale was that international trade was far too complex, and the economic activities of peace and war times were too interconnected to enable any trading nation (including

327“The Real Problem, The Halifax Herald, Friday October 18, 1935: 6. *In the course of an address to McGill University Students, Sir Norman Angell made the argument that Canada’s contribution would be to impose “metallic sanctions”, especially in the case of the export of nickel.*Other articles of interest: “Plans To Bar Raw Material To Italy To be Acted Upon”, The Gazette, Montreal, October 14, 1935, Front Page. “Speakers Declare For Sanctions Against Italy”, The Halifax Herald, November 21, 1935.
328 Letter to the Honorable McKenzie King, Prime Minister, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa Canada from The secretary of The Canadian League Against War and Fascism, St. Catherine’s Branch, dated November 26th 1935. filed under Department of External Affairs file number 927-A, Box RG 25 Volume 1721, League of Nations, Library and Archives Canada.
329 Ibid.
332 Ibid.
Canada) to isolate itself from a major world conflict.\textsuperscript{333}

Moreover, Italo-Canadian relations were represented as worthy of great consideration to any pending decisions to be made by the Canadian government (Bennett’s or King’s). In addition to protests, questions and concerns surrounding the economic implications of sanctions against Italy and the impending war were directed to the Canadian government. “As a new complex and deplorable situation for Canadian industries and agriculture has arisen from recent sanctions”, A.A Sabastienii, President of the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Canada argued, “the export of wheat, fish and Canadian products being prohibited to be exported to Italy” was “a considerable loss” for Canadians.\textsuperscript{334} Sabastienii was not making a purely economic argument. Discourses around anti-fascism, sanctions and peace caused ethnic tensions in Canadian society.\textsuperscript{335} Whilst outright jingoism was not permitted in Canada, there was a strong contingent of support for the Italian cause in Canada which felt slighted by the federal government and the press during this period.\textsuperscript{336} In response, some newspapers across Canada ran editorials expressing a form of kinship toward their fellow citizens of Italian descent.\textsuperscript{337}

The reality in this period was that Ethiopia’s symbolic value was not at par with Ethiopia’s political and economic value to Canadians.\textsuperscript{338} Canada’s trade with Ethiopia was deemed too negligible to even gather detailed statistics on, albeit “a great many

\textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{337} “Canada’s Attitude”, The Halifax Herald, Saturday, August 21, 1935: 6.
\textsuperscript{338} Underlined by the following newspaper headline: “Italy Hits Back At Canada”, The Windsor Daily Star, Friday November 22, 1935:Front Page.
Canadians” were consuming coffee imported “from Emperor Haile Selassie’s domains”. In the 1933-34 fiscal year, coffee imports from Ethiopia were valued at a significant $10,854. In the fiscal year ending March of 1935, the Dominion imported 101,857 pounds of coffee, valued at $12,873 from Abyssinia. Ironically, Ethiopian coffee became an iconic symbol of the nation during this early period of the twentieth-century, and continues to be one of the enduring cultural and economic symbols of the East-African nation. Its presence in Canada in the early twentieth century speaks to the economic and cultural cachet of an exotic imported good. Conversely, pneumatic tire casings were reported as the only goods of any consequence sent to Abyssinia in that same year. Whilst there had been more variety in Canadian exports to the East African country in previous years, they were all items connected with the motor industry. Seventeen trucks, five passenger automobiles, (all low-priced models), and $245 worth of settler’s effects were disclosed, leading the news article to assert that “somebody must have migrated from Canada.” Some prominent Canadians did live in Ethiopia during this critical period, most were missionaries. Canadians who worked and resided in Ethiopia in the early twentieth century forged bi-lateral relations between the two countries, in the absence of official Canadian government presence and interest in the country, until the opening of a Canadian embassy in Ethiopia in 1966. Missionaries and other Canadians living in Ethiopia played a critical role in perpetuating representations and perceptions of the East-African nation and its peoples during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

339 “The statistics as to Canadian trade with Ethiopia are not to be found in detail in the trade returns, because they are not of sufficient importance, but Mr. W.A. Warne, chief of the division of external trade, bureau of statistics was kind enough to dig them out, upon request, and satisfy our curiosity”, in Canada’s Trade with Ethiopia”, (From the Woodstock Sentinel Review), The Toronto Star, September 6, 1935: 6.
340 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid.
343 A little-known advertised fact was that the Governor of the Imperial Bank of Ethiopia during this period was Charles Saint John Collier, a native of New Brunswick. Collier was amidst a number of prominent Canadians who held a special seat in the Emperor Haile Selassie’s advisory circle throughout the early twentieth-century. “Canadian Governor of Ethiopia Bank: Charles Saint John Collier Native of Province of New-Brunswick”, The Evening Citizen (Ottawa), Friday September 20, 1935: 18.
2.8 The Emperor, The Warriors and The Legacy of Adowa: The Role of Canadian Missionaries and The Canadian Press in Perpetuating The Historical Legacy of a Christian Civilization

On February 13, 1934, a cable from Toronto, Canada arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia “remitting by telegraph 500 pounds sterling emergency measures in view of the situation”. Rumors of war with Italy were circulating both in and out of Ethiopia, as early as February 1934, (long before the Wal Wal incident of December 1934), and Dr. T.A. Lambie was seeking an assessment of the situation on the ground from Clarence W Duff. Both members of the transnational Sudan Interior Mission, Lambie was writing to Duff to get his views on the present situation, before returning to Ethiopia. Through these types of correspondences alongside newspaper features, this section of the chapter gleans insight into the multi-layered roles and activities of Canadian churches and missionaries stationed in Ethiopia during the 1930s. The activities and engagements of Canadian Missionaries had a longstanding impact on the representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians proliferating in Canada during the 1930s. Canadians living or working in Ethiopia during the 1930s were important sources of information during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and played a critical role in forging any form of Ethio-Canadian relations which existed during the 1930s. Most Canadians living in Ethiopia during this period were Evangelical Missionaries. During the peak of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, missionaries in the field served as subject matter experts who prolifically provided their respective religious organizations, the Canadian government and the general Canadian public with first-hand insight into the situation on-the-ground.

Historian Patricia Roy asserts that “before the Second World War, what most Canadians knew of the “Far East” came through Missionary writings and lectures”. The same argument can be made about Africa and Africans, particularly about Ethiopia.

---

and Ethiopians in the 1934-36 period. Between July 1935-December 1936, missionaries were frequently quoted in the press and advertised as public speakers by various congregations. A handful of Canadian missionaries served a bilateral purpose both before and during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. During the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, missionaries served as valuable sources of information to the Canadian Press, general public and government. Missionaries also served as medical missionaries, educators and proponents of peace and support for the Emperor Haile Selassie.

By the peak of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in 1935, Canadians Dr. T. A Lambie and his wife, had a made a long career of travelling to and from Abyssinia “carrying gospel” to the African land. The favorable status of Canadians like Lambie in Ethiopia, afforded them the status of “subject matter experts” in Canada. Canadian Missionaries like Lambie expressed their opinions on the Italo-Ethiopian situation and educated the Canadian public on the history and culture of Ethiopia. After 12 years of working in the neighboring Sudan, as part of the Sudan Interior Mission, Lambie crossed the frontier between the two lands and carefully worked his way to the capital city of Addis Ababa in 1919. Lambie’s medical knowledge gave him access to leading people in the country, and he was soon appointed physician to Ras Tafari Makonnen then Regent of Abyssinia, later to become Emperor Haile Selassie (coronation in 1932). By 1935, Lambie’s long-

---


347 “Missionaries To be Heard Here: Workers in Africa and Japan to Speak at Wortley Road Church”, The London Evening Free Press, November 19, 1935: 9.


351 Ibid.
standing relationship with the Emperor Haile Selassie and the upper echelons of Ethiopian royalty afforded him a special status. Over the course of his eight years in the country, Lambie was credited for building a large hospital in Addis Ababa, alleviating the sufferings of thousands in Ethiopia, enlightening and uplifting Ethiopians through Christianity, and for breaking down “the prejudice” of the Ethiopian people “against the white man”. Various members of Evangelical missions stationed in Ethiopia spoke up during the conflict to articulate their assessments of the East African nation and its peoples, as well as lobby for political and public support in raising medical supplies. Lambie was an instrumental proponent of a pro-Ethiopia stance in Canada during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. Lambie was also Secretary-General for the Red Cross in Ethiopia during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

Paradoxically, prominent Canadian missionaries like Lambie alongside other key Canadian church figures of the period perpetuated the historical representation of Ethiopia/Abyssinia as an ancient Christian civilization. Biblical arguments made in favor of the Ethiopian cause were pervasive. In early September, Reverend C. J. Rolls declared that passages in the Bible which forecast an Italo-Ethiopian dispute intimate that Italy may not be so successful in her designs. Reverend Rolls, also a member of the Sudan Interior Mission, was set to sail to Ethiopia along with Lambie. Several other church sermons and lectures during the late summer and early Fall of 1935 made explicit connections between the ongoing conflict, and Biblical forecasts for an impending doom for the aggressor. Dr. Shields at the Jarvis Street Baptist church in Toronto ran a series of lectures on the road to war addressing the Biblical nature of the conflict. On August 24, in a double feature sermon he posed the question “Will Ahab-Mussolini Fall at Ramoth-

352 Ibid.
356 “Says Ethiopian War Predicted in Bible: Rev. Dr. Rolls Goig to Abyssinia Despite Threatening Situation”, The Toronto Daily Star, August 30, 1935:
Gilead?”. Shields’s position on the war became even clearer when he asked: “will Anti-Christ Come out of Rome –now, or at any time?” Shields was rooting for Ethiopia in his declarative sermon entitled “When Anti-Christ will meet his Waterloo”.

As the rhetoric of peace and war loomed over the minds of church goers, church services presented another dimension of the conflict for the consideration of patrons. In part, the invocation of the Biblical relevance of the conflict helped to solidify Ethiopia’s central position within a grander narrative of a shared civilization trajectory. The bond to the East-African kingdom was premised on conceptualizations of Christian kinship. The links made between Biblical references to Ethiopia and the ongoing conflict signified the existence of an old bond. The Ethiopian story was an origins narrative which had widespread appeal. Christian kinship and the symbolic role of Ethiopia within a paradigm of grand master narratives were in full consideration during this period. “Ethiopia’s Peril-And Ours” was the title of one such sermon which underscored a sentiment held by the global Christian community. While the bond transcended national and geographic boundaries, it was still encumbered by sensibilities based on skin colour and notions of propriety.

Arguments for the Biblical relevancy of the conflict were also intimately tied to Ethiopian history, particularly Ethiopian victory over Italy in the Battle of Adowa of

---

357 “Will Ahab-Mussolini Fall at Ramoth-Gilead?” Announcement for Dr. Shields sermon scheduled for 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. in The Toronto Daily Star, Saturday September 7, 1935:11.

358 “Will Anti-Christ Come out of Rome –Now, or at any time?” Announcement for Dr. Shields sermon scheduled for 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. in The Toronto Daily Star, Saturday September 7, 1935:11.

359 “When Anti-Christ will Meet His Waterloo”, Announcement for Dr. Shields sermon scheduled for 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. in The Evening Telegram, Toronto, September 14, 1935: 16.

360 In particular: The Faith Baptist Church on Broadview in Toronto featured an evening lecture entitled “Ethiopia: In History and In Prophecy”, and The Church of Christadelphians ran a sermon on “The Lion of The Tribe of Judah” on September 15, 1935, The Evening Telegram, Toronto: 16.

361 “Ethiopia’s Peril-And Ours”, Announcement for Dr. Shields sermon scheduled for 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. in The Toronto Daily Star, Saturday August 31, 1935:6.
1896. Ethiopian victory at Adowa in 1896, and Italian aggression in the 1934-36 period were frequently represented as inextricably linked matters. On August 20, 1935 the *Leader-Post* encapsulated the historical context in an assessment that a “half-century of hatred” lay behind the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of the present.\(^{362}\) Canadian newspapers across the country dedicated front page columns to contextualizing the present conflict. “About forty years ago, King Menelik of Abyssinia, the father of the present Emperor, Haile Selassie, administered Italian forces a crushing defeat when the Italians attempted to take Adowa” reported the *Globe and Mail*. \(^{363}\)

In one of the earliest comprehensive assessments of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict published in *The Financial Post*, Kenneth R. Wilson argued that: “One thing led to another, and on March 1, 1896, the Abyssinians administered a crushing defeat on the Italians at Adowa, at that time the capitol of Abyssinia”.\(^{364}\) Wilson surmised: “no rout so complete, no such humiliation of a white power had been known in modern times”.\(^{365}\) The point of emphasis on the humiliation associated with the defeat of a White army by a Black one was the recurring theme fueling a “revenge narrative” behind the second Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

The revenge narrative surrounding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of 1934-36 was both a point of reference and a compass guiding the sensationalized press-coverage of the war-front.

As early as May of 1935, the Canadian press widely re-printed archival accounts of the first Italo-Ethiopian Battle of 1896 often in great detail. In 1896, the Italian troops sent to Ethiopia were 13000 strong under the command of Colonel Baratieri.\(^{366}\) Emperor

\(^{362}\) “Half-Century of Hatred Lies Behind the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict: Adowa Defeat Leads Mussolini to War in Africa’s Last Empire”, *The Leader-Post*, Regina, Friday, August 20, 1935: 19.


\(^{365}\) Ibid.

Menelik’s forces were 90,000 strong overwhelming the Italians. The facts surrounding the battle details varied a little from one daily press to another, but they all underscored the determination of Italy to not be shamed twice. The Italians symbolically targeted both Adowa and Axum to open the Italo-Ethiopian the war, and this made for several sensational headlines across the world. Mussolini was the master architect behind a plan of redemption for his country. The revenge narrative surrounding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of 1934-36 endured for more than half of the twentieth century, and still carries curry today.

2.9 The Narrative of the Impenetrable Ethiopian Fortress

Ethiopian victory in the Battle of Adowa had enough political and cultural cachet in 1935, that Italy’s march to war was frequently articulated as a plan doomed to fail. “Mussolini will not win, says Missionary” The Toronto Star proclaimed in mid-August of 1935. Beyond Biblical and historical arguments made for Ethiopian success, many also made persistent arguments for the supremacy of Ethiopians in their native terrain. Lambie argued that during all of the years of imperial conquest by the European countries, Ethiopia remained free for good reason. With ample experience navigating the interior terrain, Lambie declared that the situation was hopeless to foreigners. The central part of the country as he described it was forged of a series of “formidable mountains cut

---

367 Ibid.
371 Ibid.
through by deep canyons” surrounded by malarial swamps.\textsuperscript{372} Described as a country about as large “as our province of British Columbia”, the assessment of several reports was that Ethiopia was as inaccessible as “it has been down through the centuries, cut off from the rest of the world by its deserts and mountains, its torrid climate, and the savagery of its native tribes.”\textsuperscript{373} As a result, some military experts in Canada believed that contrary to Mussolini’s assertion that conquering Ethiopia would be “child’s play”, the war in Ethiopia could take up to two years to be won.\textsuperscript{374} Whilst military experts would not go so far as to predict a victory for the Abyssinians, they made the argument that even a localized conflict would not be a “walk-over” for Italy.\textsuperscript{375}

Many secular and religious subject matter experts (across colour, political and national lines) argued with conviction that “Ethiopia would not be defeated in the present conflict”. Prior to the full outbreak of war in October, the misguided prevalent assessment by various subject matter experts was that Italy was \textit{not} going to win the war, because Ethiopia was geographically impenetrable. The principal argument was that the Italian army had no chance, because Ethiopia was better-suited to guerilla warfare, and that was going to be the strategy of the emperor who was described as “grimly prepared to carry it on for years if need be”.\textsuperscript{376} Whilst the impenetrable fortress argument was closely linked to the prowess of a patriotic Ethiopian army demonstrated in the Italo-Ethiopian battle of 1896, it was more deeply steeped in a colonial perception of both Africa and Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{377}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{373} “Ethiopia is as large as British Columbia”, \textit{The Petrolia Advertiser}, Thursday October 16, 1935: 2.
\item \textsuperscript{375} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{376} “Mussolini will not win, says Missionary”, \textit{The Toronto Star}, August 15, 1935: front page.
\item \textsuperscript{377} “Ethiopians Far More Than Mobile Than Italians”, \textit{The Halifax Herald}, October 3, 1935, 4.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
2.10 Haile Selassie and the Narrative of David and Goliath

The impenetrable fortress narrative had close association to the legacy of Adowa and was part of the “David and Goliath” metaphors used to describe the conflict abroad. In addition to military might, Ethiopian triumph in Adowa was aided by the “soft power of propaganda”. This strategy was also deployed by Ethiopians during the second Italo-Ethiopian conflict of 1935-1936 period. Canadian churches and missionaries helped to shape and define the narrative of “David and Goliath” which emerged in the Canadian Press throughout the period of the conflict. The longstanding relationship of Canadian Missionaries (particularly those from the Sudan Interior Mission) to the Ethiopian royal family and the East- African region played a significant role in the types of representations and discourses generated and perpetuated during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of the 1930s. In a Toronto Star article, Lambie described the emperor Haile Selassie “as a man of small stature, 43 years of age” and “as near a picture of Christ as any man” that he had ever seen. Within the paradigm of an epic Christian battle, Haile Selassie was David and Benito Mussolini was the Goliath of the allegorical drama. Much like his famed parents, Emperor Menelik and Empress Taytu, Haile Selassie was the antithesis to the cliched barbaric African. The Emperor oft referred to in the Western Press in his Amharic title of “Negus”, or the King of Kings, was the prominent and favorable face of the conflict in Africa. Much like his father Emperor Menelik II did during the first Italo-Ethiopian conflict in Adowa, Haile Selassie also appealed to the Christian sensibilities of the citizens of White European nations. Haile Selassie counted on public opinion abroad to sway decisions in Geneva. He opened up his land and his home to the foreign press, with the objective of capturing people’s minds and hearts abroad. He was Africa’s second Christian monarch to yield as much public attention as he did, with the first being his father Emperor Menelik II. And much like his father, the

381 Jonas, The Battle of Adwa,3.
emperor was mostly represented as a serene and noble head of state. Empathy for the Emperor and his peoples was so pervasive in this period that some suggested that he ought to be nominated for the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize.

The war of propaganda had two sides. On August 3, 1935 “Italian Colonists Tell Why War Must Come” proclaimed a headline in *The Evening Telegram* of Toronto. The tagline “Ethiopians have no honor, they must be treated roughly” clearly sought to rebuke any differing accounts coming from both within the walls of the Ethiopian imperial palace, and the mouths of other subject matter experts speaking on behalf of the East-African nation. The propaganda war waged between the two nations also encompassed news from the Battle front. In a sardonic summary published in late December of 1935, *The Halifax Herald* dubbed Italian military tactics as those of “gentle” Warriors. The *Herald* article was written in response to Italian government’s communication to the League of Nations “protesting the use of dum-dum bullets by Ethiopian troops.” The author surmised that the protest of the Italian government “would be ridiculous- if it were not so tragic”.

---

382 Ibid.
385 Ibid.
387 Ibid.
388 Ibid.
called into question the principle with which the matter was being approached by Italy, the League and the Press. Condemnation of the complaints stemmed from the argument:

_Italian militarism apparently thinks it is quite all right, and a “gentle” method of prosecuting war, to rain bombs from airplanes upon women and children in primitive Ethiopian villages- but when the Ethiopians happen to reply with “dum dum” bullets or some other form of “out-lawed” war machinery, a protest goes up to high heaven._

2.11 “Ethiopia Rallies”: The Warriors and Representations of the Nation

With the threat and realities of airplanes targeting villages and civilians, the battlefield for the Italo-Ethiopian war was vast. Guarding the home front was not a job left solely to the Ethiopian army. “Men, women and even children in Ethiopia have rallied to defend their country from threat of war by Italy” asserted the _Leader-Post_.

Coverage of the war front by the Canadian press underscored the fact that ordinary Ethiopians were prepared to take up arms to defend their nation against Italian aggression. Their Commander in Chief was none other than the Emperor Haile Selassie himself.

Ethiopian warriors penetrated into the imagination of Westerners in innumerable ways. During the Christmas shopping season in 1935, the Italo-Ethiopian war caused an unforeseen disturbance to the toy market. On November 4, 1935 _The Toronto Star_ declared that the “Toy Soldier Trade” was upset by Ethiopia. Toy manufactures in North America were

---

389 Ibid.
392 “Toy Soldier Trade Upset by Ethiopia: Demand for Ethiopian Figures is Great, but manufacturers cannot meet it”, _The Toronto Star_, November 4, 1935.
bombarded with demands for Ethiopian military equipment and figurines that they could not meet. During one interview, a frustrated department store representative stated: “all we hear is Ethiopia- Ethiopian tanks, they want Ethiopian soldiers, Arabs on camels, and models of Ethiopian villages to bomb”.\(^{393}\) His frustration stemmed from the fact that newspaper accounts affirmed that “they all look different and all weapons are different”. The toy mass manufacturing industry of the day struggled to overcome the challenges of making a regiment of Ethiopian soldiers that all looked different.\(^{394}\) Nonetheless, the demand was so great from young boys that toy soldier sculptors were tasked with working on ideas in order to meet the Christmas rush.\(^{395}\)

At the same time as news coverage of the front lines placed an emphasis on the valor of warriors and ordinary people at war, efforts to dispel steadfast perceptions of Ethiopians as warlike were also underfoot. “Sometimes we hear that Ethiopians are “warlike” asserted Uncle Ray’s column in \textit{The Halifax Herald}.\(^{396}\) However, this characterization of Ethiopians was proclaimed as unfair. On the Ethiopian plateau, people had a long tradition of avenging wrongs toward them, and it was hardly fair that they should have been “persuaded to withhold their fire while they witness an enemy advancing and invading their own homes”.\(^{397}\)

The misguided prevalent assessment that Italy was not going to win the war, because Ethiopia was both historically and geographically impenetrable held steadfast. The principal argument that the Italian army had no chance because Ethiopia was better-
suited to guerilla warfare, did appear in various iterations. Accounts of the climatic temperament of the region impacting the movement of soldiers were imbined with a notion that “nature” could protect Ethiopians when all else fails. The deep-seated nature of this wide-held perception is exemplified by reminisces of the Canadian political representative in Geneva, Walter Riddell. In his 1947 memoir World Security By Conference, Riddell lamented that “apart from his oil-fuel driven land and air equipment”, he along with many others “believed that the Italian soldier was no match for the Abyssinian warrior.” In 1935, the prevalence of the impenetrable fortress argument as justification for the inactions of the League of Nations and so-called allies from the West was problematic on several fronts. Italy had weapons capable of mass destruction which seriously impeded the ability of Ethiopians to win any large-scale war without being seriously scathed.

In the end, one cannot help but wonder if the revenge narrative, along with Ethiopia’s Biblical legacy was in fact a handicap for the Ethiopians during the 1934-36 period. With many wistful declarations that the Ethiopians were going to win in 1935, it would appear that Western governments and populace were absolved from the guilt of inaction, because in the end God would help the Ethiopians. The Italians bombed hospitals generating international outcries; but the outcries were too little too late. Italian forces presented the bombings as legitimate forms of reprisal during the 1930s. Since then, the targeted bombardment of medical facilities operated by different Red

402 “Army on March to Hit Italians: 200,000 Ethiopians to Strike Invading Force in South, Djibouti Hears of 10,000 Ethiopian Casualties by Gas and Other Bombs”, The Gazette, Montreal, October 14, 1935, Front Page.
Cross Societies has received some attention from historians. The little reprimand that the Fascist regime received at the time speaks volumes to the lengths the international community was willing to turn a blind-eye to war crimes against Africans, with misguided hopes of averting a Second World War.

2.12 Conclusions

War and politics dominated Canadian front pages through 1935. Loyalty, crime and violent death came in for a share of attention, but for the most part the opinions of telegraph editors across the country reflect significance of the Italo-Ethiopian war in the world generally and of politics in the Canadian field.

The proliferation of Canadian interest in Ethiopia hinged upon intersections in political events (domestic and international), the leisure and intellectual activities of the middle-class and the engagement of the media. The political cachet of the conflict between Italy and Ethiopia translated into cultural confluence during this period. The end result was that citizens across the Canadian socio-scape engaged in several forms of discourses pertaining to Ethiopia and Ethiopians in the press, on the podiums of Sunday services, private clubs and conventions (the trades congress) or the local university and high-school debate teams. Consequently, the Abyssinian Crisis and the ensuing Italo-Ethiopian war served as catalysts for the mass permeation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity throughout Canada during this early period of the twentieth century.

Contrary to preceding historiographical assertions, it was not just The Winnipeg Free Press, The Canadian Forum, and the French speaking press in Quebec that were

---


engaged in debates about the Italo-Ethiopian crisis.406 Canadian conversations and engagement related to the Italo-Ethiopian affair were far more copious than that. Publishers and producers met the demand for “the latest news” on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict by trying to provide the most insightful, intriguing or sensational coverage related to the topic, whether it was freshly written or reprinted from another source. Subsequently, in the 1934-36 period, the name Ethiopia became integrated into the vernacular of ordinary Canadians interested in learning more about a foreign war that had imminent implications to their own livelihoods. This was how Ethiopia became of Canadian concern.

Canadian historiography on the Italo-Ethiopian affair argues that ultimately Canadians chose “Alberta, Not Abyssinia”, but that argument was solely based upon the economic and political considerations of Canadians in this period, and therefore only tells part of the story of Canadian engagement with the Italo-Ethiopian affair.407 According to a Canadian Press survey conducted in December of 1935, the top best world newsbreaks of 1935 cited the death of Will Rogers and Wiley Post as number one, followed by Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia as number two, the King’s Jubilee as number six and the application of sanctions against Italy as number seven.408 Conversely in Canadian domestic news: the Dominion/ Federal election was number one, followed by Social Credit victory in Alberta as of second importance, the Regina riots as third and the Canada-US trade pact as fourth.409 The correlations between interest in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and the Dominion election of 1935 are paramount to understanding why, and interpreting how Ethiopia was of Canadian concern in 1935. Conversely, this period of the twentieth century is critical to interpreting representations and perceptions of Ethiopians within Canada, and the rest of the world which prevailed for more than half of the twentieth century.

406 Bothwell et al., argue that during the 1930s it was primarily the Winnipeg Free Press and Canadian Forum that were engaging with international news, in Canada, 1900-1945, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987): 297.
407 Norman Hillmer and J. L Granastein, from chapter title “Alberta, Not Abyssinia, 1930-1939”, in Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World into the Twenty-First Century.
409 Ibid.
At the core, both the Italo-Ethiopian wars (1896 and 1935-36) were the fulcrum of the Pan-Africanist movement of the 1930s. Several Pan-Africanist movements of the early twentieth century were already premised on race consciousness, racial uplift and solidarity centered around Ethiopia. Historian S.K.B Asante poignantly argued:

"conscience of belonging to the African continent and the Negro race and the awareness of membership in that distinctive race, and the desire to maintain the integrity and assert the equality of that race were reinforced by the conception of Ethiopia." 410

In the 1935-36 period, rhetorical solidarity with Ethiopia influenced Black political culture across the globe.411 Therefore, Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was a crisis for the Black World.412 In the 1934-36 period, the “Black man” the world over was watching what was happening in Ethiopia intently, and conversing about it.413 Tales of an unjust war permeated across the Black countries and communities of the globe, resulting in protests and agitations with varying degrees of intensity and motivation.414 East African colonies of Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika, Egypt, southern Africa, and the West Indies orchestrated protests. 415 The Ethiopian crisis served as impetus for the growth and development of West African nationalism aimed at dismantling the structures of colonialism in Africa.416 Black communities in America, Britain, Europe and Canada engaged in both passionate and practical expressions of pan-African consciousness and action.417 The preceding legacy of “Ethiopia Unbound” earned even more credence

414 Asante, 4.
415 Ibid., 2.
416 Ibid.
417 Ibid., 4.
during this moment in time.

The fervor of the period and the growing momentum of race-based support from the Canadian public is muted within most official government records. However, in alignment with S.K.B Asante’s findings in West Africa, the Canadian press is an insightful source of information on race relations throughout Canada and the world, public opinion on matters of race, public action committed to race-based activism, and on the widespread implications of Pan-Africanism sentiments across the globe. 418 On the road to war, the Canadian press integrated editorials forewarning that a localized East-African conflict had the potential to permeate outwards. From South Africa, Jan Christian Smuts, a Boer War veteran “gave warning to the world” that an impending Italo-Ethiopian war “may strike a spark which will explode the powder keg of relations between blacks and white throughout Africa.” 419 The argument was that a war in Ethiopia would have repercussions in adjoining British territories and contribute to intensification of “black-against-white feeling.” 420 Aggression against Ethiopia was widely believed to have had the potential to incite “the allegiances and fortunes of three hundred million natives of the “dark” continent.” 421 In August of 1935, A. R. Thompson publicly declared to a Montreal audience that in the event of an Italo-Ethiopian conflict, “every white man in Africa hopes that Italy will win”. 422 A prominent mining man and MP in Rhodesia, Thompson declared to Canadians that if “Italy falls, the coloured population of Africa would at once assume that the white man’s power was on the wane”. 423 Hence, even if the personal sympathies of most white men were with the Ethiopians, Thompson argued that these same white men were faced with the realization that an

418 Asante argued that: “a country may be on the verge of revolution yet not a hint of it appears officially. But the Press, if not deliberately silenced, speaks with no such muted voice; the undercurrents officials conceal, bubble openly in the newspapers” in Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941:5.
420 Ibid.
422 “Fears Trouble If Abyssinia Defeats Italy”, The Toronto Telegram, August 6, 1935:
423 Ibid.
Italian defeat “would be just the spark that would send the African natives beserk”.\footnote{Ibid. *Also – “South Africa’s Dark Races ‘Lined Up Behind Ethiopia’: Will be Embittered if Britain Discriminates Against The Negus”, \textit{The Toronto Daily Star}, September 16, 1935: Second Section, 1.} The race implications of the Italo-Ethiopian war also reverberated in a Canadian context.

It was not just uprisings in Africa and the Caribbean countries that white leaders had to worry about. Blacks in Britain, America and Canada were equally incited and engaged with the cause. Evidence of this incitation exists in multiple facets. For example, the Canadian press ran a handful of columns outlining the tense situation caused by the African war in New York. “Tense situation in Brooklyn Due to African War” cried an \textit{Ottawa Citizen} headline, describing a fight which broke out between Blacks and “Italian sympathizers at odds over the conflict”.\footnote{“Tense situation in Brooklyn Due to African War: Fighting Breaks Out Between Negroes and Italian Sympathizers at Odds Over Conflict”, \textit{The Ottawa Citizen}, October 4, 1935: 9.} The politics of power within a geo-political paradigm played out within localized contexts. A noteworthy example is the parallel to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict which existed in the sporting world during the same period. African-American boxer Joe Louis had several high profile fights with white opponents which captivated public attention, and garnered comparisons to the ongoing Italo-Ethiopian/ Haile-Selassie vs. Mussolini public debates raging around the world.\footnote{“War Pushed Into Background In Britain By News Of Fight”, \textit{The Ottawa Evening Citizen}, Wednesday, September 25, 1935: Cover Page. “Joe Louis, Haile Selassie---Big News of 1935, Tumble in 1936; Joe in Comeback”, \textit{The Chicago Defender}, Saturday January 9, 1937: 1.}

In Canada, there is also evidence that the Italo-Ethiopian conflict raised questions of racial allegiance. Social mobilization and advocacy for the Ethiopian cause was across color lines. On August 4, 1935, several hundred Black Canadians attended a “protest meeting” in Montreal.\footnote{“Montreal Negroes Uphold Ethiopia: Many Whites Attend Protest Meetings”, \textit{The Globe (Toronto)}, Monday August 5, 1935: 2.} The meeting supported the Emperor Haile Selassie on his stand, “terming Premier Mussolini’s action in Ethiopia as unwarranted and ruthless aggression”.\footnote{Ibid.} Two resolutions were adopted from this meeting. The first was addressed to the Emperor Haile Selassie, in support of the dignified manner in which he was
“upholding the integrity and independence of his nation”. The declaration was accompanied by the pledged moral support of the Montreal Negro Community. The second resolution was directed to the British government. The group wanted the British government to utilize all of the “resources at its command to uphold international law and to protect Ethiopia from the “unlawful and unjustified attack” of Italy. Black Canadians living in Cape Breton County, Nova Scotia were also rallying their support for the East African nation. Although not permitted to fight for Emperor Haile Selassie, they gathered every Sunday at the African Orthodox church to devise ways in which they could assist. By December 6, African Canadians from Cape Breton had raised over $350 which was scheduled to arrive in Ethiopia for medical supplies, via the legation in London, England.

Examples are also available from Ontario. In Toronto, B.J. Spencer Pitt, barrister, and Rev. J.T. Dawson, pastor of the British Methodist Episcopal Church sought out permission from the city’s police commissioner to hold a tag day to raise funds for medical supplies to be sent to Ethiopia. The two were representing the 500 people of color who met on Sunday October 13, 1935 and unanimously decided to assist in the medical relief of Ethiopia. Medical supplies were also collected by Toronto children. Groups of “white and colored children affiliated with the Children’s aid to Ethiopia

---

429 Ibid.
430 Ibid.
431 Ibid.
435 Ibid.
committee” were featured in *The Toronto Star* in recognition of their fundraising efforts. The committee was comprised of the Colored Women’s Cooperative Council, the B.M.E Church, the U.N.I.A, the Grant A.M.E. Church Mission band, the Baptist Church and the Toronto Children’s Council. 436 The message was clear: Ethiopia and Ethiopians mattered to contingents of the Canadian populace and they took action to demonstrate this fact.

Ultimately, both the Canadian government’s refusal and the public reluctance to be engaged in a foreign war, did not detract from Canadian interest in remaining informed about the Ethiopian situation and consuming information about the country and its peoples. Ethiopian history had political and cultural cachet in 1935. Subsequently, Italy’s march to war in 1935 was frequently articulated as a plan doomed to fail, with many religious subject matter experts across colourlines arguing with conviction that “Ethiopia would not be defeated in the present conflict”. In this vein, various members of Evangelical missions stationed in Ethiopia spoke up during the conflict to articulate their assessments of the East African nation and its peoples, as well as lobby for political and public support in raising medical supplies. 437 Missionaries were critical to the proliferation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during this period.

When the situation in Ethiopia got worse, Canadian missionaries ignored directives from their government to return home. 438 The commitment of Canadian missionaries to Ethiopia was evident. 439 At the time of Italian invasion in 1936, there 80 members of the Sudan Interior Mission stationed in Ethiopia. 440 Nine of the eighty

439 “To Help Ethiopians: Woman Missionary Plans Own Medical Unit”, *The Gazette*, Montreal, October 29, 1935, 8.
440 Letter from Ernest Jones (Secretary, Sudan Interior Mission) in response to O.D. Skelton’s inquiries (Department of External Affairs, Ottawa), March 1, 1938. RG25-Vol. 1835, LAC and “Soudan Mission Given $60,000 By Italians”, *Ottawa Journal*, March 3, 1938 in RG25-Vol. 1835, LAC.
missionaries stationed there were Canadian, one of whom was murdered by bandits during the war and another who died of natural causes. Missionaries were aware of the dangers with which they were faced, yet, they opted to stay and fulfil their pledge to their mission of proselytizing in Ethiopia, and supporting the victims of war. Representatives of the Sudan Interior Mission wrote to the Canadian Federal government to ascertain the safety of their loved ones, and underscoring the pervasive belief in the importance of the work of the Evangelical missions in East Africa. These unexplored facets of Ethiopian-Canadian relations come to the fore in the next chapter of this thesis, as prominent Canadians such as Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson acknowledge the longstanding friendship of the two countries forged by these early connections.

By March of 1937, American and British Missionaries were accused of spying and creating “spiritual and political disorder” by the Italian Fascist press. Without any irony, it was declared by the Fascists state that religious missionaries were a “grotesque and insidious phenomenon of foreign disorder”. In spite of Italian attempts at complete domination of Ethiopia, resistance to Italian occupation was widespread causing the Fascist occupying force considerable angst. Consequently, American and British

441 Ibid.
444 “Spying Is Charged To Missionaries: Italian Fascist Editor Assails British and Americans in Ethiopia”, Montreal Gazette, April 10, 1937. RG25-Vol. 1835, LAC.
445 Letter from Ernest Jones (Secretary, Sudan Interior Mission) in response to O.D. Skelton’s inquiries (Department of External Affairs, Ottawa), March 1, 1938. RG25-Vol. 1835, and “Soudan Mission Given $60,000 By Italians”, Ottawa Journal, March 3, 1938 in RG25-Vol. 1835, LAC.
missionaries were expelled out of Ethiopia. The circumstances became so precarious that by 1938, the Sudan Interior Mission was expropriated by the Italian occupational government in Ethiopia. The mission owned a marquis Leper hospital in Furi, a headquarters building in the capital Addis Ababa, along with 12 mission stations throughout Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{447} The Sudan Interior Mission was forced to accept Twelve Thousand Pounds Sterling ($60,000 CAD) for all of the buildings and furnishings within, and leave the country immediately after the signing over of the properties.\textsuperscript{448} The Canadian Department of External Affairs closely monitored the process.\textsuperscript{449} Within one year of Italian occupation, there was no room in Ethiopia for the presence of Protestant Missionaries outside of the minority Italian ones. Canadian Press engagement with the Italo-Ethiopian affair subsided significantly after this period.

Overall, for many Canadians, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis entailed “various stages of fear, exhilaration, hope and despair”\textsuperscript{450}. From July of 1935 until January of 1936, Canadians coasttocoast were immersed in, and consumed information about the intricacies of Ethiopian topography, the mosaic of Ethiopian peoples and society(ies), Ethiopian cultural institutions, and the historicity of the ancient empire through multiple mediums. As a consequence of Ethiopia being at the heart of the issues \textit{du jour} during a pivotal time in both world and Canadian history, this chapter revisited the discourses of the 1934-36 period to demarcate this time as the first critical intersection in Ethiopian and Canadian history during the twentieth century, which facilitated the widespread infusion of stalwart Ethiopian identities into the Canadian political and cultural vernacular.

The most enduring representation from this period is of Ethiopia as the “test case”. The Italo-Ethiopian crisis was a litmus test for inefficacy in collective international

\textsuperscript{447} Letter from Ernest Jones (Secretary, Sudan Interior Mission) in response to O.D. Skelton’s inquiries (Department of External Affairs, Ottawa), March 1, 1938. RG25-Vol. 1835, LAC and “Soudan Mission Given $60,000 By Italians”, \textit{Ottawa Journal}, March 3, 1938 in RG25-Vol. 1835, LAC.

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid.


action through the League of Nations. As a member state, Ethiopia was failed the peace and security promised by membership in the League to all other sovereign nations. In June of 1936, the Emperor stood before the League of Nation Assembly in Geneva to “claim the Justice due to his people”. 451 He pointed out to the member states that assistance was promised to his people some eight months prior, when “fifty nations asserted that aggression had been committed in violation of international treaties”. 452 The Emperor prayed that almighty God “may spare nations the terrible sufferings” that had been inflicted upon his peoples. 453 His words would echo in the aftermath of World War II, when many leaders of the world hailed him as a prophetic figure who predicted the calamities that would ensue around the world. 454 When the League of Nations convened in September 1936, the effort to prevent the seating of an Ethiopian delegation failed. Emperor Haile Selassie was there in person and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and Senator Drummond of Canada “made a point of cultivating a friendship with him” that was not forgotten for the remainder of his time in power. 455 By autumn of 1936 there was de facto recognition of Italian occupation of Ethiopia. 456 Haile Selassie’s presence at the League of Nations Assembly in 1936 was marked in history as both his “saddest” and “greatest” hour. 457

League discussions surrounding official recognition of the occupation by the Council continued until May 12, 1938. On May 12, a decision was made in council for individual members “to determine their own respective attitudes” toward the issue. In November 1938, the United Kingdom granted du jure recognition of the King of Italy as

452 Ibid.
453 Ibid.
455 Ibid.
456 Ibid.
the Emperor of Ethiopia. A majority of other Western governments, aside from the United States, offered the same recognition. The Emperor Haile Selassie continued to reside in England and work toward the restoration of his throne until World War II. The tide turned towards the Emperor’s favor, when Italy joined forces with Germany in July of 1940 and England renewed a commitment to assisting the Emperor once more.  

By January 1941, the Emperor was back in Ethiopia. He made a triumphal entry into Addis Ababa on May 5, 1941. On the following day, Prime Minister Mackenzie King cabled his “warmest congratulations on the restoration of his kingdom”. On February 23, 1943 Canada recognized the Imperial Ethiopian government as the legal and rightful government of the country.  

The second most enduring legacy of this period is the perpetuation of the preceding cultural and political cache of “Ethiopia unbound”. Ethiopia’s historical symbolism preceded the 1934-36 period, but it was reinvigorated by the Italo-Ethiopian conflict and gained significant traction across social spectrums. The symbolism of the Ethiopian nation still proved powerful enough to transcend all political and geographic boundaries in the early twentieth century. The concept of “Ethiopia unbound” was inextricably intertwined with the Emperor Haile Selassie and his representation of an uncontested legacy, steeped in the narrative of a 3000-year-old Christian empire. The 3000-year-old legacy encompassed both Axum and Adowa. Combined with his political role in Geneva, it was in this period that Haile Selassie transcended into something more than a mere mortal. Images and representations of the Emperor preceding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict were already distinguished. After he was reinstated into his throne into 1942, Emperor Haile Selassie ascended from being a celebrity political icon, into the realm of prophets and legends. Memory of the Emperor was of course surrounded by his loyal subjects and warriors. Under Haile Selassie’s leadership, images of loyal Ethiopian
subjects fighting under one banner prevailed as a metaphor for strength in Ethiopian unity for much of the twentieth-century.
CHAPTER 2: Portrayals of Symbolic Affluence: Ethiopian Participation in Expo 67 and the Predominance of Representations Rooted in History, Politics and Culture

On April 30, 1967, a crowd of about 2,000 spectators gathered outside of Parliament Hill to hear Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and Governor General Roland Michener pay tribute to the Emperor Haile Selassie for his “constant efforts for peace,” and his symbolism as “a personality of courage, wisdom and humanism”. Michener’s words of praise for the Emperor echoed in the Prime Minister’s proclamation that:

*The people of Canada have long been admirers of your dignified courage, your wisdom and your indomitable resolution as a leader of your country for so many years. In times of tribulation and in times of triumph you have shown yourself to be a real leader of your people.*

Pearson and Michener’s words of welcome and praise for the Emperor spoke volumes to his ubiquity within the Western psyche during the middle of the twentieth century. By 1967, the political and historical gravitas of the Abyssinian Crisis (1934-35), the second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-36), the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-41), along with his infamous appeal to the League of Nations in June of 1936, had all carved him a place as one of the most distinguished political and historical figures of the twentieth-century. Emperor Haile Selassie’s state visit in 1967 was his third, and most prominent visit to Canada. The Ethiopian Emperor came to Canada to preside over events scheduled for Ethiopia’s National Day (May 2) at Expo 67 in Montreal. More than sixty Heads of State were expected to partake in Canada’s Centennial celebrations at Expo 67,

---


463 Attesting to his unprecedented level of fame and popularity arising from the 1930s, Haile Selassie was featured on the coveted cover of *Time Magazine* twice within the same decade. Once during his coronation in 1930, and the other as “Man of the Year” in January of 1936.
and Haile Selassie was the first to arrive. He was also one of the most memorable. Both the Emperor’s state visit and Ethiopian participation in Expo 67 signify an indelible intersection in Canadian and Ethiopian history. Governor Michener encapsulated this intersection in his pronouncement that: “Canada could rejoice, that an Emperor whose country traces its history back 2000 years was helping a youthful Canada mark the 100th anniversary of confederation”.465

Ethiopian participation and portrayal at Expo 67 is a milestone event in the study of the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada. This second major intersection in Canadian-Ethiopian history is integral to demonstrating the stronghold of depictions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians which flourished during the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-36. When Emperor Haile Selassie arrived in Canada, newspaper headlines across the country touted the arrival of the “King of

---

“Kings” and “The Lion of Judah”. Also introduced several times as “the 255th descendant of King Solomon and Queen Sheba”, the Canadian press reinforced the lineage from which he came. The Ethiopian monarchy was still presented and perceived “as the most obvious and influential marker of Ethiopian identity and nationhood”. The legacy of the Ethiopian monarchy from the late nineteenth-century still permeated discourses on both the Emperor and his country throughout the 1960s. Expo 67 marks the zenith of mass awareness of hallmark Ethiopian identifiers such as: the Emperor, Axum and Adowa.

Predominant representations of the East-African nation at Expo 67 remained almost the same as they had been nearly thirty-years before, when Ethiopia and Ethiopians first penetrated the imagination and vernacular of ordinary Canadians. A living embodiment of the historical legacy that Governor Michener spoke of, Emperor Haile Selassie was integral to both the construction and permeation of an Ethiopian identity during the period of Expo 67. To the world, the Emperor represented the familiar legacy of an empire at the crossroads of history and civilization; a narrative which flourished after the 1930s. In the aftermath of the Italo-Ethiopian war and occupation, Haile Selassie was still the personification of his nation, and the embodiment of the character and dignity of his peoples. Representations of Ethiopian modernism at the

---

world-class exhibition were illustrative of the ways in which the nation and its people had been imagined and narrated, both visually and textually, since the late nineteenth-century: ancient, Christian, unconquered, and politically and culturally pertinent.

Ethiopian participation in Expo 67 affirmed Ethiopia’s historic and steadfast symbolism, in praxis to the West. Alternately referred to as the “World’s Fair”, Expo 67 was created in commemoration of one-hundred years of Canadian confederation. The world-class exhibition was held on the St. Lawrence Seaway in Montreal, Quebec, from April 28 – October 27, 1967. The marquis event was the highlight of the nationwide celebrations marking Canada’s Centennial across the nation.470 Through Expo 67, Canadian nationalist fervor provided an opportunity to showcase Canadian ambitions of internationalism. Distinguished as the “only independent pavilion of any African nation south of the Sahara”, the Ethiopian Pavilion at Expo was Ethiopia’s first autonomous exhibition at a World Fair.471 Pearson notably decreed that Ethiopia was one of only two African countries which constructed their own pavilion at the World Exhibition in Montreal.472 All other African countries which participated in the Exhibition were grouped together in the Africa Place Pavilion, specially constructed and curated by the Canadian government. Ethiopian political, historical and cultural affluence during this period is evidenced at the intersection of Canadian political and cultural interests in hosting the exhibition, and Ethiopian political interests in participating.

This chapter outlines the ways in which Expo 67 serves as a historical benchmark in the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada. The manner by which Ethiopian participation was elicited for Expo 67, coupled with the rhetoric surrounding the official nine-day state visit of the Emperor illustrate the


472 Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Remarks at the Official Welcome of his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie to Ottawa Parliament Hill, Sunday, April 30, 1967 found in LB Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.43; LAC.
international political and cultural relevancy of the East-African nation during this period. By outlining the tenets of the Exhibition and the politics of Ethiopian participation, this chapter demonstrates the confluence of political and cultural objectives in facilitating the proliferation of steadfast narratives of Ethiopian identity. In the memory, this chapter will conclude by examining observations of both the Emperor and the pavilion at Expo. The final section of this signals the shifts in perceptions of Ethiopian identity which are examined in the next chapter.

3.1 Why Expo? Contextualizing The Scale and Significance of Ethiopian Participation at the World’s Fair

Canada received unanimous authorization from the International Exhibitions Bureau in Paris to hold a “general exhibition of the first category” in 1962. The International Exhibitions Bureau (IEB) established in Paris in 1928, was responsible for defining and enforcing standards governing the timing, format and operations of international exhibitions. In its conventions, the IEB discerned between exhibitions, fairs, salons and shows; strictly regulating the frequency of World Class Category One Exhibitions like Expo 67. There were only two previous Category One world exhibitions. The first was in 1935, and the second was 1958, and both previous large-scale Exhibitions were held in Brussels. Expo 67 had the distinction of being the first large scale exhibition to come to North America. As such, Expo 67 was marked with much fanfare and excitement, both nationally and internationally.

Expo 67 engaged all facets of Canadian society, from the government to young school-aged children. At the macro level, the federal government and the Expo Corporation played critical roles in perpetuating Ethiopian participation and representation at Expo. The Canadian embassy in Ethiopia was integral to ensuring that the Ethiopian government remained committed to the Canadian Exhibition. The engagements of the provincial governments of British Columbia and Montreal during the

---

474 Ibid, 2.
475 Ibid.
Emperor’s statewide visit provide insight into the political and cultural importance of Ethiopia during this period. Municipal governments and representatives such as Mayor Jean Drapeau of Montreal were instrumental figures in facilitating the royal treatment of the Emperor and his entourage during his country wide journey. At the meso and micro level, intermediary figures like Father Lucien Matte of Quebec (of the Jesuit Order), and Social Credit MP for Red Deer Alberta Robert N. Thompson, demonstrated stronghold of relationships that prominent individual Canadians had forged with the East-African nation. The vitality of relationships forged between Canadian missionaries like Father Lucien, military servicemen like Thompson and several other ordinary Canadians who served as schoolteachers in Ethiopia in this period culminated into the underscored diplomatic “friendship” between the two nations. At the micro-level, the memories of individual Canadians who were at Expo also attests to the political and cultural cachet of the East African nation. These memories also speak to the racialized and temporal nature of Ethiopian cultural and political affluence.

Expo 67 was a highly orchestrated event infused by the dominant ideological propensities of the Western world during this period.\textsuperscript{476} Billed as an anti-New York Model from the outset, Canadian organizers reiterated time-and time again that Expo was not merely a trade fair.\textsuperscript{477} When questioned about why the Canadian venture would be any different than the recent 1964 World’s Fair in New York, Canadian organizers spelled it out. World Fairs like the one in New York were characterized as mere marketplaces where producers had opportunities to offer samples of their goods at general intervals.\textsuperscript{478} The Fair in New York they argued, had no stated educational aim, it principally facilitated the buying and selling of goods.\textsuperscript{479} On the other hand, the organizers of the Canadian exhibition aimed to adhere to, and even exceed the

\textsuperscript{477} “Some Difference”, Expo Digest: Canadian Corporation For the 1967 World Exhibition, Vol.1, No.8, August 26th, 1964: 3. Expo 67 Collection, Box # RG69 Vol.29, Library and Archives Canada.
\textsuperscript{478} Canadian Expo Commission, “Man and His World-Theme of Expo 67”, Theme Pavilions:2.
\textsuperscript{479} Ibid.,1.
conventions of the IEB. The IEB mandated that the immediate aim of any Category One Exhibition was “to demonstrate, through originality of presentation, the value and usefulness of the number of articles assembled”.480

With many diverse nations and ideas represented, the Canadian Exhibition sought to serve as “a chronicle of the contemporary era.”481 Themed as “Man and his World”, Expo 67’s humanistic outlook, was inspired by the world renown novel of the same name, penned by French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Expo 67 was designed to be universal and educative in its outlook.482 Expo 67 was concerned with telling the master narrative of “man and his world and the story of civilization”.483 All the participating national and private participants in the Exhibition related their presentations to one or more aspects of the central theme.484 In crafting the master narrative of human progress, *Avant Garde* exhibition techniques were utilized to dramatize humankind’s achievements in “the realms of ideas, culture and science”.485 Commissioned by the corporation coordinating Expo 67, visitors were offered a cutting edge and unparalleled cinematic experience in a pavilion dedicated to showcasing “Man the Hero”.486 The integrative *Labyrinth* experience has since been proclaimed as “nothing less than an attempt to encapsulate the journey of human life in a 48-minute show.”487 Ethiopians were conspicuously integrated into this inventive chronicle of human life. Symbolism spelt out the message at Expo.488

Expo 67 was significantly fashioned by both cultural and political overtures. It was widely recognized that Pierre Dupuy, the Commissioner General of Expo, was a “man of letters”.489 “Men of Letters” like Dupuy were scholars of a vintage era vested in

---

480 Ibid., 2.
483 Ibid.
485 Ibid.
488 Robert Fulford, This Was Expo (Toronto: Mclelland and Stewart Limited, 1968): 161.
master narratives of human civilization. For Dupuy, a career diplomat, the most important element to his role as Commissioner General was to secure the participation of various countries in order to have “a total display of the cultures that together make up human civilization” present at Expo.\(^{490}\) Dupuy worked tirelessly travelling the world to recruit as many nations as possible. Upon his return from such a trip encompassing North Africa, and the Middle and Far East, Dupuy declared that his trip was productive reminding him “of a \textit{Thousand and One nights}”; an atmosphere which he wanted replicated at Expo 67.\(^{491}\) In alignment, Dupuy wanted “the first alphabet from Damascus” to be shown at Expo, alongside “works from Tehran dealing with the third millennium before Christ”.\(^{492}\) The end result that Dupuy envisioned was that Expo visitors would be able to follow civilization “from the stone knife to today.”\(^{493}\) As a world renowned ancient civilization, Ethiopia fit neatly into Dupuy’s vision for Expo.

At a welcome banquet held for the Emperor in Montreal’s City Hall, Mayor Jean Drapeau declared that, “it is indeed most fitting that one of the world’s oldest countries should be the first to salute Man and his World.”\(^{494}\) The involvement of Canadian political figures like Dupuy, Pearson, Michener and Drapeau in the coordination and execution of elements of Expo 67 shaped interpretations of the meaning and symbolism of Ethiopia. Preceding Ethiopian participation in Expo 67, representations of Ethiopian history and identity in Canada were mass circulated through the lens of imminent political conflict and crisis during the Italo-Ethiopian affair of the 1930s. Canadian leaders like Pearson, Michener and Drapeau did not forget the significance of the East-African nation to the world during one such period. During the period of Expo 67, those same prolific narratives about the East-African nation and its peoples were invoked

\(^{490}\) Ibid. *Dupuy’s illustrious career as a diplomat was referenced several times. A World war II hero, he was widely praised for his success in bringing so many disparate countries into a single location amicably. “only Dupuy”, said an Expo official “could have made so many hostile countries agree to come together as neighbors on a mere 700 acres of land”. “The Boss At The Fair: Pierre Dupuy”, The New York Times, Saturday, April 29, 1967: 16.

\(^{491}\) “\textit{Thousand and One Nights}”, Expo Digest: Canadian Corporation For the 1967 World Exhibition Vol. 1, No. 25, December 23, 1964: Cover Page. Box # RG69 Vol.29, LAC.

\(^{492}\) Ibid.

\(^{493}\) Ibid.

through the lens of cultural and historical symbolism. Ethiopia’s cultural and historical symbolism in 1967 was predicated on familiarity with world history, and inextricably intertwined with Ethiopian political relevancy during the 1960s.

3.2 Of Canadian Interest: Ethiopian Participation and Canadian Political Aspirations of “Internationalism”

The Canadian public and government’s fervor and engagement with Expo 67 fit into the paradigm of “internationalism as a political project” highlighted by Historian Sean Mills.495 The primary purpose of the exhibition, it was widely argued, was to show the important changes that had taken place in the world since the previous exhibition which was held in Brussels in 1958.496 Canada planned to host the world in 1967, eager to showcase the progress of the world: “not in spirit of competition, but in the spirit of the theme of the universal and international Exhibition”.497 “In an age when international rivalries threatened to overflow into space”, it was maintained that the Government and people of Canada could take “justifiable pride” in demonstrating through Expo that international cooperation was “not merely a noble ideal for Man and His World but an eminently feasible enterprise.”498 Expo 67 reflected Canadian political ambitions to carve a niche for the nation as a middle-power or “peace keeper” within a post-World War II

495 Sean Mills, The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 63. * Mills argues that there was a profound social consciousness in this period of what was going on in the rest of the world. He gives the specific example of French-Canadian engagement with the Algerian War. Research for this chapter also found Mills’ assertions evidenced in the news features of 1967 alongside the editorial and comment sections of the major dailies. Canadians were particularly engaged with the anti-Vietnam war protests in the United States, the occupation of the California State Legislator by the Black Panther party, and the potential for war in Nigeria.
496 “Business Columnn: Expo 67 Makes Grand Preparation; Official Explains Objectives”, The Ethiopian Herald, Sunday, November 6, 1966. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
and Cold War geo-political paradigm. “Man and his world” was designed to tell the story of “man’s hopes and aspirations”, along with “his ideas and endeavors”. Expo 67 deliberately shifted focus away from raging rivalries between nations to shine a light on “the interdependence of men of all nations”. The intentional emphasis was “on the common bonds uniting the peoples of the world rather than on the differences, real or artificial”, which tended to divide them. This emphasis on commonalities and bonds was particularly evidenced in the rhetoric surrounding the Emperor Haile Selassie’s 9-day Canada-wide state visit.

Ethiopia’s foreign policy of “theoretical non-alignment” was favored by Canadians. Over the course of the previous decade, Ethiopia had secured substantial foreign assistance amounting to $220 million USD from various sources for economic development. The principal donors to the country during this period were the United States, West Germany, Sweden, USSR, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Israel and United Nations. Within a Cold War geopolitical paradigm, Ethiopia’s relations appeared as “pro-western”. Ethiopia had good relations with the United States in particular. American foreign policy in the Horn-of-Africa was vested in preventing Ethiopia from “forming a dependency on the Sino-Russian bloc”.

---

499 A point underscored best by Robert Bothwell in Pearson: His Life and World, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978. Bothwell argued: “to justify Canada’s active participation in international planning alongside the great powers, a new conception of Canada’s international status was required. The category of “middle power”, the intermediate between insignificance and arrogance, was invented. Because of his excellent connections in Washington, Pearson was able to keep the Canadian government informed of the course of the discussions among the Americans, British and Russians”, pages 32 and 34.


501 Ibid.

502 Ibid.


504 Ibid.

505 Ibid.

was Ethiopia’s main source of aid during this period. The relations between Ethiopia and France were characterized as longstanding, and notably enhanced by the visit of President de Gaulle to Ethiopia in August 1966, and the conclusion of a Franco-Ethiopian accord. The French and Ethiopians were sympatico in their desires to “maintain the status quo in French Somaliland (Djibouti)”. While Ethiopia received economic aid from the USSR during this period, the fact that the USSR was training and financially supporting the army of the Somali Republic impaired relations between the two countries significantly. The prevailing assessment of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs was that Communism had made no inroads in Ethiopia, and that the key African nation maintained a “pro-Western attitude.” Ethiopia was in alignment with Canadian foreign policy objectives both within the African continent and the rest of the world.

With the Canadian government and organizers of Expo 67 were eager to adhere to the tenets of representing “Man and his World”, African participation was of great significance to Canada’s world class exhibition in the 1967, for both political and cultural reasons. Expo 67 provided opportunities to “strengthen Canadian relations with the countries concerned.” In addition to the national pavilions at Expo, the accompanying state visits by heads of state were “of some significance” to Canadian external relations, particularly for the first timers, and “renewed interests like Ethiopia”. The African continent was of particular importance to Canadians during this period. Nurturing existing links with both Commonwealth and French speaking countries on the continent were flagged as priorities, for a Canadian government interested in fostering further “economic cooperation and political consultation on major world problems”. Concurrently, good relations with Ethiopia were important to Canada because it was “a

---

507 Briefing Papers prepared for the Emperor’s state visit entitled “Foreign Relations” in Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967: page 5. LAC.
508 Ibid.
509 Ibid.
510 Ibid.
511 Ibid.
513 Ibid., 3 and 17,
514 Ibid., 13.
large African country”, playing a leading role in African affairs.

The Canadian Government opened an Embassy in Ethiopia in April of 1966, appointing M. Michel Gauvin as Ambassador. This decision, it was argued reflected the significance of Ethiopia “among independent African nations, the eminence of the Emperor among world statesmen, and the fact that Addis Ababa is the seat of the organization for African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa.”

When reporting news of the Emperor’s arrival in Quebec, Le Devoir proclaimed that Canada–Ethiopia relations were:

"l'importance politique de l'Ethiopie n'echappe d'ailleurs a aucunes grandes capitales qui ont depuis longtemps dans ce pays des missions diplomatiques importantes".

The language of cooperation and friendship extended throughout the duration of the Emperor’s 9-day statewide visit is integral to the interpretation of Canada-Ethiopia relations and representations during this period. In his welcome address, Governor Michener proclaimed to the Emperor that Canadians were proud of “the warm and friendly relations” which had united their two countries for so long.

The prism of Ethiopian recruitment and participation at Expo 67 elucidates the existence of long-standing multi-scale and bilateral relationships between Canadians and Ethiopians; which both framed and shaped articulations of Ethiopian history and identity during the 1960s. Intermediary Canadian interests in Ethiopia, addressed in chapter one of this


518 Quote from Michener’s welcome speech to Haile Selassie from John Gray’s article “Emperor En Route To City”, The Montreal Star, May 1, 1967:2.

thesis were established from the late 1920s onwards, largely unhampered or unofficially facilitated by the Canadian government. The longstanding relationships of individual Canadian missionaries, businessmen and educators to Ethiopia had resulted in the establishment of what was frequently described as “good” foreign relations between the two nations. As a prime example, Canadian prestige in Ethiopia was described as quite high in 1967, primarily due to work of Canadian educators who played instrumental roles in the organization of the Ethiopian educational system since the restoration of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1943. Pearson reaffirmed this point in his welcome remarks to the Emperor, emphasizing that “their presence has forged a link between our two countries, which Canada cherishes.” To put matters into perspective, by 1968 there were 955 Canadian teachers listed as working throughout the African continent. The Canadian community in Ethiopia alone was 117 in 1967, almost exclusively comprised of missionaries and teachers.

In the period between 1943-1967, Canadians occupied the offices of President of the University College, Director General of Education and Director of Provincial Education in Ethiopia. Among the persons widely recognized for fostering Ethiopia-Canada relations in 1967 were prominent Canadians Father Lucien Matte of Quebec representing the Jesuit Order, and Social Credit MP for Red Deer Alberta Robert N. Thompson, who initially went to Ethiopia in his capacity as a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Thompson and Father Matte played integral roles in post-war

---

520 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations”, Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967, L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC.
521 “The Following is the Text of a Message of Welcome to his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, from the Prime Minister.” Press Release from the Office of the Prime Minister, October 7, 1963: 2. Library and Archives Canada, LB Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.26. LAC.
524 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations”, Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967, L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC.
military and education development in Ethiopia, in turn fostering favorable forms of bilateral Ethiopia-Canada relations.\textsuperscript{526} Thompson joined the Emperor and his entourage for part of his cross-country travel from Winnipeg to Ottawa, giving the general Canadian public impressions of deep-rooted affinity between the nations and fostering a rhetoric of Ethiopian political and cultural relevancy to African autonomy.\textsuperscript{527} Pearson recognized Thompson’s integral role to relations with Ethiopia in his welcome speech to the Emperor.\textsuperscript{528} These multivariate relationships between individual Canadians and Ethiopia also facilitated the permeation of venerable symbols and markers of identity during Expo. For example, members of the Ethiopian Committee relegated to organizing facets of their participation in the World Class Exhibition called on Thompson “as an old friend of Ethiopia”, to facilitate the participation of the Ethiopian folk dancers on Ethiopia’s National day at Expo.\textsuperscript{529} A matter of no small importance, as the entire premise of

\textsuperscript{527} Photo Caption: “Emperor Haile Selassie Stopped in Winnipeg Saturday Morning for 45 minutes on his way to Expo 67. “Robert Thompson MP for Red Deer, who spent 10 years in Ethiopia, joined the Emperor’s party in Winnipeg for the ride to Ottawa. The last three cars on the CN’s No.2 train easy were occupied by the emperor.” Winnipeg Free Press, Saturday, April 29, 1967: Front Page.
\textsuperscript{528} Pearson’s quote: “I am very happy to point out that the relations between our two countries are on very warm and friendly basis, though our two countries are so far apart geographically. Our background and our traditions are very different; but our friendship is very real. One of the reasons for this, as I am sure Your Majesty, you will appreciate as much as I do, is that some of our Canadians in recent years have had the privilege of serving in Ethiopia. Among the outstanding persons to have that privilege is, of course, our mutual friend, Robert Thompson.” For further details see: “Transcript of the Prime Minister’s Remarks at the Official Welcome of his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie to Ottawa Parliament Hill, April 30, 1967.” LB Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.43, LAC.
\textsuperscript{529} Letter from Gordon Hilker, Artistic Director, World Festival, to Jean Cote, copied to Giles Lefebvre and K.L Marshall, Re: Ethiopian Folk Dancers, dated November 2, 1966 found in File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651 and Letter from Hapte Selassie Taffesse addressed to the Hon. R.N.Thompson, Social Credit National Leader, dated August 2, 1966. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, Library and Archives Canada. *Given his relationship with the Emperor, Thompson was also considered a subject matter expert on Ethiopia and the Emperor, at times fielding questions regarding the Emperor. As a prime example, Thompson was quoted by The Globe and Mail “speaking to the rule about submitting questions three days in advance”. Clearly regarded as a subject matter expert on Haile Selassie, the article states that “Robert Thompson, Social Credit
soliciting global participation and engagement in Expo hinged upon the tenets of Canadian foreign diplomacy during this period.

Haile Selassie also recognized and praised the role of Canadian teachers in his country during the press conference in Parliament, whilst adding, that “he hoped relations with Canada could be expanded by further Canadian assistance in educational facilities and in developing Ethiopian natural resources.” It was a well-known fact that the emperor’s visits to North America were among other things, intended to open the way for development of Ethiopia’s natural resources through the investment of capital in mining and agriculture and the opening up of communications. Hence, the Emperor’s visit to Expo became an appropriate occasion to initiate bilateral discussions premised on previous business. Talks held between the Emperor and members of the Pearson Liberal government in Ottawa on May 1, resulted in announcements of Canadian government initiation of “a programme of technical assistance.” Valued at about $100,000, the goals of the program were centered on “educational aid”, with details to be worked out by the Canadian Embassy in Addis Ababa and the Ethiopian Government.

Notably, this announcement of formal aid to Ethiopia marked an important departure from the Canadian practice of restricting its African aid to Commonwealth or French speaking countries. Canada initiated a formal programme of aid to African

---

534 Ibid. The honorable David MacDonald also pointed out the challenges of this legacy in his experiences as the Famine Relief Coordinator and Ambassador to Ethiopia and Sudan in the 1984-88 period. Author interview March 28, 2017.
Commonwealth countries in 1960, alongside Britain, Australia and New Zealand.\textsuperscript{535} Dubbed the “Special Commonwealth Africa Assistance Plan (SCAAP)”, the program was first limited to educational and technical assistance, but in later years grew to include “capital projects, particularly pre-investment and feasibility projects to allow the recipients to make better use of their limited resources”.\textsuperscript{536} Canadian assistance to French-speaking African countries started in 1961, with an initial commitment of $300,000 in grant funds earmarked for largely educational purposes annually.\textsuperscript{537} Development loans and capital aid were added to this programme in the 1964-65 period.\textsuperscript{538}

In addition to Canadian internationalist ideals, an awareness of domestic Canadian political tensions and considerations during this period is key to understanding the rhetoric surrounding the participation of Ethiopia and other African countries. Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloane argue that while “the concept of nation remained central throughout Expo 67”, the array of national pavilions and exhibitions displayed at Expo were situated against a “backdrop of Canadian and Quebecois nationalisms”.\textsuperscript{539} The solicitation and facilitation of African participation at Expo 67 fit into the paradigm of underlying English and French-Canadian aspirations and tensions. In early 1965, Pierre Dupuy declared that “in addition to the cultural presence of the Negro countries of Africa, individually or in group pavilions”, he hoped to realize in Expo 67 “a project that should be of particular interest to Canadians as citizens of a British country whose two official languages are English and French”.\textsuperscript{540}

Dupuy was the right person to bridge the divide between French and English

\textsuperscript{536} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{537} Ibid.,142.
\textsuperscript{538} Ibid. R.O. Matthews argued that greatest growth of the programme occurred in the 1968-69 fiscal year, as a direct result of a seven-week tour made by the Honourable Lionel Chevrier to seven French-speaking countries in Africa. “In an effort to give greater recognition to its bilingual and bicultural character, the Canadian government agreed to finance 49 projects to be implemented over five years at the cost of $40 million.”
\textsuperscript{539} Kenneally and Sloane, Expo Not Just a Souvenir, 7.
\textsuperscript{540} “Master Salesman Dupuy Turns to Africa, Latin America”, \textit{Expo Journal: Man and His World}, February 1965, Vol 2, No1: 3
Canada and present a face of Canadian solidarity internationally. He was the Canadian Ambassador to France prior to accepting his role as the Commissioner of Expo, and his previous role was an asset to his international recruitment efforts. Dupuy already had “the pleasure of meeting many personalities” in those diplomatic circles, and fostered a pathway to the possible inclusion of African countries “during his mission to the newly independent countries of Africa on behalf of Canadian government in 1960.”

State welcomes and other matters of diplomacy were part and parcel of intricate matters of representation during Expo 67. Domestic tensions were inferenced by the English and French-Canadian Press alike. During Haile Selassie’s visit to Quebec, reports alleging that Premier Daniel Johnson’s government deliberately breached protocol. Premier Johnson met Emperor Haile Selassie as he stepped down from a plane at Ancienne Lorette Airport, sparking accusations of breaches in protocol outlined by the Federal government. In accordance to protocol, the Governor General and the Prime Minister extended the official greetings and hospitality of the government for state visitors, only in Ottawa. The federal government was working closely alongside Dupuy as the lead Diplomat and Drapeau as the Mayor of Montreal to extend the provincial greetings. Johnson’s failure to abide by the protocols outlined by the Federal government was viewed as an exemplar of Quebec’s bid for “special status”. Some protocol experts claimed that the Emperor Haile Selassie should have been “greeted by Lieutenant Governor Hughes Lapointe or some other representative of the crown”, leading Johnson to explain the “lapse” by saying: “I invited him, so I should

541 Ibid.
544 Ibid.
545 Ibid.
546 Chevrier, Report of the Commissioners General For Visits of State 1967, 1 and 3.
greet him.” After all, the government of the Province of Quebec had made known its wish to invite all such Heads of State or Government to visit Quebec City. The invitation was previously conveyed through Canadian representatives overseas. Press reports about Ethiopia in French Canada were also framed through the prism of “an old friendship”. Drapeau affirmed this fact in his assertion that close ties linked the two countries together, and that “French speaking Canadians in particular, show deep interest in Ethiopia.” During his visit to Quebec, it was notably pointed out that: “the Emperor and his hosts spoke in French, a language of commerce in Ethiopia where the national language is Amharic.”

French Canadian interest in Ethiopia was very visible during Expo. In addition to the rhetoric and diplomacy of politicians, a group of 30 boys and girls from College St. Croix demonstrated this fact whilst waiting for the Emperor to arrive at the country’s National Pavilion. Much like his visits through other provinces in Canada, during the Emperor’s first visit to the Expo site he was met with enthusiastic crowds. In this particular instance, the school aged children were poised waiting in front of the Imperial Ethiopian Folklore Ensemble. The two groups struck an instant friendship in song and

---

548 Ibid.
550 Ibid.
dance as the Emperor arrived. The 24 dancers and singers in the Folklore Ensemble
were on the steps of the pavilion dressed in their traditional white robes, with “some of
the men carrying wicked looking spears.” The students started to clap and cheer upon
the Emperor’s arrival, leading what grew into a round of applause by 2,000 onlookers.
The Ethiopians grinned and waved to the crowd. The students then broke out into a
French version of the song “Hey Friend Say Friend.” The Ethiopians applauded and
followed with song number from the repertory they were scheduled to present nearly
three hours later. The crowd loved it, so much so, that the students came back with
“Vive La Canadienne”. The next thing the spectators knew, the Ethiopian folk ensemble
had sung and danced most of their program. Applause came from all around, even
from a mini rail load of spectators passing overhead. The guards and pavilion staff
stood on the steps and sang and chanted cheerily as the Emperor went inside the pavilion:
“they even applauded politely when a group of young Quebec Separatists in the throng
sang Separatist songs.”

From the outset, Ethiopia did not neatly fit into the Expo Corporation’s
recruitment and grouping of African countries as recently decolonized, nor as members
of the Commonwealth or the La Francophonie. Instead, Ethiopia’s positionality was
liminal falling into the category of African states which “shared linguistic and cultural
interests with Canada”. Canadian ambitions in coordinating the exhibit were intimately
intertwined with Canadian foreign policy objectives. Canadian successes in the
recruitment of several disparate nations to participate in Expo was attributed to the fact

that “Canada, a middle power with neither an embarrassing past nor threatening ambitions”. 563 Canada was “the champion of international solidarity without discrimination”. 564 The Canadian government was eager to showcase to both its own citizens, and the rest of the world, that its position in the world was rapidly evolving. Canadians were extremely proud of their successful recruitment efforts and the diversity of international participation that they had secured for the exhibition. As Commissioner of Expo and Chief Diplomat for Expo, Pierre Dupuy travelled the entire world almost six times in the period between September 1963-April 1967. 565 By 1965, Dupuy was exhilarated by his diplomatic successes. He declared:

At the beginning, when I predicted that 70 countries would participate, I was thought to be over optimistic. Today I am tempted to speak of 80, and even more. 566

As a consequence, Dupuy was dubbed a “Master Salesman” with 28 countries officially confirmed at the end of 1964, and another 57 tentatively booked. 567 Dupuy proudly affirmed then that Expo 67 would not “be an American Fair”. 568 The Canadian objective to include as many countries of the world, particularly the recently decolonized African countries was reflective of the political and cultural ethos of the time, and attested to the historical and political relevance of Ethiopia to Canada and Canadians in 1967. It is within this framework of Canadian government engagement and pride with the World Class Exhibition that Ethiopian participation and representation became of political relevance. 569

563 Ibid.
565 Ibid.
566 Ibid.
567 Ibid.
568 Ibid.
3.3 Selling Expo 67 and The Politics of Ethiopian and African Participation

On March 31, 1965, Ethiopia became the 41st country, and the ninth African nation, to announce its participation in the world-class exhibition.\textsuperscript{570} By 1967, the international geo-political landscape had dramatically changed across the world and the organizers were keen to display the changes.\textsuperscript{571} Expo took place at the pinnacle of decolonization on the African continent, and Expo organizers thought it prudent to both represent and celebrate this phenomenon at their international extravaganza. Between 1957, the year of Ghanaian independence and 1962, twenty-five new African states had emerged.\textsuperscript{572} On the eve of Expo 67’s opening, reporter Terry Haig declared in the \textit{Montreal Gazette} that: “it was no secret among the members of the Expo press corps that one of Commissioner General Pierre Dupuy’s pet projects was to lure as many of the new African nations as was humanly and fiscally possible to the Montreal fair.”\textsuperscript{573} From recruitment to implementation, African participation in Expo 67 reflected Canadian internationalism objectives as well as domestic political considerations.

Getting African countries in line with and committed to the world exhibition took a considerable amount of effort on the part of the Expo 67 organizers. In spite of recruitment for Expo 67 starting shortly after the Montebello conference of March 1963, amidst the changing concerns and priorities of the countries on the African continent, the

\textsuperscript{571} Kenneally and Sloane, “Introduction: Dusting Off the Souvenir”, 6.
courting process to secure African participation continued until late 1966. 574 Both Pierre Dupuy and K.L Marshall made several individual and joint trips to the continent to “sell” African countries on the idea of participating in Expo 67.575 First category exhibitions like Expo 67 mandated that the countries invited to participate were responsible for building their own pavilions.576 Hence, within the paradigm of Man and his world, it was a matter of expectation and prestige that the foreign nations who participated in Expo 67 “were probable to build their own pavilions.”577

Consequently, Ethiopia as a third world country, alongside the other invited African nations, was initially invited with expectations of payment for participation in Canada’s Category one World Class exhibition. This invitation would initially prove to be unattractive to many of the African countries solicited, including Ethiopia. Subsequently, Expo organizers were forced to reconsider their recruitment approach, in order to try and secure as much representation as possible from the world. “To sweeten the bait”, the Canadian government elected to build the oft referenced Africa Place Pavilion with its own money.578

From the outset, Ethiopia did not fit tidily into the paradigm of the “Black African” experience presented at Expo. In an Expo 67 Opening Booklet issued by the Montreal Star, the Africa Place Pavilion was characterized as “A Continent in 15 Cells”,

574 The courting was no secret- “Exhibition Official Due To Arrive Here”, The Ethiopian Herald, October 30, 1966. Department of External Affairs Clipping including in the Materials on the Ethiopian Pavilion at Expo, File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. LAC.
575 In a feature article entitled “Sells Expo in Africa”, it was reported that “K.L Marshall, a liaison officer with Expo’s department of Exhibits, is off on another journey, this time to various commonwealth countries in Africa”. “Sells Expo in Africa”, Expo Digest: Canadian Corporation For the 1967 World Exhibition, Vol. 1, No.22, December 2, 1964: 4. Box # RG69 Vol.29.LAC.
capturing the “Drama of Africa”.579 Africa Place is remembered and celebrated as “providing testimony to that continent’s ongoing national liberation struggles”.580 However, prevalent narratives on the East African nation during this period triumphed the fact that the ancient country had been “un-colonized”. And yet, the organizers of the exhibition initially saw it fit to place Ethiopia amidst other “newly liberated states”. This discrepancy is integral to understanding why Ethiopians would eventually elect to self-represent at the world-class exhibition.

Furthermore, Africa Place mirrored prevalent conceptualizations of the continent influenced by historian Arnold J. Toynbee. Africa in the period of Expo 67, was widely understood in terms of Toynbee’s hypothesis of “two Africas”. Africa was widely perceived as a continent physically and politically delineated by “the Sahara and Libyan desert and the Abyssinian plateau”, and “the tropical rainforests of West Africa and the ferns of the Upper Nile”, with one acting as “a second barrier behind the first”.581 This physical distinction was, and still is, imperative to interpreting prevalent discourses and conceptualizations of the continent today.582 Irrespective of European colonialization across the continent, it was widely understood that “the northern third of Africa” was “far more closely connected with Asia and Europe”.583 In contrast, the southern two-thirds of the continent was, and still is, commonly interpreted as the “one and indivisible African continent.”584 Recruitment efforts for Expo 67 were reflective of this paradigm. By 1967, Ethiopia had strategically positioned herself at the political crossroads of this ubiquitous geographical and political delineation of the continent. In April of 1966, Ethiopia was confirmed as part of the Africa Place project alongside: Senegal, Upper Volta, Togo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Niger, Tanzania and

580 Kenneally and Sloane, 6.
582 Similar arguments regarding the historical, cultural and political delineations of identities on the continent (in the present) are made by editors Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu throughout their introduction to the edited collection The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging. (Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2005).
584 Toynbee, ibid.
Madagascar.” 585 Notably, for “matters of prestige” Ethiopia opted out of a designated slot in the collective pavilion in late 1966, electing to self-represent and build its first autonomous exhibition at the world’s fair. 586

Designed by Australian-Torontonian architect John Andrews, the Africa Place complex was set up to mimic a large village that would offer both “unity and diversity” under one exhibit. 587 The thinking was that each participating nation would be afforded sufficient exhibit space to express their individual character, sovereignty and culture, whilst promoting their trade, economic development and tourism. 588 During the early planning stages of Expo 67, K.L Marshall penned a directive letter outlining prudent information to shaping an effective “African Sales Campaign”. 589 In spite of numerous states achieving their independence from their colonial masters by 1964, Marshall wrote: “Africa has not basically changed during the last 25 years.” 590 He attributed such stagnancy to the high degree of illiteracy, disease, political and racial tension endemic on the continent. Espousing a prevalent assessment of affairs in Africa during the period, Marshall asserted: “very few of the 24 new states which have emerged as new countries during the last few years have existed long enough to prove their economic and political stability”. Moreover, Marshall argued that between North and South Africa, there were “30 independent states whose economy could never be expected to invest the necessary funds to build individual pavilions”. 591 Shortly thereafter, Marshall recommended that the

588 Ibid.
590 Ibid.
591 Ibid.
Planning Department be authorized to proceed with a corporation-financed African House project, enabling the Exhibits Department to be in a position to solicit individual participation to fulfill designated spaces within a single unit. Collectively, Marshall argued, “under one roof the cultural, industrial and economic development of these newly emerged countries could form one of the most dramatic and engaging pavilions of Expo’67.” 592 Expo billed the “African deal”, as an appropriate but less costly manner for to facilitate the participation of African nations in the exhibition.593 The Expo Digest (official guidebook to the exhibition) advertised that: “a special and important place has been reserved at Expo 67 for the newly independent nations of Africa”.594

The courting process for securing African participation in Expo 67 was a long and delicate one. For much of the recruitment process, Canadians were extremely mindful of eliciting participation, without alienating or daunting the nations desired. In October of 1966, members of the Canadian Corporation for 1967 World Exhibition sought permission from Ethiopians, “to make a special presentation on Expo films and publicity material” at an Organization for African Unity (OAU) meeting in Addis Ababa.595 The response from Ethiopia to this proposal from key Canadian figures involved in the recruitment process was measured. After careful consideration, Pierre de Belleuille Esq., (Director of Exhibits) advised that such a presentation at that time, would likely be counter-productive to the efforts made to obtain further African participation in Africa Place.596 Belleuille recommended that Expo not send anyone to Addis Ababa at the time of the OAU meetings, as the sense was that “real efforts were being made with the

592 Ibid.
594 Expo Digest (official guidebook), :147. Found in Expo 67 Library Collection at LAC.
595 letter to M. de Bellefeuille responding to a telegram from same to Mr. Gualtieri from October 3, 1966 asking for permission to “take advantage of the OAU Meeting in Addis Ababa in November to make a special presentation on Expo films and publicity material, possibly presented by M. Dupuy.” letter to M. de Bellefeuille responding to a telegram from same to Mr. Gualtieri from October 3, 1966 asking for permission to “take advantage of the OAU Meeting in Addis Ababa in November to make a special presentation on Expo films and publicity material, possibly presented by M. Dupuy.”, LAC.
596 Confidential Letter on Department of External Affairs Letterhead to M. de Bellefeuille, from Pierre de Belleuille, Esq., Director of Exhibits, Canadian Corporation for 1967 World Exhibition, dated October 7, 1966. As found in Place d’Afrique/ African Place files vol 1, LAC.
Africans”.597 Belleuille cited that in recent weeks the Prime Minister had “sent a number of letters to African Heads of State urging them to reconsider their decisions not to participate in Expo”.598 These letters were followed up by the Embassies and High Commissions; and as such the feeling was that African Foreign ministers and Heads of State might resent being approached during their meetings, which were intended “to deal with political problems of great concern on the African continent.”599

Nonetheless, Pierre Dupuy arrived in Addis Ababa on the morning of November 2 and departed on November 8, 1966. Dupuy’s visit to Addis coincided with the opening of the Ethiopian Parliament, the 36th anniversary of the coronation of the Emperor, and the OAU Foreign Ministers and Heads of State conferences.600 The Ethiopian Capitol city was rife with activity during this period, and preparations made by the Canadian embassy ensured that Dupuy would have a successful trip. To ensure success in Dupuy’s efforts to secure new participants and retain existing ones, press releases were issued in both English (Ethiopian Herald of October 30) and French (Addis Soir of November 1) prior to Dupuy’s arrival in Addis.601 The Canadian Embassy in Addis also secured interviews with a number of representatives of African countries attending the OAU conference. Expo organizers also pre-arranged for Ato Hapte Selassie, the Ethiopian Commissioner General for Ethiopian participation in Expo, to display the Maquette of the Ethiopian pavilion at the conference. Ambassador Michel Gauvin asserted that Maquette would be useful in attracting the attention of the other African countries who had not yet decided to participate.602 The Maquette was placed in prominence at Africa Hall during the OAU Summit Meeting from October 29 to November 9, along with other materials.

597 Ibid.
598 Ibid.
599 Ibid.
600 Pierre Dupuy. “Visit to Addis of Commissioner General of Expo 67”. Unclassified letter to the Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa from The Canadian Embassy, Addis Ababa. Also received by C. Lacombe (Director of Foreign Exhibits) As found in Place d’Afrique/ African Place files vol 1, LAC.
601 Ibid.
602 Letter from Michel Gauvin, (Canadian Ambassador to Ethiopia) to K.L Marshall (Liaison officer of Expo 67), File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
providing information on the Ethiopian Government’s participation in Expo 67.  

The intricacies and politics of creating an African experience at Expo were implicit in planning correspondences, where it was made clear that African nations, including Ethiopia, had to be convinced of the value in participating in the world-class exhibition. Dupuy was hard at work in Addis in November of 1966, because there were still doubts by African nations regarding the value of their participation to them. When asked in what way the exhibition could be of practical benefit to developing countries such as Ethiopia, Dupuy asserted that the participating countries would have opportunities “to meet prominent businessmen from other parts of the world”.  

From the outset, Dupuy had argued that “for the young independent states”, seeking to develop a tourist industry, there was no advertising campaign that could equal their presence at the great international gathering in 1967. Thus, antithetical to the espoused aims and objectives of *Man and His World*, participation in Expo was primarily sold to Ethiopians and other Africans as a “way of attracting future business investments”, and as “a great aid” to “the field of tourism”. Subsequently, marketing for both Africa place and the Ethiopia Pavilion were true to Dupuy’s assurances. African leaders had to be convinced of the material benefits, or the economic and political values to taking part in the proposed Canadian extravaganza. As such, in actuality, the material realities of African participation were not twined into the post-World War II ethos espoused by the Expo Corporation; but rather grounded in tangible and potentially lucrative aspirations of newly decolonized African nations to integrate their new economies into a post-colonial global economic framework.

The arduousness of Canadians selling participation in Expo to Africans in general, is inherent in the Ethiopian recruitment and participation experience. In spite of their confirmation of participation in March of 1965, the Ethiopians decided to renege on their participation.

---

603 Ibid.
606 Ibid.
commitment to participate in June of 1966. On behalf of the Ethiopian Committee struck for making prepartations for the country’s participation in Expo, Gauvin sent a Telex to the Expo Corporation advising that the Ethiopians were making a request for an individual pavilion, outside the parameters of the Africa Place Pavilion, but preferably nearby. The reason cited by the Ethiopians was that “it would be desirable to have larger space then the 536 sq ft already offered them”.

It was unsurprising that the initial reaction from the Expo Corporation to this news was negative. With less than one year to go before the opening of the Exhibition, this change was nothing short of a nightmare for the organizers. As a means of appeasement, the Expo Corporation offered a larger space within the Africa Place exhibit. On July 19th 1966 K.L Marshall responded to Gauvin indicating that an individual pavilion was not possible at that time, considering the fact that the construction work had already started on Africa Place. Instead, to placate the integral African nation, the Canadian corporation offered Ethiopia a larger space within the Africa Pavilion. Ato Bekele Endeshaw, the Ethiopian Minister in question, had initially requested this same larger allotment during an earlier visit by K.L Marshall to Addis Ababa. With an increase from 1,024 sq feet to 1,536 sq.ft., the proposed space was costed at an additional $31,000. In a subsequent letter to Ato Bekele Endeshaw, Gauvin recommended that Ethiopia accept the larger space offered for two reasons. First, Gauvin argued that the

---

607 Pierre DuPuy, Visit to Addis of Commissioner General of Expo 67”. Unclassified letter to the Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, to Ottawa from The Canadian Embassy, Addis Ababa. Also received by C. Lacombe (Director of Foreign Exhibits). Place d’Afrique/ African Place files Vol 1, LAC.
608 Telex from Michel Gavin to MontExpo MTL DE OTT 192, regarding Ethiopian participation and referencing previous correspondence in this regard from June 29/ 1966. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
609 Ibid.
610 Telex from K.L Marshall presumably to Ambassador Gauvin dated for July 20,1966, in reference to Tel 192 (response to Telex from July 19 from Gauvin). File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey,132651, LAC.
611 In this communication K.L Marshall points out that although a figure of E$31,000 additional would be necessary to pay for the increased space, there is already E$25,000 available. By reducing the amount to be spent on personal subsistence in Montreal, it would not be too difficult to come by the remaining E$6,000. Letter addressed to Ato Bekele Endeshaw Minister of Commerce and Industry, from Canadian Ambassador Michel Gauvin, dated May 2nd, 1966. Found in file # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
Corporation’s offer of a larger area would give Ethiopians the desired increased space for exhibition purposes. Second, the new placement “would not place Ethiopia in an inferior position alongside other countries taking space in the Africa place.” The rationale was that a larger area could give Ethiopians similar status of an individual pavilion, within this same location. The caveat was that the Ethiopians would have to respond fast, because concrete pouring in this area was taking place soon.

When initially advised that an individual pavilion would not be possible at such a late stage in the exhibition planning processes, the Ethiopians opted “to be absent and to prepare themselves for future participations”, instead of taking “an insignificant part”.

Subsequently, Gauvin reported to the Expo Corporation that the inter-Ministerial committee formed in Ethiopia had made the decision not to participate, “because it felt Ethiopia was not rpt [sic] not prepared and had no rpt [sic] no adequate means and personnel to make participation worthy of Ethiopia”. At the behest of Dupuy and the Expo Corporation, Gauvin worked hard to understand why such a decision was taken, and to figure out how it could be reversed. On June 8, 1966, Gauvin wrote to the Expo Corporation to inform them that he had an unsuccessful fifty-minute meeting with the Ethiopian Minister of Commerce and Industry, who after first evading reasons for the decision not to participate, explained that financial considerations had nothing to do with their decision. Subsequently, Gauvin wrote to Dupuy to advise him that: “soyez assuré que je ferai tout mon possible pour faire renverser la décision du government Ethiopien de ne pas participer a l’Expo”.

---

612 Ibid.
613 Ibid.
614 Telex from K.L Marshall presumably to Ambassador Gauvin dated for July 20th, 1966, in reference to Tel 192 (from July 19 from Gauvin). File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
615 Telex From Michel Gauvin to TT External 146 Immed De Paris Info TI MontExpo DE OTT EMB Paris (Dupuy) Ref Mytel 142 Jun 6, Ethiopian Participation Expo 67. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
616 Ibid.
617 Ibid.
618 Official Letter from Michel Gauvin ambassador to Ethiopia in Addis Ababa to Pierre Dupuy, Commissaire generale de l’exposition universelle, Ambassade du Canada, Paris France. Found in file # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
News of the reversal of the decision to participate by Ethiopians caused a frenzy amidst Canadian Expo organizers; triggering a series of internal urgent messages. Expo officials were trying to find ways to mitigate for the Ethiopian decision. The objective was to convince the Ethiopians to change their minds, so that other African countries would not follow suit. One of the other imminent concerns was that Ethiopia had already been “allotted choice location on basis of formal acceptance” and that “withdrawal at this stage would seriously disrupt construction of African plaza.” Gauvin made a follow-up appointment with the Ethiopian Minister of Commerce and Industry to have this “decision reversed”, whilst making a simultaneous request from the Corporation to provide him with the immediate cable list of all African countries participating.

Gauvin’s frustration with the back-and-forth regarding Ethiopia’s commitment to participate in Expo was evident. At a reception hosted by the Committee of 24, Gauvin sternly conveyed Canadian “surprise, disappointment, and annoyance at reversed decision” to Minister for Foreign Affairs Ketema Yifru, Minister of Commerce and Industry Endalkachew Makonnen, and to the Minister of Justice Mammo Tadessa. Gauvin informed the Expo Corporation that Ketema Yifru (one of the most influential cabinet ministers) had invoked lack of funds as an excuse, but that information did not appear “au courant.” The fact that the Emperor frequently shuffled his members of cabinet was a source of real annoyance to the Canadians. The hope of organizers was that their initial contacts and allies were still within the realm of influencing a decision.

---

619 To this effect a Message from J. Asselin- Expo 67 to R. Gualtieri- info division – External OTT, indicates: “The following countries are participating in African plaza. Niger, Upper Volta, Togo, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Congo (Leo), Chad, Gabon, Madagascar, Senegal, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ghana.” Found in file # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopia No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
620 Ibid.
621 Telex from Michel Gavin, Addis Ababa to MontExpo, MTL 142, De OTT Ethiopian Participation, dated June 6/66, Found in file # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopia No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
622 Telex From Michel Gauvin to TT External 146 Immed De Paris Info TI MontExpo DE OTT EMB Paris (Dupuy) Ref Mytel 142 Jun 6, Ethiopian Participation Expo 67. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
623 Ibid.
reversal in the recently shuffled Ethiopian cabinet. To this effect, Marshall wrote to Gauvin to ask of news of whether Ato Bekele Endeshaw would remain within the ministry of Commerce and Industry. Marshall hoped that Endeshaw could influence a decision reversal, as he had “appeared to be very interested and keen on his country’s participation in Expo’67.”

On June 15, Gauvin met with the Ethiopian Prime Minister and handed him an aide memoire covering past negotiations between the two governments to read over very carefully. Gauvin reinforced Canada’s pleasure in learning of the Emperor’s delight that the government of Ethiopia had found ways to participate Expo through Africa place in March of 1966. Gauvin then reaffirmed the fact that the former Minister of Commerce had as recently as June 7th confirmed the Ethiopian decision to participate in Expo as final. Gauvin prudently referenced the fact that Ethiopian participation at Expo 67 was the first business transaction between the two countries since the opening of the Canadian Embassy in Ethiopia. The Ethiopians required further placation to participate, and Gauvin continued to press to ensure that the Ethiopians would remain committed to being present at Expo. When he reported back to the Expo corporation, Gauvin asserted that he did not conceal the fact that unless the recent decision not to participate by the Ethiopians was reversed, a bad impression would be left on Canadian authorities. Gauvin’s assessment was that the prime minister appeared genuinely concerned by problem, and that he was unaware of new proposal by the Canadians to facilitate Ethiopian participation “on considerably lower cost basis”. It appeared that

624 Letter addressed to Michel Gauvin from K.L Marshall, dated 9th May 1966. Found in file # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Box Ethiopie No.2. Expo Collection, LAC.
625 Telex to Externl 160 Immed Info: EMBParis (For Dupuy) MntExp De Ott, Ethiopian Participation in Expo, (From Michel Gauvin in Addis Ababa), stamped in receipt by General Manager on June 17, 1966. Found in file # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
626 Ibid.
627 Ibid.
628 Ibid.
629 Gauvin explains that the PM was under the impression that the project costs were too high: “He said in French the equivalent of quote “I thought this was a project costing over a million USA dollars” unquote. He then added he would review question of participation with his cabinet colleagues and promised to let me know their final decision within a few days.” Telex to Externl 160 Immed Info: EMBParis (For Dupuy) MntExp De Ott, Ethiopian Participation in Expo, (From
Gauvin was successful in securing Ethiopian participation after this particular conversation.

Thereafter, the Ethiopians were literally courted into participating in Expo. Upon special invitation, members of the Ethiopian Royal Family made a site visit to Expo in Montreal on June 25, 1966. At the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal, his Highness Ras Mangasha –Seyoum questioned K.L Marshall about the details of the Ethiopian participation and requested a lot plan of the “Africa Place” project for study, after the group’s visit to the site. During the briefing and luncheon for the royals, Dupuy alluded to the “negative attitude of the Ethiopian government to participation” and expressed hope that there could be “a change of heart within the next few weeks” It was clear that Canadians were willing to leverage both soft and hard diplomacy tactics to preserve Ethiopian participation in Expo.

On the other side of the globe, at the continued directive of Canadian Expo officials, Gauvin invested a lot of time and energy into ensuring Ethiopian participation from the auspices of the Canadian Embassy in Addis Ababa. The possibility of Ethiopian withdrawal from Expo was cause for concern amidst administrators for Expo, and Dupuy was kept well-apprised of Gauvin’s efforts in Ethiopia via Telex. The terse nature of correspondences between the various stakeholders is evidence of the importance of securing Ethiopian participation, and the perceived ramifications of a potential Ethiopian pull out from Expo. After the Canada Day reception at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa, Gauvin wrote to Ato Bekele Endeshaw to advise that he had informed Canadian government in Ottawa of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs final decision that Ethiopia would participate in Expo’67.

Conversely, Gauvin wrote to the Canadians to assure them that now that the
Ethiopians were committed, they were genuinely interested in “making a good show” and that the Expo Corporation should try to accommodate them as much as possible. 634 By that point, Ethiopians had already sought advice from French architect Benoit Barnet who was responsible for their pavilion at Paris trade fair.635 Gauvin promptly followed up with the Ethiopians on June 30 to advise the Ethiopians that the Canadians were happy with the Commitment from the Ethiopians.636 He then pressed the Ethiopians to sign the contract and make arrangements for the initial payment of 25 percent.637 Through the enforcement of a signed contract, a firm hand was being applied by the Canadians to secure Ethiopian commitment. By October of 1966, things had taken a significant turn. Ethiopia was once again a committed ally in support of Canadian efforts to recruit other African countries during the OAU summit of late October and early November.

Ethiopian requests for an individual pavilion were fraught with politics of self-representation and image building for the East African nation. Gauvin attributed Ethiopia’s decision to withdraw from Expo 67 to the fact that: “their Department of External Affairs reflects a complex of inferiority characteristic of this country for which pride and prestige are dominant factors in all decisions.”638 Aside from the blatant frustration and paternalism imbedded in Gauvin’s statement, he was not wrong in the fact

634 Telex from Michel Gauvin addressed to Externl 193, stamped received by the Commissariat-general on July 21, 1966, Pierre De Bellefeuille on July 22nd 1966 and signed by C.Lacome and K.Marshall. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. LAC.
635 Telex from Michel Gauvin addressed to Externl 193, stamped received by the Commissariat-general on July 21, 1966, Pierre De Bellefeuille on July 22nd 1966 and signed by C.Lacome and K.Marshall. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
636 Telex from Gauvin to Externl 172 Immed, Info MonExPo De OTT, Ref Mytel 169 Jun 24, re: Ethiopian Participation in Expo. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
637 Evidenced in Letter from Michel Gauvin to Ato Bekele Endeshaw - “now that the decision is final, it would be appreciated if the contract left with your former minister could be signed and sent to me at the earliest possible moment. I should also be grateful if you could let me know what arrangements are being made for the initial payment of 25% mentioned in Mr. Marshall’s letter of March 29”. Source: Letter from Ambassador Michel Gavin to Ato Bekele Endeshaw, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
638 Telex From Michel Gauvin to TT External 146 Immed De Paris Info TI MontExpo DE OTT EMB Paris (Dupuy) Ref Mytel 142 Jun 6, Ethiopian Participation Expo 67. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
that pride and prestige were of the utmost importance to the Ethiopian government in this period. When Expo authorities proposed sending Chief Architect Fiset to explain to the Ethiopian Inter-Ministerial Committee how “Ethiopian contribution could be effective without the necessity of a grandiose pavilion”, Gauvin received no interest or encouragement in facilitating such a visit from the Ethiopians.\textsuperscript{639} Gauvin communicated to the Expo Corporation that Ethiopian requests for a larger space within the Africa Place Pavilion stemmed “from consideration of prestige”, as he had previously mentioned, and that it would be of no use to try to convince them otherwise. When the model of the Ethiopian pavilion was unveiled in Montreal in September of 1966, it was forecasted to be “one of the gayest pavilions of all of Expo” with pride.\textsuperscript{640} Hapte Selssasie Tafessa was in Canada for the unveiling ceremony. He humbly proclaimed that the Ethiopian decision to build an individual pavilion was “motivated by the emperor himself, in recognition of all that Canada has done for Ethiopia”.\textsuperscript{641}

The politics and paradigms of courting Ethiopian participation, and the subsequent representations of the East African Nation and its Emperor at Expo, were not solely premised on fulfilling the espoused ideals of the exhibition. Selling the lofty concept of \textit{Man and His World} to the Ethiopians and other African nations was not as easy a feat for Canadians. In addition to the symbolic value of Ethiopian participation as one of the oldest countries in the world, the presence of the Emperor Haile Selassie was actually testament to the successes of the rigorous political and coordination efforts of the Canadian government and members of the Crown Canadian Corporation for the World

\textsuperscript{639}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{640} Helen Rochester, “Ethiopia Unveils Gay Exhibit”, \textit{The Montreal Star}, September 21, 1966. LAC.
\textsuperscript{641} Ibid.
Exhibition to secure African participation in Expo.

With all of the effort exerted into African recruitment, it was fortuitous that both the opening and closing of Expo 67 were bookended by visits from representatives of African countries. The first by the Emperor of Ethiopia, and the last by the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Congo (Kinshasa). 642 State visits were influential in determining policy and shaping “a Canadian image in other countries”. 643 Consequently, national days at the exhibition were enhanced by the presence of “chiefs of state” and other parliamentarians. These visits were declared of significance in the history of Canadian external relations, “especially for the first timers, and/or renewed interests like Ethiopia”. 644 The purpose of the exhibition, Dupuy proclaimed to the Ethiopian Herald, was “to show that men are getting more interdependent”, and that visitors should come “to the conclusion that what is uniting men is more important than what is dividing them.” 645 In alignment with the ideals of the exhibition, the purpose of national days was to draw attention to each of the 60 countries enlisted to participate, and Ethiopia was first. 646 “In a symbolic sense alone”, The Montreal Star reported, “Haile Selassie makes a distinguished figure, as the first head of state to visit Expo.” 647

3.4 Symbolism in The Emperor’s Welcome

On May 2, Ethiopia’s National Day at Expo, the 74-year-old monarch proved so popular that crowds braved strong winds and low temperatures to pack Place des Nations and surround the Ethiopian pavilion when he visited it. A crowd of 2000 people, including school children from Montreal and Toronto gave the Emperor loud applause as

643 Ibid., 12.
644 Ibid., 17.
645 “Business Columnn: Expo 67 Makes Grand Preparation; Official Explains Objectives”, The Ethiopian Herald, Sunday, November 6, 1966. File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
646 Master Salesman Dupuy Turns to Africa, Latin America”, Expo Journal: Man and His World, February 1965, Vol 2, No1:3. LAC.
the 21-gun salute fired at 15 second intervals. 648 A one-hundred-man Guard of Honor from the Royal 22nd Regiment presented arms and dipped the regimental colors, whilst the Black Watch Band played the Ethiopian National anthem. 649 The Emperor then inspected the guard, and when more applause came from the stands he smiled and waved several times. 650 By noon, the crowd was so deep that the RCMP had to vigilantly keep people at bay. 651 “There is something especially appropriate in the fact that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia should be the first Head of State to be received as a visitor to Expo”, wrote a commentator in the Montreal Gazette: “for Emperor Selassie holds a unique place in the story of Man and his world”. 652 The Emperor’s official nine-day Canada-wide state visit, particularly his presence in Ottawa and at Expo 67 in Montreal, garnered mass political and cultural appeal amongst Canadians eager to see a historical icon and living political legend in their own backyard.

The Emperor’s nine-day Canadian visit began in Vancouver on April 26, 1967, where after his warm receptions in both Vancouver and Victoria, he would board a CN Rail Train to make his cross-country journey to Ottawa, and then Montreal. 653 The imagery and narrative invoked by press reports of the Emperor’s arrival across the country, is compelling enough to elicit pride in the breasts of contemporary Ethiopians who look back upon this period fondly. In Victoria, “spontaneous Human Warmth” overcame the disappointment of a chilling, drizzling day on April 28, “as hundreds of spectators joined official dignitaries in welcoming Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia” to the West Coast city. 654 The charismatic emperor commanded unparalleled admiration during this period. “Isn’t he gorgeous?”, an unidentified woman proclaimed, as the “

649 Ibid.
650 Ibid.
King of Kings, King of Zion, Invincible Lion of the Seed of Judah, and Implement of the Holy Trinity” walked past the gathered spectators, and into City of Hall to be greeted by Mayor Hugh Stephens of Greater Victoria. Representations of the Emperor imbibed with historical symbolism were prevalent during this particular Canada wide visit by the Emperor. The flag of Ethiopia, green, yellow and red surmounted by the Lion of Judah, soared high in front of the City Hall in Victoria. In spite of the inclement weather, hundreds of Victorians waited on the steps of the legislative buildings at Centennial Square, and by the doors of the Union Club, to catch a glimpse of the Emperor being welcomed by Premier Bennett. A ubiquitous political and cultural icon, the emperor, who was celebrating his 74th birthday and 40 years of effectively uninterrupted rule of his nation, “slowly, and in measured cadence, replied to the welcome”. The emperor notably expressed that “he was deeply touched by the friendly reception he had received in Canada”, reaffirming “his friendship with Britain and all its associated nations.”

Widely introduced as the “235th ruler in an unbroken line of rulers”, the legacy that Emperor Haile Selassie embodied in 1967 had first penetrated Western mass consciousness at the close of the infamous battle of Adowa in 1896, and then again during the Italo-Abyssinian/ Italo-Ethiopian conflicts of 1934-36. Many Canadians invoked this historical legacy in 1967. In his brief address, Premier Bennett, “reminded the guests that Ethiopia’s fight against invading Italy in 1935 was a foretaste of the Second World War.” Bennett declared to the emperor: “when most of the world slept, you fought, just as your people had fought the same enemy 40 years before for the same

655 Ibid.
658 “City’s Warmth Touches Visitor”, The Daily Colonist.
659 Ibid.
661 “City’s Warmth Touches Visitor.”
cause – independence.”662 In this same vein, the Emperor received several other glowing tributes as he toured the nation. The welcome of the Emperor of Ethiopia in Ottawa fortuitously coincided with the opening of the new press theatre on Parliament Hill. Pearson declared that he was pleased to open the theatre with introducing a man “whose courage and resolution and wisdom over the years made him admired by all peoples in all countries”.663 He added:

my own mind goes back to those days in the 30s at the League of Nations when the Emperor of Ethiopia gave all men a lesson in dignity and decency and wisdom in the face of great injustice and cruel aggression.664

It was admittedly no small feat for a black man to maintain this type of respect and adoration for over two decades, especially during a markedly tumultuous period of race relations across the globe, and particularly across North America. Discourses of the day indicate that Canadians were attune to race politics. The rhetoric utilized to describe the Emperor Haile Selassie was in stark contrast to the language used to describe several other Black international and political figures of the period.665 Emperor Haile Selassie was depicted and described as dignified. Notably, other prominent Black cultural and political figures frequently in the press in the same period as coverage of Haile Selassie’s visit were negatively depicted as defiant, aggressive, outright militant or too soft to hold-on to long lasting power.666

---

662 Ibid.
663 “Transcript of The Prime Minister’s Remarks at The Opening of The Press Conference Room National Press Building”, May 1, 1967”. LB Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N4, Vol. 43, LAC.
664 Ibid.
666 This analysis is yielded from readings of several newspaper articles on Cassius Clay (Mohammed Ali), Stokley Charmichael and the Black Panthers. Some illustrative examples are: Ed Smith’s “We Have Card- Burners, Heroes – and Cassius Clay”, The Daily Colonist, April 26, 1967: 12; W.J. Weatherby’s “‘Black Power’ Man: Meet ‘the real’ Stokely Charmichael”, The Windsor Star, April 21, 1967: 11; “Cassius Clay Ne Veut Pas Porter L’Uniforme”, Le Soleil, 21 Avril 1967: 8; Heard, Raymond’s “New Mood of Negro Militancy”, The Montreal Star, Friday,
In addition to the flattering rhetoric of political leaders, both the English and French press ran editorials on the symbolism and grace of Haile Selassie. In one such article entitled “The Noble Lion”, The Montreal Star contended that “the name of Haile Selassie automatically evokes the memory of a short, dignified man standing before the League of Nations to plead the case not only for his own country but for a world threatened by aggression.”\footnote{667} That was of course in 1936, but Haile Selassie’s prevalence as a metaphoric and symbolic Lion was proved prescient.\footnote{668} In the aftermath of this historic episode, Premier Bennett synopsized to the Emperor, “your valiant actions in 1935 and ’36, against hopeless odds, wakened the freedom-loving world, however slowly, from its lethargy.”\footnote{669} Hence, it was declared that the Emperor enjoyed the admiration of the Canadian people for his gallant stand against Italy in the 1930’s, resulting in warm receptions to Canada, twice before 1967.\footnote{670}

Many agreed that Haile Selassie won international admiration with his grave defiance of Mussolini’s legions. And when it was all over, some pundits reported, “he went on to gain further respect by introducing reforms that started his country into this century.”\footnote{671} A full-page advertisement in the Montreal Gazette related to the Emperor’s state visit and the Ethiopian Pavilion encapsulated the ethos of the man and his times through the enclosure of evaluations of the Emperor by several world renown political leaders.

\footnote{667 “The Noble Lion”, \textit{The Montreal Star}, May 2, 1967: 8.}
\footnote{668 Ibid.}
\footnote{669 “City’s Warmth Touches Visitor”, \textit{The Daily Colonist}, April 28: 1967: 21.}
\footnote{670 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations”, \textit{Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967}. L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC. *Also see Emperor Haile Selassie’s State Visit to Canada, on Monday October 7, 1963 in “Meet Mr. Pearson”. This CBC Documentary film was produced by Ross McLean “to show a single day in the office of the Prime Minister”. It was filmed a week after parliament resumed under the minority government of Lester B. Pearson, and cameras followed the Prime Minister around on a particularly “busy day”. On his agenda that day were: “dealings with a threatened filibuster, a longshoreman walkout, and the start of a state visit by Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie”. \url{http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/meet-mr-pearson} }

\footnote{671 “The Noble Lion”, \textit{The Montreal Star}.}
figures including the late UN, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. Hammarskjold’s quote dating back to June 1, 1954 spoke most eloquently to the relevance of the Emperor within the paradigm of the political aspirations of the United Nations. He declared:

_The Emperor of Ethiopia stands in the perspective of the history of our time, as a symbolic landmark, a prophetic figure on the path of man’s struggle to achieve international peace and security through concerted international action._

Adding to his accolades, in 1963 Haile Selassie had also spearheaded the founding of Organization for African Unity (OAU), earning him the title of the “African stabilizer”. Consequently, he was emblematically referenced as a “unique African leader”. Ethiopia had acquired a level of unprecedented world prestige from her foils in the 1930s, and Haile Selassie had brokered that political clout and cachet to both envision and create for himself a higher place at the table of world leaders. During a previous visit in 1963, then also Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson had welcomed the emperor, “not only as Emperor of Ethiopia, but also as the embodiment of the movement of African co-operation through independent states which is sweeping across that continent.”

On May 1st 1967, in advance of the Emperor’s visit to Expo, the aforementioned Montreal Gazette full-page advertisement also featured Pearson’s assessments, amidst other glowing reviews of the Emperor. Pearson had also boldly declared in 1963 that “the 1960’s may well be known to history as the African decade”, when more than 25 sovereign African states joined the world community. By contrast, he asserted,

---

674 Ibid.
675 “The Following is the Text of a Message of Welcome to his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, from the Prime Minister,” Press Release from the Office of the Prime Minister, October 7, 1963. L.B Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.26, LAC.
676 “Ethiopia His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I First Head of State to Visit Expo 67”, L.B Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.26, LAC.
“Ethiopia can look back to 3,000 years of independent nationhood”. 678 Thus, “nothing could have been more fitting”, he argued, then the gathering of the 32 independent African states in Addis Ababa, “to lay the foundation of future African unity through signature of the charter”, which his majesty had proposed. 679

During his visit to Ottawa in 1967, the Emperor was an emphatic proponent of the Organization of African Unity, and an ardent believer that the role of the organization was essential to the African continent. 680 In the face of scrutiny, the Emperor defended the organization asserting that “unifying a whole continent was not an easy job”. 681 “A united Africa will have a significant role to play in international peace and security,” the 74-year-old African monarch decreed during the news conference in the National Press Centre. 682 The Emperor’s integral role in fostering peace and stability on a seemingly tumultuous continent was of interest to evolving Canadian Foreign Policy during this time. Sentiments to this effect were echoed within the rhetoric of the politicians hosting his visit, the editorials covering his countrywide tour, and the advertisements announcing his arrival.

Pearson had previously openly acknowledged Haile Selassie’s “strong support of the United Nations as a forum for global understanding”, citing that “the principle of International co-operation through the United Nations has also long been a firm foundation of Canadian policy”. 683 In his 1963 welcome, Ethiopians and Canadians,

678 Ibid.
679 Ibid.
681 Ibid.
683 Press Release from the Office of the Prime Minister, October 7, 1963. L.B. Pearson Papers, LAC. * Andrew Cohen makes the argument that to Pearson: “His Canada was too silent at the League of Nations and too ignored in the Second World War. He wanted a greater commitment from the United Nations to a permanent peacekeeping force. He wished to make NATO more a political community than a military alliance”, all points affirming the importance of allyship with “peacekeeping nations” like Ethiopia. Excerpt from Andrew Cohen’s biography: Lester B. Pearson (Toronto: Penguin, 2008): 189.
Pearson declared, had “more than once found themselves working side by side in the cause of peace”. 684 He underscored recent efforts in the Congo where personnel from both countries had cooperated in “the efforts of the United Nations to bring peace to that troubled land.” 685 Ethiopia’s political clout in African matters, and the Canadian government’s desire to align themselves with the emperor’s work towards “an independent, stable and united Africa”, strongly influenced prevalent representations of the Emperor and his nation during this period.686 In addition to his historic symbolism during the 1960s, Haile Selassie was also an integral political ally to many Western nations including Canada. Discourses of key political figures and the assessments of members of the Department of foreign affairs collectively demonstrated that Haile Selassie was regarded as the key to African Peace and Unity. The main themes of the state visits 1967 according to Lionel Chevrier, the Commissioner General for Visits of State, “were the search for security in the world through the United Nations and other agencies, trade and economic co-operation, interests shared with La Francophonie and Commonwealth Nations”.687 The narrative surrounding the Emperor’s visit is indicative of his fit within this paradigm.688

Premier Bennett dubbed Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa, as “the Geneva of Africa”. 689 It was not by mere chance, that the two most important agencies of the

684 Press Release from the Office of the Prime Minister, October 7, 1963. L.B. Pearson Papers, LAC.
688 Ibid.
689 “City’s Warmth Touches Visitor”, The Daily Colonist.
decade on that continent, the Organization of African Unity and the U.N Economic Commission for Africa, selected Addis Ababa for their headquarters instead of other centers. The wide-held belief in this period was that “regardless of the real worth of either the UN regional headquarters or the OAU”, they gave “Ethiopia the aura of an African Switzerland.” In a post-World War II global order, Haile Selassie continued to grow in world prominence and raise his country’s stature, primarily through his integral involvement in African, and other international affairs. Haile Selassie demonstrated his commitment to the tenets of collective security, and not any ideology, when he deployed Ethiopian troops to serve in the United Nations Command in Korea and later in the Congo.

Haile Selassie’s notable political and theoretical reorientation “from one of careful detachment from captive Black Africa to one of super-Africanism” had paid off in this regard. Notably, the Emperor took his forum in Ottawa in 1967, as an opportunity to comment on the request by Ethiopia and Liberia that South African jurisdiction over the territory be terminated. The request, the Emperor declared, was wrongfully rejected, “by a divided court on procedural grounds”. In testament to his clout, the Emperor pushed on the matter further. He argued that matters that concern human rights and freedom could not simply be decided on procedural grounds. Instead, the Emperor argued that both Ethiopia and Liberia stood “for the liquidation of racialism throughout the world”, and therefore could not accept a decision which ensured the continued proliferation of racialism. The 1960s was the pinnacle of both the decolonization and the Black Power movements, globally. Haile Selassie was an influencer in these spaces,

---

694 Don Shannon, “Haile Selassie Winning New Ethiopian Battles”.
695 Canadian Press (CP), “Emperor Arrives in Montreal: OAU’s Role Held Essential”.
696 Ibid.
697 Ibid.
and as a result, Ethiopian presence at Expo 67 had a lot of international political and cultural cachet.

3.5 Fashioning An Identity: The Ethiopian Pavilion and Representations of a Steadfast 3000 Year Old Legacy

If design approaches to the pavilions reflected “a nation’s position about its history”, the Ethiopian Pavilion spoke volumes on the subject matter. 698 The model of the pavilion was officially unveiled in Montreal by the Ethiopian Commission-General for the Exhibition Ato Habte Selassie Tafesse in September of 1966.699 The pavilion was a great source of pride for the Ethiopians, “heralded as one of the most striking pavilions to be erected”.700 In marketing materials released ahead of the exhibition, many referenced the unique and artistic nature of the pavilion. In the Montreal Star’s special exhibition guide/booklet, under the collective heading of “Africa”, it was maintained that Ethiopia’s pavilion, topped by a crimson tent, looked like a work of art itself.701 In his historical monograph The Great Exhibitions (1977), Historian John Allwood decreed that the Ethiopian pavilion was one of the “more unusual” foreign pavilions at Expo, “adding a great deal to the scene of Expo”.702

At Expo 67, the Ethiopian pavilion was widely marketed as “a panorama of the

699 “Exhibition Official Due To Arrive Here”, The Ethiopian Herald, October 30, 1966. Department of External Affairs Clipping including in the Materials on the Ethiopian Pavilion at Expo, File # 1200-5-2-Eo3 Ethiopie No.2. in Exhibition Box 11: Dahomey, 132651, LAC.
700 Ibid.
history and culture of Ethiopia.”

Designed by architect Jacques Benoit-Barnet of Addis Ababa, the Emperor’s royal tentmakers in Addis Ababa sewed a 90-foot tent from half a mile of bright-red Canadian plastic. Approximately 750 yards of crimson canvas formed the tent-like roof of the pavilion, prefabricated in Ethiopia, and then constructed on Île Notre-Dame between the pavilions of Venezuela and Tunisia. The five tons of Bamboo poles used in its construction were taken from the jungles of the Sidamo province in Ethiopia. “Four steeles from the ancient city of Axum” flanked the entrance to the pavilion, and plastic reproductions of the iconic obelisks from Axum stood nearby. In essence, the pavilion was a large-scale reproduction of the tents utilized by travelling Ethiopian monarchs of the middle-ages, surrounded by ancient obelisks and filled with attractions like the Ethiopian crown jewels. The peak of the pavilion was surmounted by a revolving golden brass “Lion of Judah”, and “the green, yellow and red banner of the Ethiopian Empire.” For added excitement and symbolism, the tent was guarded by two live lion cubs on the front lawn. The whole pavilion, it was argued, was:

---

707 Ibid.
708 Ibid.
710 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations”, Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967. L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC.
a reminder of Selassie’s title of Lion of Judah with 12 golden lion heads acting as water spouts around the canvas edge, another golden lion topping the tent and holding a green, yellow and red national flag of Ethiopia, and the lion rampant of the Ethiopian airlines in one of the exhibit areas.711

The giant monolithic obelisks surrounding the pavilion were models of the pre-Christian tomb palaces of Axum, the ancient capital city of the Queen of Sheba.712 It was no coincidence that descriptions of the pavilion placed an emphasis upon the historicity of the obelisks and tents as powerful signifiers of a cultural vestige. Both the architecture and contents of the pavilion “gave a clear indication of the cultural values and political ideologies of the time.”713 Ethiopian self-representation at Expo is illustrative of the hybridity of Haile Selassie’s brand of “Modern Ethiopianism”, which apart from being a modernist project, “was first and foremost a nationalist project with ideological implications, such as defining the highland culture as benchmark”.714 A central feature of the pavilion was a model of twelfth century cross-shaped church, the Biete Giorgis.715 An iconic structure from the mountain village of Lalibela; the replica of the church at Expo 67 had among other treasures, illuminated manuscripts.716 Representations of Ethiopian identity at Expo were by in large portrayals of the primarily Christian, Amhara /highland culture heritage of the ruling classes. These iconic representations still permeate contemporary representations of Ethiopian identity and history in a Western context. However, within the paradigm of a global Diaspora these images are rife for criticisms of hegemony.

716 Ibid.
More than half-way into the twentieth century, the historicity of the Emperor and Ethiopia were still pervasive touchstones of the dominant narrative on the nation and the Emperor. By 1967, Ethiopians were masters of carefully cultivating an identity and an image to project to the extraneous world. In alignment with the assertions of Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis, the myths and ideals of the Ethiopian nation in 1967, were imbedded within the discursive constructions which permeated narratives and images of the East-African nation from both within, and outside of the East African nation during the period of Haile Selassie’s rule.717

The Ethiopian pavilion was an exercise in self-representation, deeply influenced by the prevailing awareness of the historicity of the Abyssinian Empire. In alignment with the Expo mandate to both “educate and entertain”, 718 the Ethiopian pavilion was designed to fit within the prevailing paradigm of showcasing the progress of “civilization” that Dupuy called for.719 The interior exhibits of the Ethiopian Pavilion featured reproductions of early cave drawings and stone tools from Melke Kontoure, a site dating back half a million years.720 Artifacts from the old Axumite empire (4th-5th century B.C to 10th Century A.D) such as pottery jugs and bowls, bronze objects, stone pedestals and lintels bearing Sabean inscriptions were also integrated into the tour of the civilization. And last but not least, more modern Ethiopian works of art, including the crown jewels of the kingdom were displayed in an unbreakable glass case.721 The Ethiopian display delivered on Dupuy’s mandate for displays to outline the progress of


721 Ibid.
civilization “from the stone knife to today.” The iconography of the historiographical exhibits was deliberate. On the one-hand, the carefully curated displays were intended to educate visitors on the history of Ethiopia. On the other-hand, the elaborate display was also deliberately intended to generate interest in tourism, to the East-African nation fixed at the cross-roads of history. Adventurers and history buffs were sure to be enticed to visit the East African country. In essence, the $135,000 pavilion was a grandiose gesture of affluence which warranted some expectation of a return in investment by the Ethiopian government.

In addition to the historical images and lessons evoked through the exhibits, visitors to the pavilion witnessed Ethiopian artisans at work, and listed to songs and poems in Amharic, with translations into both French and English available. A “Lion coffee shop” was also an integral part of the Ethiopian pavilion. In traditional fashion, Ethiopian coffee was served under colourful velvet timkat umbrellas of the coffee shop, by Ethiopian women dressed in their Abesha Kemis’. Guests seated at individual tables under colorful umbrellas, drank coffee from cups specially designed for the pavilion by Ethiopian craftsmen. The Ethiopian Coffee bar was marketed as a must-see destination. During the period of Expo, trade between Ethiopia and Canada was minimal with the major Canadian export to the East African nation being aircraft engines, and the major import to Canada being Ethiopian coffee. Through their participation at Expo, the Ethiopians were eager to capitalize on the opportunity to promote their number

---

724 Ibid.
726 In particular, the Vancouver Sun had an illustrious advertisement. “or how about coffee at the Ethiopian coffee bar, where you can also see reproductions of the temple of Axum (now Aksum), the ancient capitol of Ethiopia?” “or go to Jamaica for rum and watch them roll tobacco into fine cigars. Or visit Japan and find out how a loser can become a winner in no time flat – and drink sake while you are doing it”, “Expo 67 THERE: Other Countries, Other Peoples”. The Sunday Sun: Weekend Magazine, The Vancouver Sun April 22, 1967: 9.
727 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations.” Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967. L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC.
one export. As part of the enticement for participating in Expo 67 in the first place, the pavilion was also designed to attract tourists and commerce to the East African nation. To this effect, the Ethiopian Coffee Board was a willing cost bearer, paying for the “coffee pamphlets”. A lot of care and effort was taken by Ethiopians to promote the quality and superiority of their number one export product. The word coffee, it was widely advertised during Expo, was derived from the original source - the Ethiopian province of kaffa. Debates on the origin of coffee from Ethiopia, and the authenticity and quality of the product still resonate today. During his tour of the pavilion on May 2, Emperor Haile Selassie symbolically had coffee with Dupuy prior to touring the exhibits. Upon his departure from Canada, the Emperor “left three 100-pound bags of specially blended coffee from his African nation”, one for Governor-General Ronald Michener, a second for Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and a third for Lionel-Chevrier in his capacity as Commissioner-General for visits to Canada by heads of state.

In June of 1968, a little less than a year after the international event concluded, the Expo 67 site reopened. Scaled down and rebranded as Terre des Hommes, there was a lingering hope for the continuation of the successes of the prolonged summer of 1967. However, the turn styles had significantly decelerated and the national engagement with Expo had faded. Intent on enticing his readership to return to enjoyment of what once was, journalist Richard Needham painted a literary picture of Terre des Hommes in a Globe and Mail editorial. Needham described a site where an antique carousel vacillated.

---

728 “Coffee Board of Ethiopia willing to pay for the printing of the coffee pamphlet- mentioned by Ato Demeke” in Minutes of The Meeting At Ministry of Commerce and Industry, December 5, 1966, File Folder 1200-5-E03 Ethiopie No 2., Expo 67 Collection, LAC.

729 Bill Bantey, “Expo-67: Year Droppers.”


and “kids and adults held hands everywhere as cleaning men chased down every last scrap of paper”. With all the markings of an ordinary Fair experience, Needham closed his vignette of what remained of Expo 67 with: “the great red tent of Ethiopia glows in the night, the best coffee in Montreal, in Canada, in the world, served within”. Needham’s rumination was punctuated by both the lingering presence of the Ethiopian pavilion on site, and his reverence for the quintessential coffee that was served within. The Ethiopian pavilion remained as an integral part of Terre des Hommes, donated by the Emperor in support of Montreal Mayor Drapeau’s desire to keep the Expo site ongoing.

3.6 The Memory

To many Canadians of a particular generation, Expo 67 was a touchstone event. Three decades after the World’s Fair closed, Canada’s beloved national chronicler Pierre Berton captured the lasting impact of Expo 67 on the nation’s psyche. Berton declared: “it was a special year – a vintage year- and it is probable that we will not see its like again”. In 1967: The Last Good Year (1997), Pierre Berton captured the essence of the Emperor’s visit within the paradigm of Expo: “everybody who was anybody, it seemed, was there”. In that fateful summer of 1967, Berton outlined that Kings, Reigning Queens, Princes, Presidents, Prime Ministers and other dignitaries traversed through the Expo grounds accompanied by their entourages of secret service agents, police, journalists, and “huge throngs of ordinary people brandishing cameras”. Haile Selassie was one of those figures that Berton showcased in his memoir.

734 Ibid.
738 Ibid.
On account of her busy year as both the Secretary of State and the Minister in charge of the portfolio of Canada’s centennial celebration, Judy La Marsh told of her encounter with the Emperor in her political biography Memoirs of A Bird In A Gilded Cage (1968). To La Marsh, the first of more than forty-state dinners held by the Micheners during Expo 67 was worthy of recollection, for it was in honor of the Emperor Haile Selassie. La Marsh remembered him to be “great fun as a guest”, and accentuated the fact that he conversed fluently in both Canadian national languages.739 She also recalled that she had had the occasion to meet the Emperor briefly during an earlier visit to Canada, but that she “had forgotten his diminutive stature because of his great dignity which was enlivened with a sparkling sense of humor.”740

Memories like those of La Marsh, speak to both the political and cultural relevancy of the Emperor, particularly to a Canadian generation that was cognizant of the implications of international events both pre-and post WWII. Within the confines of what amounts to less than a single page, La Marsh spoke to the Emperor’s distinguished imprint on the politicians of the day. La Marsh’s narration is one of the few remaining accounts of the Emperor’s visit which gives some sense of his political and historical

740 Ibid.
gravitas during the period of Expo. La Marsh’s memory demonstrates both the existence and the close of an era of “vintage” diplomacy towards the Emperor, an era of vintage diplomacy articulated and characterized by members of the Canadian political establishment in 1967, like Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, Governor Ronald Michener, Ambassador Pierre Dupuy, Premier Bennet and Mayor Jean Drapeau. This era faded away shortly after Expo 67. Even in reminiscence, the rhetoric of those who placed value in the historic and political symbolism of the Emperor conveyed a certain degree of veneration, providing insight into the extent of his cultural relativism during this particular period in history.

In honor of Montreal’s 350th birthday in 1992, the American Pavilion built for Expo was brought back to life. On this momentous occasion, Canadian author Emil Sher penned a commemorative national editorial. Sher relived his journey across Man and His World “through a brittle scrapbook” authored by his eight-year-old self. In his editorial, Sher recalled among other things, standing outside pavilions impatiently in anticipation of the treasures inside, and eagerly awaiting “another stamp for the red passport clutched in his hand”. To Sher and many others like him, collecting a stamp in his passport was an act of both “validating the document and the experience”. In his reminiscences of a formative event, Sher recaptured his engagement with the Ethiopian pavilion through the prism of his younger self. From his scrapbook, Sher recited:

The Ethiopian stamp is just beautiful. It is shaped like a tent. They show how they live – things they use, such as pots, pans, cards. As soon as you come out there is this

*Particularly in Pearson’s assessment of the League of Nations affair in Geneva shaping his early political experiences and shaping his world purview.
743 Ibid.
744 Ibid.
745 Ibid.
cage with three lions and a man. There is tire which the lions jump through.\textsuperscript{746}

Through the prism of his childhood memory, Sher encapsulated the residual impact of the Exhibition, and a sliver of Ethiopian representation at Expo. It is clear from Sher’s memory that the pavilion was aesthetically pleasing and memorable for some.\textsuperscript{747} Whether Sher knew it or not in grade three, the lions were purposely incorporated into the pavilion to signify the glory of the history of the Lion of Judah. However, when Sher’s memory is contextualized with other reminiscences of the World Fair, it is telling of a different narrative of Ethiopian representation at Expo.

In his homage to The Labyrinth as the pinnacle of the Terres des Hommes, Pierre Berton asserted that: “the ultimate shock came when man faced the beast – an Ethiopian in a canoe, who killed a crocodile with a spear thrust.” \textsuperscript{748} A climatic moment during the circumferential cinematic experience, the aforementioned scene was featured on the large central screen, illuminating the animal wildly thrashing in the throes of death.\textsuperscript{749} In Berton’s rendition, startling photographic images of “grotesque African masks” follow the fateful death of the Crocodile at the hands of the primitive looking Ethiopian armed with a spear.\textsuperscript{750} Directed by Colin Low, Roman Koitor and Hugh O’Connor for the National Film Board, the pavilion and film were commissioned by the exposition as part of Expo’s theme “Man the Hero”. The Labyrinth pavilion offered an Avant Garde and unparalleled cinematic experience to its visitors.\textsuperscript{751}

Whilst the technology was new, the paradigm of the Labyrinth experience was premised on the classic mythical narrative of the Minotaur. Simulating a contemporary Labyrinth, the coveted pavilion experience was comprised of a walking journey through

\textsuperscript{746}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{747} In particular see the following commemorative blog sites: Pavilion of Ethiopia: \url{http://expo67.ncf.ca/expo_ethiopia_p1.html} and Jason Stockl’s “The Ethiopian Pavilion”, \url{http://expolounge.blogspot.ca/2013/12/the-ethiopian-pavilion.html}
\textsuperscript{750} Berton, 1967: Canada’s Turning Point: A Chronicle of Canada’s Centennial Year, 297.
\textsuperscript{751} “Labyrinth/ Labyrinth”. Cinema expo67. \url{http://cinemaexpo67.ca/labyrinth/}
three distinct chambers. Chamber one and two were film-screening venues featuring cutting edge technology. In chamber one, audiences were privy to images from a loosely structured universal story that captured their attention in its unique medium of deliverance. Images projected a narrative to audiences *vis-à-vis* two fifty-foot (15 meter screens) that were placed both horizontally and vertically across the chamber. The experience was immersive, and memorable. Viewers consumed meanings of contemporary life across the digitized globe, as they walked through “four stacked rows of elliptically shaped balconies” to watch the colossal two-screen film. Audiences were then guided through a maze like passage to emerge into a third chamber, where they were gathered in a conventional auditorium setting to watch the feature film of the same name. *The Labyrinth* was viewed on five screens in the form of a cruciform.

In contrast to the Berton’s reminisce of a single scene, Ethiopians were actually featured several times throughout the landmark cinematic narrative. Within less than a minute and a half into the film, an elderly Ethiopian man stared directly into the camera with a look of consternation. His gaze held for what felt like an eternity, challenging the audience to truly feel the discomfort of the forthcoming introspective journey. The camera then pans out to film the old man and his companions walking away with their donkeys fully loaded with bundled sticks. The simplicity of their rural highland vignette is sharply juxtaposed to the preceding imagery of the hustle and bustle of a metropole train station. Given the tempo of the music, the viewer almost envies the simplicity of the life of the contemplative old man. The overarching message read as: African life is simpler. The appearances of Ethiopians in the feature film were not all static. As the film traversed through the desert and snow-covered lands of the world, it graced over ubiquitous signifiers of the perils of mankind. After an iconic scene of several devout Hindus bathing in the holy river Ganges, Ethiopians reappear in the film. This time,

752 Ibid.
753 Ibid.
754 Ibid.
755 Ibid.
756 https://www.nfb.ca/film/in_the_labyrinth/
Ethiopian priests and monks chant in prayer and hymn to beating drums, underneath the pitch-black African sky lit up by a single moon. Evoking narratives of an ancient Christian civilization, the Ethiopian monks were seamlessly integrated into the deeply Judeo-Christian undertone of the master narrative.

Hyenas then appeared in the dark, and viewers were eerily transported down a muddy brown river by a Black man. “The Ethiopian” that Berton referenced was steering a single wooden canoe through a river surrounded by brush masking unknown danger. The man was clearly afraid, but he held the wooden vessel steady as it traversed down the muddied waters guided by the bright light of the burning torch. The long history of exploration in Africa is evoked. Traversing through what feels like the “Heart of Darkness”, the audience is acutely gripped by both the fear and uncertainty of what might come next. The ultimate shock that Berton described ensued six minutes into the film, with the alligator writhing, thrashing and screaming as a seemingly primitive man emerges victorious, in spite the odds. The film was not subtle in rendering typologies of humans across the globe. Africans in this scene demonstrated the age old trope of man versus nature.

The intensity of the moment is relieved by the serene scenes and sounds of daybreak on what seems like the same river. Two separate Ethiopian men dressed in their iconic white shammas are again introduced in states of deep contemplation. The river was far less intimidating in daylight. And eleven minutes and sixteen seconds into the film, the momentum of the film shifts again as hundreds of Ethiopians are viewed exuberantly singing and dancing on the four screens below a rocketship launching into space. This particular scene evokes ubiquitous depictions of Ethiopians from the 1935-36 period. Even though they are clearly engaged in an unidentified cultural celebration, in the film, the Ethiopians seem to be celebrating humankind’s extraordinary achievement.

Ethiopians are revisited once more in a rural and tribal setting, about 18 minutes

———

757 In his visit to Ethiopia and witness to a similar scene in the 1960s, Arnold J. Toynbee wrote: “this assemblage of men dressed like Ancient Romans in white togas: where had I seen it before? It was in a photograph of an Ethipian market-place on a market-day that I had seen in the Illustrated London News when I was a child. That picture had printed itself on my visual memory, and here it wwas being reproduced, sixty years later in real life. Meet the Amharas?” from Between Niger and Nile, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965: 52.
into the film, and two minutes away from the conclusion. The family of Ethiopians depicted in this final scene appear to be members of the still famed and “exotic” semi-nomadic communities of the southern parts of the country bordering Kenya.\(^{758}\) The ethnographic diversity of the East African nation lent well to the country being a stand-in for all of Africa in this film.

By design, the integrative labyrinth experience embodied the type of cultural internationalism which prevailed during the period of Expo.\(^{759}\) An internationalism that within the context of the time was premised on strong notions of shared human experiences, cultural exchanges and foreign relations, as characterized in the works of Akira Iriye, Edward Said and Fiona Paisley.\(^{760}\) The caricatural view of historical evolution offered in the Labyrinth narrative reaffirmed humanism as an exclusively Western enterprise interposed by African presence.\(^{761}\) The primacy of the film both during and within the living memory of Expo, provides insights into pervasive and steadfast conceptualizations of race and place within the dynamic schema of “human progress” in the 1967.

The historical implications of Ethiopians being featured in the Labyrinth are two-fold. First, the integration of Ethiopians into an award-winning cinematic representation of “the human experience” reinforced the longstanding cultural and historical symbolism of the country and its peoples throughout the twentieth century. In representation, being an “African” Ethiopian in the film were synonymous. Ethiopian presence in the film stood as sole representation of African history, culture and identity. The presence was a


\(^{759}\) Keith Walden’s assessment of Expo as an influencing factor in swaying the political landscape to favor the widespread embrace of Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s brand of multiculturalism is supportive of this claim. See Keith Walden. Expo 67, The Oxford Companion to Canadian History. Edited by Gerald Hallowell, Oxford University Press, online publication (2004).


\(^{761}\) Edward Said makes several points regarding Western exclusivity in humanism throughout Culture and Imperialism.
continuation of the long cultural legacy of rooting Black origins to Ethiopia, previously addressed in chapter one. Every image in the film evoked previous cultural encounters with the peoples and the land. The juxtaposition of select scenes of Ethiopians as religious and contemplative, also integrated the concurrent narrative of Ethiopians as part of a Judeo-Christian origins story addressed in chapter one of this thesis. Ethiopian presence in the film ultimately spoke to Ethiopia’s continued cultural relevancy in the period.

The second historical implication of the film is the reaffirmation of the colonial message about Africa. Representations of Ethiopians as “the African” in the Labyrinth, were imbibed with meanings of Africanness that were inextricably tied to Western conceptualizations of self and the other.  

Semiotics of the visual representations of Ethiopians throughout the film affirm that the images promoted deep-rooted interpretations of Africans and African culture. The depiction of Ethiopians throughout the film was as rural, tribal, primitive, entranced and contemplative. David Duner argues that European travelers of the eighteenth century “faced severe problems in understanding the alien African cultures they encountered”. Armed with this legacy of difference, the Labyrinth evoked and celebrated the Alieness of African culture. Duner argues that Africans and African cultures were typically viewed as completely separate from European interpretations of culture and classified as “belonging to the natural history of the human species”. Semiotics of the African encounter in the Labyrinth, alongside the penned reminisces of Expo goers like Berton and Sher, suggest that age-old conceptualizations of Ethiopians/Africans as “natural” connections to an ancient past still prevailed in 1967. The labyrinth stood as testament to man’s technological advancement. The African was integrated as a juxtaposition to this advancement, as the natural state – pre-advancement.

762 This phenomenon is outlined and articulated throughout Anne McClintock’s: Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality In The Colonial Conquest, New York: Routledge, 1995.
3.7 Conclusions

On the eve of the official opening of Expo 67, journalist Bill Bantey surmised that: “you would have to excuse Ethiopia if it were late in its participation at Expo, it is only 1959 in that African land”.

The underlying tenor of Bantey’s assessment was that Ethiopia as a concept and a country was fixed in the past. As a microcosm of the ethos of a period, Expo 67 provided a purview from which the progression of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identities can be located and situated the mid-twentieth century. Expo was the first world class exhibition to come to North America, and for this reason it was marked with much fanfare and excitement, both nationally and internationally. Expo organizers had predicted 26 million admissions, but their expectations were exceeded immensely with a final count of 50 million.

The Ethiopian Pavilion at Expo 67 was a site of cultural and political mediation. The white Aksumite towers and the tent-like pavilion signified the roots of the modern republic and conveyed the long legacy of the un-colonized Abyssinian Empire. Ethiopian participation in Expo 67 facilitated the mass permeation of ubiquitous symbols of Ethiopian history, culture and identity into a contemporary Canadian consciousness. Within the paradigm of a national and international extravaganza, Ethiopian participation and representation in Expo 67 marked the second major intersection between Ethiopian and Canadian history during the twentieth-century.

Expo 67 was demonstrative of Robert Rydell’s assertions that fairs and exhibitions were reflections of the shifting political and class alignments of a period.

More than just a birthday party, Expo 67 was a political, and cultural statement about what it meant to be Canadian. What it meant to be a Canadian in 1967 differed greatly along the regional, linguistic and ethnic lines delineating the topography of the nation.

---

768 Helen Davies also makes the point about Expo 67 being a Canadian political statement in the following thesis: The Politics of Participation: A Study of Canada's Centennial Celebration (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 999):25.
The Federal government and the Canadian press rallied that divided nation into manifesting Expo 67 as an expression of a united Canada on the international stage. Expo took place in a climate of political unrest in Canada and abroad. Quebec nationalism, race riots in the United States, the Vietnam War and widespread unrest on the African continent were some of the occurrences which cast a long shadow on the tenor of Expo 67. A poignant editorial in the Montreal Gazette captured the desire of the Canadian governments and Expo organizers to shelf the malcontent in the world during the period of Expo. A reprise on the urge to behave badly in front of the world was issued to Canadians. It was argued that Canada was a host to the world, and that it was a powerful penchant “to celebrate the centennial in glowing appeal versus in darkness”.769 The purpose of Expo was not to become a focal point of protest, but “rather an opportunity for all governments and nations peaceably to see the world on display, to learn something of the world’s variety”. By design Expo was a “supreme example of civilized cosmopolitanism.”770 Everything about the coordination and the execution of Expo 67 signaled this. Every participating country, including Ethiopia was molded into the vignette. Despite evidence of protest of the Emperor by some of his countrymen in Canada and the United States, there was no room for marring his image at Expo.771 Symbolism was of the essence.

By the period of Expo 67, the 1936 Italian invasion of Ethiopia was widely recognized as “the first act in a series of acts that did not end until mid-1945, sweeping away tens of millions of lives around the globe.”772 Haile Selassie and his country were an integral part of this global narrative. The Emperor and his countrymen stood as testament to this fact. Drapeau characterized the Emperor as the “valiant symbol of the love for freedom and independence for which Ethiopians fought so valiantly throughout their long history.”773 In the aftermath of both the Italo-Ethiopian war and occupation (1935-41) and the Second World War, Haile Selassie was the personification of his

770 Ibid.
nation, and the embodiment of the character and dignity of his peoples. The rhetoric of prominent politicians like Prime Minister Pearson, Governor Michener, Premier Bennet and Mayor Jean Drapeau all paid homage to the historical legacy of the Emperor during the 1930s and 1940s and affirmed his revered place within contemporary world history.

The Emperor had so closely branded himself with Ethiopia, that the man and the state were indistinguishable. Also a living embodiment of the 3000 year-old historical legacy that both Governor Michener and Mayor Drapeau spoke of, the Emperor Haile Selassie was integral to both the construction and permeation of the steadfast narration of Ethiopia as an ancient civilization in 1967. The prevailing reverence for the long rooted 3000 year legacy in 1967 evoked prominent Canadian journalist Robert Fulford’s assessments of the power of the “Master Narrative” in the twentieth-century. Fulford’s emphasis on “The Triumph of Narrative” and the importance of “Storytelling in the Age of Mass Culture” are useful metaphors for contextualizing Ethiopia’s position in praxis to the West during the period of Expo 67. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century portrayals of Ethiopian history and culture were mass circulated in the west through lenses of political conflict and crisis. During Expo 67, representations of Ethiopian culture and history permeated through lenses of cultural and political symbolism. The medium for story telling had revolutionized by 1967. But in many ways the predominant representations of the East-African nation remained almost the same as they had been nearly thirty-years before, when Ethiopia and Ethiopians first mass penetrated the imagination and vernacular of ordinary Canadians.

774 Alexander Farrell, “Leaders Value Selassie Role”.
776 Ibid.
Yet, in 1967, neither Emperor nor nation were narrated purely as vestiges of the past. Instead, the Emperor and his nation were represented as living testimonials to the continued existence of the past, within the present. The integral role of Ethiopia on the African continent, and the Emperor in African and other global affairs afforded Ethiopia special honors. As Haile Selassie’s train travelled through Saskatchewan, the Leader Post declared that most other African leaders had made it plain that they value the Emperor.  

This was a well echoed fact. The Los Angeles Times had decreed two years earlier that on a continent which “worships cults of personalities” the Emperor was the champion in all categories. His accolades spilt over into his Canadian visit in 1967. A strong proponent of personal diplomacy, in 1967 the Emperor was esteemed for his long experience in dealing with governments all over the world. He was widely regarded as “a badly needed symbol of stability” on the African continent. His symbol of stability, and the respect that he garnered from Western nations was narrated as the ideal situation that “his lesser colleagues” strove to attain. In the mid-1960s, the prevailing sentiment in North America was that few African leaders could touch Haile Selassie when it came to running a nation.

Canada’s diplomatic relations with Ethiopia during this period were notably predicated on pre-existing friendships between individual Canadians and the Ethiopian government, including the Emperor. Missionaries, businessmen and educators had established connections to the East-African state un-aided and un-hampered by the Federal government from the late 1920s onward. Canadian educators were integral to the development of the Ethiopian educational system, including the formation of Addis Ababa University. This “friendship” promoted favorable reviews of the Empire and its peoples in 1967. The pre-existing friendship paved the path for Ethiopia to seek more

778 Shannon, “Haile Selassie Winning New Ethiopian Battles”.
779 Farrell, “Leaders Value Selassie Role”.
780 Ibid.
781 Shannon, “Haile Selassie Winning New Ethiopian Battles”.
782 Ibid.
783 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations”, Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967. L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC.
funds from Canada for further development in the key area of education. There was also talk of how Canada might assist the Northeast African nation to develop its natural resources, an area almost exclusively financed by Americans and the World Bank.

The tenacity of the international political and cultural cachet of the East-African nation in this particular historical period was evidenced at the nexus of Canadian political and cultural objectives for the exhibition, and Ethiopian interests in participating. In his final report on the Exhibition, Lionel Chevrier boasted that there was extensive representation from a continent in which Canada had been steadily extending its diplomatic relations in recent years. By 1967, the African countries officially represented within the parameters of the pavilion were: Cameroon, Chad, Congo Republic, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda. Out of a continent of forty-five sovereign nations existent/officially recognized during this period, Africa Place featured fifteen member nations of either the British Commonwealth or the Organisation International de la Francophonie.

On opening day, The Montreal Gazette bragged that “the nations of the Dark Continent will be getting plenty of exposure at Expo.” The Africa Place Pavilion was a Canadian attempt at global inclusivity in the exhibition. At the World festival of Negro Arts in Dakkar (1966), Senegal’s president Leopold Sedar Senghor had asserted that “the humanism of the 20th century would become impoverished if it passed by one single continent.” Through Expo, the clarion call was out for Canada to extend its relations within the vast continent both politically and culturally. Conversely, Ethiopia opted out of the Africa Place Pavilion. Instead, Ethiopia was notably coaxed into participating in one of the largest world expositions of the twentieth century by being allotted an independent

785 Ibid.
788 Ibid.
pavilion. From planning to execution the Ethiopian government played an integral role in self-representation at Expo. The independent Ethiopian Pavilion stood as testament to this fact.

In spite of the prevalence of laudatory language surrounding the Emperor’s visit during Expo 67, there was also some noteworthy criticism. “Amid the thrill of meeting a real live Emperor”, Bill Stavadal argued that Canadian dignitaries and their wives neglected the fact that they were also meeting “a real live dictator”. 789 Stavadal argued - “the most durable and of the most remarkable alive”. 790 In the early 1970s, there were signs of the wane of the Emperor’s international and domestic appeal. Many still believed that “he had done more to change Ethiopia than any other Emperor in its centuries of history”. 791 Yet, when these changes were measured within the metrics of more than half-a-century of rule, they did not seem “very great” to many external observers. 792 Hence, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, observers of shifts in Ethiopian politics championed the precepts of change that were promised by the tenets of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. To this effect, Robin Wright observed in Macleans that: “whatever the rhetoric, the programs do reflect a major turning point”. 793 This turning point was by in large narrated as the dismantling of “the dark age of Haile Selassie’s empire” and the beginnings of the creation of a more modern “well-rounded socialist personality.” 794 It was believed by some that the average Ethiopian “was probably better off under the Marxism of Mengistu than with the totalitarianism of Selassie, Lion of Judah and King of Kings.” 795 Thereafter, steadfast representations and perceptions of the monarch as “the African stabilizer” and Ethiopia as a model of African stability took a linguistic turn.

790 Ibid.
792 Ibid.
794 Ibid.
795 Ibid.
Expo 67 marked the last time in the twentieth century that an Ethiopian, and more notably, an iconic international Ethiopian politician elicited the widespread adoration and respect of the Canadian public. It is of little surprise then, that within recollections of ‘their history’, Ethiopian migrants of a particular generation grapple with the loss of a seemingly venerable and respectable past. In memory of Expo’s fiftieth anniversary (1997), Canadian journalist Paul Winters surmised the diminishment of Ethiopia’s venerable pinnacle best in his following reflection:

*I remember the first head of state to visit Expo was the Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Kings and Conquering Lion of Judah. Who would have predicted then that he would be deposed and humbled and that his Ethiopian empire would be reduced to a starving ruin?*\(^{796}\)

4 CHAPTER 3: From Discourses on His Majesty To The Dust Bowl of Africa: Canadian Political and Social Mobilization For Famine Relief in Ethiopia (1984-88) and The Lingering Aesthetics of The Starving Ethiopian

On 1 November 1984, the CBC’s flagship evening news program *The National*, aired a four-minute editorial on the devastating famine in Ethiopia by reporter Brian Stewart. Since credited as the impetus driving the Canadian government and thousands of ordinary Canadians to respond to the humanitarian crisis on the African continent; this short news clip scaled the depths of human suffering with its vivid depictions of an apocalyptic scale famine. Member of Parliament Reg Stackhouse told his colleagues that Canadians were “shocked by television reports of mass starvation in Ethiopia.”

Newspapers too, chronicled in great detail the depths of human depravity witnessed, as they narrated accounts of Ethiopians carrying their wives, husbands, and children on makeshift stretchers. Others who were too weak to walk were photographed and filmed as they “lay by the side of the road waiting to die”. These morbid and haunting images enabled Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his Secretary of State for External affairs Joe Clark to galvanize non-partisan support for a broad humanitarian rescue mission. At the helm of rallying Canadian public support and delivering aid to Ethiopia and other afflicted African nations, the Honorable David MacDonald characterized this period in Canadian history as “unique”. He was the champion of Canadian efforts during this period, and he holds a deep appreciation for the cross-cutting manner in which Canadians rallied together in support of a single cause with high hopes and aspirations.

Representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians flourished once again during this period in the twentieth century, in light of another historic Ethiopian crisis.

---

797 Reg Stackhouse, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984, 20.
799 Author interview with David MacDonald, 28 March 2017.
800 Ibid.
that captured the attention of the world. From 1984-1988, the Ethiopian/African famine became a unifying national cause in Canada. For the second time in the twentieth-century, Ethiopia and Ethiopians were the topic *du jour* across Canada. From television sets, to radios and the printed press, Ethiopians were extensively profiled in crisis. The conditions of the country were discussed from the House of Commons to the pulpit. Once more, perceptions of the condition of Ethiopia and Ethiopians flourished. This time, however, Ethiopia was a beneficiary of Canadian concern.

This chapter then explores the many dimensions to Canadian engagement with the Ethiopian/African famine of this period. At the macro level, the Canadian government led the mass movement for famine relief on the African continent. Throughout the four years of sustained public support for Ethiopian relief, a wide variety of Canadians, both in and outside of government, united in a socio-political phenomenon later dubbed the “sterling model of Brian Mulroney.” Organizations ranging from NGO’s and other civil societies, to schools, businesses, clubs and churches took up the cause of famine relief with exemplary commitment, indicating the far-reaching effects of civic and international engagement at the meso/intermediary level. Churches waged successful campaigns for “bushels of bread”, and their congregants demonstrated their faith in droves. The moral imperative was certainly broad-based. Colleges and universities offered the government research capacities and expertise in support. Businesses donated food and medical supplies. Trucking companies donated trucks and drivers to transport the collected aid to shipping and airlift sites.

At the micro level, several Canadians gave of their time, money and expertise in the name of humanity. Canadian children and youth postponed eating lunches, coordinated spellathons, bake sales, and dances in their efforts to support a worthy cause. As a consequence of the mass movement, many

---


individual Canadians formed new long-lasting relationships with the African nation and its peoples during this period. African famine was certainly a cause for the times.

Canada was the largest per capita donor to Ethiopia during this period. Over the course of the four years of sustained famine relief efforts by the Canadian government and its citizens (1984-88), Ethiopia received the most attention of the twenty-one African nations afflicted by famine and in receipt of “abnormally high” international food aid. Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Botswana, Cape Verde, Chad, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe were the other African nations which also suffered. Desertification and drought were initially isolated as the root causes of the catastrophe. It was argued that since the 1960s, the Sahara desert had been advancing steadily by thousands of kilometers between Dakkar and Djibouti. While natural causes were in part blamed for desertification, overgrazing and deforestation were identified as co-culprits. Rainfall had been at a 40-50 year low, in most of the African countries which suffered from drought in 1983-84.

Figure 23: The Drought in Africa


---

805 *African Famine and Canada’s Response*, 36.
806 Ibid.
807 Ibid., 11.
This chapter begins by contextualizing and commending the extensiveness of Canadian engagement with the Ethiopian/ African famine relief efforts world-wide. The outpouring of political and civilian support for relief efforts to a region afflicted by drought, famine and a decades-long brutal civil war was exemplary internationally. To this effect, Alex De Waal cites 1984 as “an earthquake in the humanitarian world”\(^{808}\), and Tanja R. Müller makes the assertion that the Ethiopian Famine was a watershed event for humanitarian action.\(^{809}\) Horrifying images of emaciated children, adults, and deaths en masse, mobilized Canadians to collective acts of humanitarian internationalism in a distant corner of the world afflicted by drought, famine, and brutal civil wars.\(^{810}\) Canada’s response was exhaustive and praiseworthy. The city of Vancouver committed to raising $1,000,000 and challenged other communities across the nation to do the same.\(^{811}\) The Kinsmen Club of Kingston, Ontario raised enough money to send a medical team to Ethiopia by February of 1985.\(^{812}\) There are countless examples of Canadian exuberance for the cause.

In Canada, mass awareness and engagement with the African famine of the 1984-88 period had a two-fold outcome. On the one hand, mass awareness facilitated the extraordinary engagement of both government and ordinary citizens, resulting in acts of mass compassion and mass mobilization towards the headlining international cause. By 1985, nearly a million Canadians had donated “an average of $60 each to help save 30 million Africans from starvation.”\(^{813}\) The famine was a clarion call for Canadians from


\(^{810}\) Drought and Famines were a recurring issue on the African continent during the late 1960s and 1970s (i.e. Biafra). In Ethiopia, the famine of 1973 in Wollo was within living memory for many of its people during the catastrophe of 1984. See Brian Jeffries, “Dateline Nairobi: African Tragedy,” Maclean’s, August 4 1980, 8.

\(^{811}\) African Famine and Canada’s Response, 24.

\(^{812}\) Ibid.

coast to coast.814

On the other hand, mass awareness and engagement with this particular famine also facilitated the construction of the African famine as one of the biggest cause célèbre events of the decade. The sustained interest in the African famine of the period resulted in mass consumption of the issues de jure as presented by the media and other subject matter experts. The politics of famine (famine reporting and famine relief efforts) between 1984-88 illustrate that famines were embroiled in complex and nuanced political, economic and environmental paradigms. The widespread ideal of famine eradication in this same period was a far more complex goal than what the general populace could digest.815 As such, media accounts of famine and famine relief were frequently reductive. Narratives championed celebratory portrayals of successes in famine relief. Failures of famine relief efforts were pinned on the brutalities and ineptitudes of African regimes, particularly the Ethiopian Derg.

Crisis-oriented and pervasive coverage of the famine encouraged the widespread perception of this period as an aberrant event with unexpected impact.816 Televised graphic images of scenes tantamount to “hell on earth” affirmed the dire desperation of the situation in Ethiopia, and validated the misconception that the disaster was a major new story.817 The underplayed reality was that the famine crisis was a slow-onset disaster. To this effect, an integral process in the discursive construction of famine in Africa was that of “aestheticization”, in conjunction with “the packaging of famine as a shocking and dramatic crisis”.818 The aestheticization of famine was instrumental in rallying both Canadian, and international support for the cause. Televised reports and newspaper columns devoted to covering the crises typically featured close-up

814 Jack Hinde from Owen Sound Ontario wrote to Joe Clark to let him know that he had “made an excellent start as Minister of External affairs. Encouraging relief for Ethiopia was a clarion call that most Canadians will respond to.” From African Famine and Canada’s Response: 52.
815 The ideals of famine eradication are best illustrated by the title of one of David MacDonald’s four reports produced: A Decade For Africa: No More Famine, published in 1986.
816 Ibid.
818 Ibid., 225.
photographs depicting starving children. “Scores of children lie, their eyes protruding from their skulls”, journalist Carol Berger reported in *The Globe and Mail*. Starving children became “the famine icon”, signifying “a moral clarity to the complex story of famine.” Images from Ethiopia rarely situat[ed] the child as belonging to a family or community, they simply represented the plight of the nation. Some argued that Ethiopian distress engaged public sympathy in the West, because they were “such fine looking people”, and because of the fact that the situation in other countries may have been just as desperate, but it was not quite as graphic. Consequently, during this period, the Ethiopian famine became symbolic of and synonymous with the entirety of “African suffering”.

Global political and social mobilization for famine relief in Ethiopia (1984-88) fostered the endurance of the aesthetic and narrative of the starving Ethiopian. Within the trajectory of representations of perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canadian history, the 1984-1984 period demarcates a significant departure from previously pervasive representations and perceptions of the East African state and its peoples. Analysis of the discursive visual and textual construction of famine during this period is imperative to understanding the irreversible transformation of Ethiopian history and identity. A disaster was transformed into a spectacle, and “the packaging of events into easily consumable form” determined the endurance of the narrative from this period as “a repeatable cycle of meanings.” As a result, more than one hundred years of discourse privileging the distinctive historical roots of Ethiopia, addressed in chapters one and two of this dissertation, was forever dislodged. One single unrelenting episode of famine coupled with exemplars of western altruism erased Ethiopia’s preceding symbolism from mass consciousness. Thereafter, Ethiopians were perpetually typecast as ahistorical, malnourished, and destitute stateless victims of famine, drought, war and a communist military regime.

---

819 Ibid.
820 Berger, “Relief Speeded in Ethiopia”, 10.
822 Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 225.
823 Ibid., 223.
It is imperative to look back at the history of this particular period of famine and famine relief, to understand both the genesis and endurance of representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians from this period. The Ethiopian famine was a major international news item of the decade. Discourses on the Ethiopian famine of this period were inherently part of a “coherent ideological narrative” representing the “Third world”, that Edward Said first brought to the attention of the world in 1979. In September of 1974, the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces commonly known as the Derg, overthrew the government of Emperor Haile Selassie I. Renamed the Military Administrative council shortly after coming into power, the Derg embraced Communism as its ideology. During this period, the Derg switched the country’s alliance from the United States to the Soviet Union. Mengistu Haile Mariam was the face of the new Ethiopia.

Under Mengistu Haile Mariam’s leadership, the Derg ruled with ruthless abandon from 1974-1987. The transition from a dynastic monarchy to a military state was a violent one for Ethiopians. Decades of malcontent with the status-quo across the country fettered into civil wars across several regions of the nation. Internal opposition to the military state came from numerous groups, most with historic rivalries, to the preceding ruling elites. Notably, the protracted battles with the secessionist Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) or Shabia made frequent international headlines. EPLF had emerged in 1970 as a far left/ Marxist-Leninist military group, after it split from the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Another group which made frequent headlines was the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) from the northern province of Tigray. The Oromo Liberation Front was also engaged in wars of liberation throughout this period. Political affiliations were identified during the 1984-88 period as “the balancing scale between life and death” in the war-ravaged nation. With headlines such as “Exploiting The Famine”, “Marxist Role in Famine”, and “The Politics of Death in Ethiopia”, the

824 Ibid., 224.
825 Ibid.
826 Berger, “Relief Speeded in Ethiopia”, 10.
famine presented an opportunity to attack specific ideological enemies of the West.\textsuperscript{827} John Sorensen argues, that through the process of inoculation, repetition, condensation and absences in analysis, there was a proliferation of anti-communist discourse effectively blaming African nations for adopting socialist policies.\textsuperscript{828}

It was clear from the start of famine reporting in 1984, that the Ethiopian government was also hostile to foreign media, and determined to engage in forms of ideological warfare to subvert messages to the outside world.\textsuperscript{829} During our interview session, David MacDonald alluded to the fact that the resistance of the Derg to open up the country to the West was rooted in tensions surrounding the fact that the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Derg, was the very same year.\textsuperscript{830} Prior to international discovery of the famine, the Derg was preparing to mark the anniversary with appropriate grandeur, to demonstrate just how far the country had come. Famines already had a long and tempestuous history in Ethiopia. The Derg itself was positioned in power, partly due to the failings of Haile Selassie’s government during the preceding period of famine in the early 1970s. Emperor Haile Selassie’s government was accused of both hiding and then downplaying the effects of the famine then.\textsuperscript{831} The memory of the survivors of the former period speaks volumes to the legacy of the failings of a preceding Ethiopian government to protect its peoples. Some argue that “[The famine] is also what caused the revolution”.\textsuperscript{832} The Biblical scale famine of the 1970s under the watchful eye of a


\textsuperscript{828} Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 230.

\textsuperscript{829} Tony Burman’s account of first-hand experiences in trying to get the breaking news footage out of the country during the 1984 period speaks to this point poignantly. See Tony Burman’s “Ebola: Canada Forgets Its Leadership In Ethiopian Famine”, The Toronto Star, November 01, 2014. http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2014/11/01/ebola_canada_forgets_its_leadership_in_ethiopia

\textsuperscript{830} Author interview with Hon. David MacDonald, Tuesday March 28, 2017.

\textsuperscript{831} Zahra Moloo, “Ethiopia’s unforgettable famines: Here’s why they really happen”, https://www.cbc.ca/documentarychannel/features/ethiopias-unforgettable-famines-heres-why-they-really-happen

\textsuperscript{832} Ibid.
Christian Emperor was the “ticket for people to revolt”.\textsuperscript{833} There had been previous failed attempts to dislodge the strong-hold of monarchy, however, the famine of the 1970s was the effective lynchpin to the Emperor’s dynastic downfall. Revolutionaries from all spectrums of Ethiopian society, including students and members of the military coalesced to speak out on the issue of famine in 1973-74. Famine became a focal point for the students and middle-class residents of Addis Ababa, who took to the streets in protest against the Emperor and his government.\textsuperscript{834} An unabated famine fuelled a battle cry, and citizens across Ethiopia declared that the abuses of power by the aristocracy could no longer continue. A single episode of famine effectively brought down a long-standing and deeply entrenched legacy of hereditary rule in Ethiopia. The Derg was all too intimately aware of the preceding narrative. Tensions arose in 1984-88 from the fact that on the one hand, the Derg “wanted to praise what they had accomplished within the first decade”.\textsuperscript{835} But “on the other hand, they had to admit that they were in the midst of an all- out famine threatening hundreds of thousands, if not a few million lives”.\textsuperscript{836} Cognizance of the impervious past still colors representations of successive Ethiopian governments.\textsuperscript{837} Over three decades later, another one of the most enduring legacies of this period is the perpetual representation of Ethiopians, and other Africans, as perpetual and hapless victims of inept and brutal regimes.\textsuperscript{838}

In 1985, political scientist Theodore Vestal characterized the famine in Ethiopia as a “crises of many dimensions”.\textsuperscript{839} Vestal’s assessments ring true throughout this analysis of the implications of a pivotal decade in both Ethiopian and Canadian history. The African famine and the proposed resolutions in the 1984-88 period were often framed into neat binary narratives of nature vs man and or good vs evil. The binary

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{833} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{834} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{835} Author interview with Hon. David MacDonald, Tuesday March 28, 2017.
\textsuperscript{836} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{837} Nassisse Solomon, “1984: The Parable of Ethiopian Famine and Foreign Aid”, Active History: History Matters, \url{https://activehistory.ca/2016/05/1984-the-parable-of-ethiopian-famine-and-foreign-aid/}
representations implicitly or explicitly, underscored the failings and brutality of a Marxist-Communist dictatorship in Ethiopia. Famine was constructed as an ideological parable by the use of standard rhetorical techniques.\textsuperscript{840} Thus, whilst the images of starving women and children continued to elicit the empathy of the Canadian and the international public as a whole, the rhetoric surrounding the complexities of the political conundrums within the region were disheartening and off-putting to many Canadians. This chapter then explores too, how exposure to the difficult challenges of humanitarian relief in a conflict-ridden region, struggling with endemic bouts of famine, sowed the seeds for popular disenchantment. Disenchantment with the breadth of the problem resulted in the need to allocate blame for failures, in otherwise magnanimous relief efforts. The widespread need to rationalize the failures of such a spirited and tremendously successful international campaign manifested into an extensive introspective examination of existing mechanisms for delivery of aid and foreign policy objectives.

Ultimately, discourses and focus resorted to allocation of blame of the failures of famine relief on the brutality of the Ethiopian Marxist-Socialist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. The disenchantment of the Canadian public with the famine relief experience also lead to subsequent disengagement with, and even complete ignorance of, future bouts of famine in the region. Within living memory for many Canadians, the 1984-85 famine relief campaign remains as the lingering beacon of hope for the permanent eradication of famine on the African continent. A hope that was the impetus to mobilize many across the world into action to effect a positive change, a change that was then ardently believed to be a permanent one. Hence, this chapter chronicles some of the efforts of the Samaritan state, to illustrate the ways in which widespread belief in the power of the Samaritan state was unrelenting, bringing Ethiopia and Ethiopians into the consciousness of Canadians from coast to coast.

\textsuperscript{840} Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, abstract.
4.1 The Samaritan State Rallied: The Widespread Implications of Canadian Political Engagement

The Ethiopian famine was one of the first foreign policy crises encountered by Mulroney’s Progressive Conservative government, elected in early September 1984.\(^{841}\)

The cohesiveness of the Canadian government and ordinary citizens in concerted acts of “Canadian” Samaritanism/ relief efforts is integral to contextualizing the proliferation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian history and identity during this period. Social cohesion in famine relief was inspired by the federal government’s determination to assume an unusually high-profile leadership role in fostering various forms of participatory and citizen-engaged politics. Canada and Canadians embodied, and even aspired to exceed, the tenets of “good Samaritanism” first espoused by Keith Spicer in his hallmark monograph *Samaritan State? External Aid in Canada’s Foreign Policy* (1966).\(^{842}\) The tenets of Spicer’s work were recently revisited by political scientist Stephen Brown.\(^{843}\) Notions of altruism and humanitarianism articulated by politicians and citizens alike during the 1984-88 period, reflected Brown’s premise that true altruism required that “a state, like a person, should be generous to complete strangers without any self-interested motive.”\(^{844}\) Responding to Stewart’s CBC newscast, Foreign Minister Joe Clark told his party’s caucus on 7 November that it “is our duty as a people to respond.” Clark continued: “We will treat Ethiopia as an all-party matter... we want support from all Canadians”.\(^{845}\) From the outset of concerted relief efforts, Progressive Conservative leaders were convinced that the crisis was a concern, not only for the


\(^{842}\) Full citation, Keith Spicer, A Samaritan State? External Aid in Canada’s Foreign Policy, University of Toronto Press, 1966.


\(^{844}\) Ibid.,312.

government, but also “for the people of Canada.”

Hence, Clark asked the help of Members of Parliament throughout the House of Commons, and of citizens across the country to ensure that the Government acts and that the people act to do whatever they could to stop starvation in Ethiopia.

Clark advised that “MPs should contact service clubs and local mayors and ask them to lend their efforts to provide aid.” One of the faults in past Canadian foreign policy was that the Canadian people were shut out. The prime minister too, was moved by the “tragedy of vast starvation and death,” and a desire not to repeat errors of governments past, when he promised the House of Commons to “provide leadership and assistance in this grave crisis” despite a towering national deficit, the prospect of a tough budget, and campaign promises to create more jobs.

Clark and his compatriots were doubtless influenced by lessons learned from Canada’s mishandling of the Biafran crisis in Nigeria nearly two decades earlier. In a later report for The Financial Post, John Godfrey argued, “we have been down this road before in Africa, most notably 20 years ago during the Nigerian civil war, when Biafra attempted to break away”. Canadians, Godfrey argued, “were deeply moved by the plight of the Biafra and offered their support despite the official indifference of the Canadian government”. While Biafra quickly faded from popular memory in the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war, historian Stephanie Bangarth argues that “the lessons learned, the tactics employed by mainstream churches, NGOs, and individuals, and the pressure brought to bear on the federal government would serve both as a foundation on which to build future humanitarian relief operations in Africa and as an example of the importance of public mobilization.”

---

846 Joe Clark, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984, 28.
848 Ibid.
849 Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984, 39.
850 John Godfrey, “Muddling Through Africa”, The financial Post, May 9, 1988, David MacDonald collection, LAC.
851 Ibid.
Biafran war”, *The Canadian Press* syndicate reported that David MacDonald was inspired and “carried along by (other) people who were trying…..to cross incredible boundaries in an effort to put an end to this famine.” 853

In 1984, opposition members echoed the prime minister’s sentiments because, as Liberal MP Jean Chretien explained, “no one wants to be partisan about this issue”. 854 The national consensus in November 1984 was that “although Canada has its problems, we are fat compared with those countries.” 855 Chretien was right in noting that all Canadians wanted the government to do more, and that this was “not the time to cut foreign aid.” 856 Impassioned by a visit to the drought and famine ravaged East-African nation in December 1984, Clark several times underscored the Mulroney government’s commitment to taking leadership in this cause. The foreign minister’s call to action was met with resounding chants of “*Hear, Hear!*” 857 Official enthusiasm by the Canadian government, was echoed by the Canadian public. An ad hoc group of Canadian musical stars and celebrities, the Northern Lights, repeated the government’s call to action in an iconic charity pop song, “Tears Are Not Enough” that topped the charts for 1985. 858 Featuing news stories like “Artisans donate work to aid famine victims,” 859 and “Canucks pledge $1.5 M,” 860 press headlines illustrated the public’s engagement with the issue. The entire country was moved by the televised images of refugee camps and mass
starvation, resulting in an outpouring of support described as “magnificent,” with more than 500,000 Canadians donating about $35 million to Africa by May 1986.  

The national feeling persisted. Early in the second year of the relief effort, a survey conducted by the government’s chief pollster, Allan Gregg, found that the majority of Canadians surveyed “were more concerned about global problems of hunger and starvation than [domestic] economic problems.” Gregg characterized this finding as the prevalent attitude among Canadians and not just “a passing fad.” In March 1986, Gregg’s final report, entitled Canadians and Africa: What Was Said, highlighted the fact that in alignment with previous surveys, one in five Canadians continued “to cite world hunger and poverty as their second major issue of concern.” During the peak of famine relief efforts, the Canadian government was truly in-tune with the nation’s pulse. Indeed, Kim Nossal later asserted that if populism in politics is measured by a willingness to involve as many “ordinary people in the policy process as possible or practicable,” then the “Mulroney government had an evident populist streak.” In recent years, foreign affairs critics have cited this period as exemplary, in contrast to the seemingly apathetic attitude of successive governments in their responses to other subsequent African crises. Mulroney, it has been declared, “knew more about and cared more for Africa

---

862 The survey by Toronto-based Decima Research found that Canadians surveyed in early February wanted foreign aid to be exempt from government cuts. “Author,” “Foreign Aid Workers Determine Strong Relief Effort to continue,” The Evening Telegram, St. John’s Newfoundland, 18 February 1986.
863 “Author,” “Foreign Aid Workers Determine Strong Relief Effort to continue,” The Evening Telegram, St. John’s Newfoundland, 18 February 1986.
than any other Canadian leader before or since”. 867

Over the course of four years, acts of relief were carried out by a variety of state and non-state actors, including churches, community groups, schools, and individual professionals from a range of fields with different levels of expertise. 868 Heightened public awareness and engagement with the issue of famine in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, widened the space in Canada for a proliferation of discourses on the global duties and obligations of the state and its citizens, culminating in acts of “humanitarian internationalism.” 869 Renown political scientist Cranford Pratt defined “humane internationalism” as “an acceptance that citizens and governments of the industrialized world have ethical responsibilities towards those beyond their borders who are suffering severely and who live in abject poverty.” 870 In their collective response to the famine, Canadians demonstrated their commitment to this philosophy in spades. As early as 13 November 1984, Progressive Conservative MP Jim Edwards captured the national mood when he recounted how the Kiwanis Club of Edmonton was “recommending to its board of directors an expenditure of $10,000 for Ethiopian and African relief.” 871 Edwards narrated how he had received a call from an Edmonton doctor who volunteered to spend his six-week vacation in Ethiopia at his own expense. That, Edwards insisted, was “the true spirit of Canadian internationalism.” 872

Most of Canada’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) program was administered by CIDA, and assistance reached Ethiopia in this period through four

2009.
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/when-brian-mulroney-was-great-1.859343
867 Brian Stewart, “When Mulroney was Great”.
870 Ibid.
872 Ibid.
principal channels: bilateral arrangements, multilateral channels, special Canadian programs, and Canadian businesses supported by CIDA. Instead of relying on established mechanisms in the Department of External Affairs or CIDA, the Mulroney government appointed David Macdonald as its Emergency Coordinator for African Famine, effectively creating “a new *ad hoc* layer of political administration.” MacDonald was given the resources to develop a separate office to oversee all the relief activities of the government, NGOs, and private citizens, enabling Canadians to respond to the ensuing “human crisis in the most effective way possible.” MacDonald was essentially granted an implicit form of “super ministerial role and access,” allowing him to overcome bureaucratic barriers and to request immediate action directly from departments, powers that he credits as key to the successes of his team and its mission.

MacDonald was clearly the right man for the job. Over the course of his term as relief coordinator, MacDonald won the hearts and trust of the Canadian public, often using quiet diplomacy to “defuse criticism of Canadian food aid operations during a critical period.” First elected to Parliament from Prince Edward Island in 1965, he was a skilled political operative, who served as a cabinet minister in Joe Clark’s short-lived Progressive Conservative government in 1979 before losing his seat in 1984. An ordained United Church minister, Macdonald enjoyed a sterling reputation in Ottawa as a man of conscience. He championed aid to the break-away Nigerian province of Biafra in 1968-69 and opposed the imposition of the War Measures Act to crush the radical Front de libération du Québec in October 1970. Happy to rise above partisan differences, as an opposition MP, Macdonald joined Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s “Futures Secretariat,” a group of national opinion leaders promoting “public interest in Third

---

873 African Famine and Canada’s Response, 36.
875 Joe Clark, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984, 28.
876 Author interview with David MacDonald, 28 March 2017.
World issues.” MacDonald’s appointment reflected the Mulroney government’s bi-partisan approach to famine relief. MacDonald surmised that he was asked by the government because they needed someone who could tackle bureaucratic impediments, as well as “somebody they knew really well and trusted.”

In his report *Africa’s Famine and Canada’s Response (November 1984- March 1985)*, MacDonald outlined in great detail the ways in which Canadians from coast to coast responded. Canadians, he argued, responded in both traditional and “new and imaginative ways.” “There was a lot of spontaneous combustion” MacDonald recalled, “of people who wanted to do something meaningful.” “Not just write a cheque, and or raise money”, he added, “but actually organize people to go to Ethiopia”. One of the earliest public initiatives that MacDonald highlighted in the official report was a Halifax-based “adopt-a-village” airlift on Christmas Eve organized by Haligonians working with John Godfrey, president of Kings College University, and the Ottawa-based World University Service of Canada (WUSC). “I see it as an alliance of people in the community of all ages,” commented Godfrey. “What makes this thing great”, Godfrey further argued, was that there were “19 year olds with 69 and 42 year olds” who were working collaboratively applying their skills and patience toward a common objective. Godfrey asserted that it had been “a real trip for students in the Maritimes” who were talking to air force Colonels and helping to order planes around. The effort, MacDonald emphasized, quickly led to the “twinning” of Canadian communities in the Maritime Provinces with a number of Ethiopian villages. When the *Forum Africa* report was published in March of 1986, “it was underscored that perhaps to a greater degree than anywhere else in Canada, recommendations that came out of the Maritimes were firmly based on the social and economic experiences of the region”.

---

880 Ibid.
882 Author interview with David MacDonald, 28 March 2017.
883 Ibid.
Seeking long-term change through the practice of twinning, Canadians from coast-to-coast invested in helping individual Ethiopian communities, as a sustainable long-term strategy to ensure that a humanitarian crisis of this magnitude would not reoccur. The long-term goal, and oft espoused ideal of famine eradication was prevalent and persistent. The experience with Gode was not unusual. Gode was one of six Ethiopian villages in WUSC’s four-month-old Ogaden-wide emergency program that was matched up with a Canadian city. Inspired by Godfrey’s effort, a small group of students at the University of Toronto secured their school’s backing, obtained space in the International Student Centre and began fundraising. Students, staff, and faculty at U of T were challenged to support a community with a $12 donation, or a dollar per month, the price of a cup of coffee. Barbara Treviranus, one of the Toronto villagers, recalls her involvement in the start of this initiative as empowering to a fourth-year undergraduate interested in international development. “Adopted” as an International Youth Year activity by local broadcaster, City TV, plenty of media coverage followed. Dubbed the “village twinners,” they ensured widespread participation in their effort by publicizing it across the city’s subway system and by engaging Mayor Art Eggleton, who

---

887 Author Interview with Barbara Treviranus, one of the original Toronto villagers, December 5, 2017.
888 Ibid.
889 E-mail exchange with Barbara Treviranus, 10 November 2017.
attached an appeal on Gode’s behalf to the city’s July tax bill. Rallying the city of Toronto proved to be a cinch with almost 20 Toronto “Villagers” schools cooperating “to aid Gode with awareness weeks, all night dances and popcorn sales.”

By the time activist Dawn MacDonald visited Gode in February 1986, this Toronto group had raised over “$60,000 with an estimated further $40,000 coming from various school and church campaigns in progress.” The powerful symbolism of the juxtaposition of the able-bodied and committed Canadian youth in contrast to the “needy third world child” was evoked once more. The engagement of youth in relief efforts was formative and would help to sustain the perception of this era as admirable and unique, anchoring the subsequent narrative of exemplary Canadian leadership in a global cause. Canadian youth were once again emblems of the nation’s commitment to a worthy international cause.

Nova Scotians forged a relationship with the village of Degehbur in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Through the adopt-a-village funds, a community school was being renovated, to continue providing 362 males and 168 female students with opportunities to learn. The school was built by the Swedes in the 1970s, and it was comprised of three separate buildings heavily damaged during the Ogaden wars of 1977-78. Five hundred children aged six to eighteen called three make-do buildings home during the hours of 9-5, and another 600 adults came at night to learn to read and write. Their collective hope was that those basic skills would “give them a chance to better a land which is harsh and unforgiving”. After a community visit by Canadians the assessment was that “although the children do not know where Nova Scotia is, they are fostering a connection

---

891 Ibid.
892 Ibid.
894 Ibid.
with the larger world outside Ethiopia”. 895 The evidence of success was in the fact that a 12-year old boy who was with the Canadian crew picked up a Bible brought by the photographer. The boy opened the book of Genesis and began to read “in the beginning…” 896 He reportedly stumbled over a few words in English, but he read aloud to the visitors for a good thirty minutes seeking occasional encouragement. This session was sufficient proof that learning was indeed going on, in spite of the near dilapidated condition of the school. 897 Education was identified as a key strategy to preventing future bouts of famines and mitigating for cyclical poverty. Without Adopt-A-Village, the children would not have had a school to go to. Instead, they would have spent “the day playing soccer or hanging around with friends”. 898

In addition to twinning, other innovative initiatives were also taking place. In November 1984, the Kingston Kinsmen Club organized facilities, drug supplies and personnel to provide a medical relief team in response to the disaster conditions in Ethiopia. 899 They named their project the African Medical Relief Program (AMR). By February of 1985, the group had assembled a medical and nursing team of fifteen, plus a support group, and raised $1-million in drug supplies and camp equipment. 900 The first AMR team was deployed on a Canadian forces jet on February 15, 1985 under the auspices of the Christian Relief and Development Association. This particular group established a desperately needed medical center in Bete and spent three months aiding thousands of starving and ill refugees waiting for medical attention. Bete was a sizeable camp primarily organized by Canadian civilian and government agencies. 901 The team video recorded their experiences, so that Canadians could visually witness just how much their support meant. 902

---

896 Ibid.
897 Ibid.
898 Ibid.
900 Ibid.
901 Ibid.
902 Ibid.
The medical facility at Camp Bete was located 260 kilometres north of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s capital city. The AMR team at Camp Bete became exemplary, inspiring doctors and nurses across the country to join the movement. The original contingent was formed in the summer of 1985, when members of the Kingston and London kinsmen joined forces after some friendly fund-raising competition. In the spirit of friendly competition, Kingston’s Mayor John Gerretsen had initially issued a challenge to London’s Mayor Martin Gleeson to match the support that the Kingston community had given to the Camp Bete project. On July 10, 1985, the Victoria Hospital Public Relations and Mutual Interest Committee in London committed to raising the $70,000 needed to support a London team with travel, food and medical supplies for three months. The group sought a campaign chairman outside of the hospital and initiated talks with CFPL-TV. CFPL-TV subsequently announced that it would be a full partner with Victoria Hospital in the camp London project, offering a gift of $5,000 to kick-start the fundraising campaign. By July 15, the London group had secured the commitment of a CFPL-TV crew to accompany the London nurses, alongside reporter Dahlia Reich from the London Free Press. Shortly thereafter, the reporters and the medical team started their inoculation series, provided by Victoria’s Employee Health Services under the direction of Chris Jackson, R.N.

By July 27th, brimming with confidence, the Victoria Hospital Committee decided that the project should be called “Camp London” and Carolyn Murray, Ann Smith, Carolyn Davies, Bernie Gilmore and John-Burke Gaffney met Kinsmen Peter Butler and several of the Kingston nurses including Sandra Mackenzie, at the Park Lane hotel in London to discuss plans. Alderman Art Cartier attended the meeting as deputy Mayor of London and a decision was made to approach the London City Council. On
July 29th, the London group made a submission to the Community and Protective services Committee of City Council to obtain full endorsement for the camp London Project. Their proposal was accepted, accompanied with an unexpected gift of $1,000,000. The City of London declared that August 31 would be Camp London Day. On August 2, Canada Trust announced that it would accept Camp London donations at all its branches in the region. CFPL-TV began a series of announcements featuring once popular news anchorman turned parliamentarian Jack Bughardt, inviting the public to join the campaign. On the occasion of its 110th anniversary, Victoria Hospital Corporation announced a gift of $5000 to Camp London, and offered to match dollar-for-dollar the monies raised by its employees and members of the London and district Kinsmen Clubs. By December of 1985, MacDonald in his capacity as the Emergency famine Coordinator announced that his office would be contributing $400,000 to the camp. Calgarians would attempt to conjure up the same level of excitement and support with hopes of sending a doctor and five nurses. The AMR team was illustrative of a widespread campaign of famine relief, successful in rallying communities from the local to the national scale.

Citizens in more rural settings were also engaged in exemplary efforts. In the summer of 1986, Susan James of the Guelph African Relief Network (GAFRN) wrote Ontario Premier David Peterson, petitioning the provincial government to focus on “community-to-community” action between the province and Africa. GAFRN, characterized as “an informal grouping of... agencies and organizations working either in development assistance or in education in international development” was a typical small scale Canadian initiative. GAFRN was advocating for long-term change through

910 Ibid.
911 “Diary of a Fabulous Project”, LAC.*For more information on the significance of Burghardt see: https://london.ctvnews.ca/about-us and https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/People/Profile?personId=13495
912 Ibid.
913 Gordon Lee, “Funding Low For Ethiopian Medical Team”, Calgary Herald, December 17, 198, David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
914 Ibid.
915 Susan James to David Peterson, 14 July 1986, David Macdonald Collection, Volume R12287 File 229-9, LAC.
916 Ibid.
cooperative action. GAFRN aimed to bolster “sustained individual personal involvement by both Canadians and Africans” and wanted more done by Canadian governments to rally their public into greater displays of international humanitarianism. “We believe,” James urged the premier to action, “that the response we have observed here to the challenge of the African drought and famine, has opened a door to much higher levels of engagements of Ontario people and their communities with Africans and development actions in Africa.”

GAFRN members argued that deeper ties between Guelph and Africa would have a long lasting impact, and were consequently seeking the support of their provincial government in bringing their efforts at the local city council to fruition. The group hoped that the province would support an exchange of health care providers, broaden the existing activities of colleges and universities in sharing both students and teachers, create more opportunities for African students to come to Ontario schools and universities through a revised fee structure, and initiate the sharing of provincial and municipal methods of planning natural resource and agricultural resource assessment and development. All of these recommendations were indicative of the fact that Canadian relief efforts would inevitably veer into activities that might- be- considered as foreign policy initiatives. The Mulroney government’s willingness to engage its citizens in participatory forms of politics facilitated a space for the proposal of such initiatives. GAFRN, like other relief organizations, participated in the national “Forum Africa” consultation meetings, which invited Canadians to “evaluate the African crisis, learn from it and to reflect on the role they could play in the recovery of those African countries suffering from famine.” Forum Africa was initialized by the federal government on 4 September 1985 in the City Halls of Ottawa and Hull; by February 1986, more than fifty communities across six regions of the country had held symposium

917 Ibid.
918 Ibid.
919 Ibid.
sessions. Though the impetus for these meetings came from the Office of the Canadian Emergency Coordinator, it was intended that community-based organizations, including humanitarian groups, churches, education, business, unions, municipalities, and the media would assume responsibility for the program. Ultimately, “Forum Africa” underlined the federal government’s capacity and willingness to leverage existing networks and resources to spearhead Canada-wide engagement on a foreign aid issue.

Overall, the level of public and political engagement with the famine in Ethiopia was impressive and cross-sectional. Yet, it is also cause for much reflection. Based on reports produced by MacDonald and his team, ideas of personal sacrifice to help Ethiopians were palatable to many Canadians, so long as the sacrifice was for the greater good. Perhaps the most poignant and hard-hitting examples of devotion to the cause were the demonstrations of support from Canadians who themselves were faced with economic hardship. John Amagoalik, co-chairman of the Inuit Committee on National Issues, told a news conference that most Inuit of his “generation have all been affected, directly or indirectly, by famine.” Four Inuit representatives were invited to tour Ethiopia, after Ethiopian authorities learned that “Canada’s 25,000 Inuit had contributed more than $100,000 to famine relief”. While the big donations had received all the attention, *The Toronto Star* argued that the Inuit had done “more than their share”. The 500 residents of Pangnirtung on Baffin Island collected $5000 in a single night, whilst 700 residents of another village in the Northwest Territories raised another impressive $9000. Amagoalik placed an emphasis on the fact that the Inuit identified “with others who live in harsh conditions and suffer from famine.” He poignantly elaborated in another news report that: “when the Inuit saw the faces of hunger on TV screens, something hit

---

921 Ibid, 7.
922 Ibid.
924 Joel Ruimy, “Ethiopia needs massive aid, Inuit says”, Toronto Star, December 17, 1985, David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
925 Ibid.
926 Ibid.
927 Canadian Press, “Inuit Group off to Ethiopia For Tour of Famine Hit Areas,” LAC.
us in our guts”, he added, “we could feel their pain”. Amagoalik urged Canadians to “give some thought to the famine in Ethiopia and other parts of Africa when they sit down to their Christmas Turkey”.  

In another example, Nancy Leavitt from Edmonton wrote to Clark offering $125. Leavitt, a full-time student and mother of three teenagers, clearly felt the sacrifice at home was worth the price of helping the “starving children of Ethiopia.” “I trust this money will go for food and not arms,” she wrote, explaining that she had told her own children that their Christmas will not be an elaborate one, but that they will “all have a clear conscience” knowing that they did their utmost to contribute. Leavitt’s rationale for support of the cause is indicative of the cause célèbre nature of the Ethiopian famine. Irrefutably, the African famine of this period elicited mass compassion from Canadians from all walks- of- life. The optimism and determination that marked popular humanitarianism in Canada was infectious and far-reaching.

4.2 The Rise Of The Cause Célèbre, The Creation Of A Disenchanted State And The Ensuing Memory Of Mass Deprivation

It was widely recognized during the period that Canada had on “a per capita basis and in terms of absolute figures, contributed the most towards food aid in Ethiopia.” Between 1984-85, through regular CIDA programs and the Special Fund for Africa (set up in response to the drought), Canada supplied Ethiopia with well over 100,000 tons of food with a value of more than $39 million. These figures represented almost one quarter of Canada’s total food aid to Africa. During this same time period, in addition to increased food aid and assistance from the Bilateral and Special Programs Branch, Ethiopia was also the principal recipient of funds from the $65 million Special Fund for

928 Ruimy, “Ethiopia needs massive aid, Inuit says”, LAC.
929 Ibid.
931 Ibid.
932 Chretien, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, November 7, 1984, 22.
Africa and the $20 million African Recovery Fund. The main CIDA objective in Ethiopia was food security, and it focused its efforts on providing food aid and investing in bilateral projects through NGO’s, the Africa 2000 program, a Business Cooperation Branch’s Industrial cooperation program, and a joint CIDA–IDRC International Development Research Project. The direct participation of Canadians was elicited through assistance from CIDA’s Special Programs Branch, in support of the Canadian government’s “efforts to promote self-reliance and meet basic human needs in developing countries.”

In 1985, MacDonald asserted that “only about one quarter of the $813 million Canada spent on aid to Africa was allotted directly to food shipments”. In alignment, the final report of MacDonald’s office presented in March of 1986, offered a series of recommendations for further Canadian involvement in Africa. One direct outcome of the ongoing public interest and opposition pressure for the Mulroney government to act, was the Africa 2000 operation. Conceived as a long term policy and programme commitment, Africa 2000 encompassed all Canadian ODA involvement in Africa. Described as more than “a financial kitty”, Operation Africa 2000 was essentially a Canadian policy commitment made for 15 years, with 150 million from existing CIDA funds in 1986 allocated over the course of 5 fiscal years to special initiatives. The central focus of the operation was policy focused, with a particular emphasis on agriculture, reforestation, food security, and women. As Stephen Brown notes, it is in legacy of this “veritable golden age of aid to Africa”, that Canada provided more official development assistance (ODA) to Africa than to any other region in every year from 1980 to 2011.

934 Ibid.
935 Ibid.
936 Ibid, 7.
938 Africa 2000 Briefing Book, David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
939 Ibid.
940 Ibid.
941 Ibid.
The evolution of Canadian government policy toward Africa during this period should be prefaced with knowledge of pre-existing assessments of matters on the continent. In light of geo-political considerations particularly the steadfast Cold War, foreign aid was already a politically charged subject in Canada. This was of relevance when it came to dealing with the famine-stricken regions in Africa in the mid-1980s. Notably, the efforts of outgoing Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to increase aid to Ethiopia in 1983-84 in anticipation of its looming famine had previously drawn sharp criticism from the Progressive Conservative opposition.943 In January 1984, Progressive Conservative MP Ron Stewart had called into question both the nature and the implications of Canadian aid to Ethiopia. Stewart was especially concerned by reports from the European Parliament that Western aid to Ethiopia was being sent onward to the Soviet Union, Canada’s Cold War adversary. Moreover, citing reports that the Ethiopian government was “spending 40% of its budget on its army – instead of feeding its starving citizens,” he questioned CIDA’s prudence in allocating $10 million in food aid to Ethiopia. While members of his conservative party supported aid when and where it was needed, Stewart insisted that accountability and transparency on the part of the recipient nation should be weighted heavily. The MP further contended that Liberal economic policies had put Canada “in the same league as Mexico, another bankrupt nation.” “The taxpayers’ hard earned dollars,” Stewart concluded, should not be spent “propping up inefficiently run, one-party dictatorships that are politically unfriendly both to us and to the entire notion of democracy and human rights.”944 That was just 10 months prior to the incoming Conservative government’s call to action in November of 1984.

Given pre-existing patterns of partisan conflict over aid, it is noteworthy that the
overwhelming public and political response to the Ethiopian crisis after November 1984 swept away concerns regarding the Ethiopian government and the efficacy of the CIDA’s aid delivery system. Yet, as political scientist Mark W. Charlton argues in *The Making of Canadian Food Aid Policy (1992)*, the Ethiopian famine remained a contentious affair. In his book, Charlton outlines the heated debates over the morality of providing aid to a government with a clear track-record of human rights abuses. In particular, Charlton underscores how the resettlement programmes of the Ethiopian government were perceived to be “genocidal and coercive” policies by many aid agencies and government critics, some of whom wanted to withhold aid as an appropriate response. 945 During the Spring of 1986, the Derg’s controversial resettlement programme posed ethical dilemmas for Canadian officials. Michael Posner, national editor for *Macleans* was part of an envoy of Canadian aid officials and parliamentarians who toured Ethiopia to visit sites where Canadian funds had been utilized to help resettle farmers from the “parched north to the highlands of the south and west”. 946 Whilst touring Jarso and other resettlement villages, Canadian officials were confronted with the ethics of funding such large-scale resettlement of peoples to “more productive regions”, and in the process funding and sustaining “a poorly organized, perhaps corrupt and inhumane Marxist-Leninist regime”. 947 During the time of the tour, Canada had yet to adopt a “firm line on resettlement”. 948 MacDonald in his capacity as emergency relief coordinator, four MPs and Lawrence Cummings (national Director of Oxfam Canada) all wrestled with the issue, unable to arrive at a consensus. “Some form of resettlement is necessary and we should put our money where we see hope and not despair”, argued NDP MP James Manley of British Columbia. 949 In contrast, B.C Tory MP Mary Collins Capilano expressed her serious reservations about promoting the political philosophy of the Derg. 950 “Resettlement is one thing”, argued Toronto Tory MP Reg Stackhouse, but “resettlement as the initial

---

945 Charlton, 170.
947 Ibid.
948 Ibid.
949 Ibid.
950 Ibid.
phase of turning Ethiopia into an Orwellian Animal farm is quite another”. 951 The resettlement debate was important to Ottawa, and much like the delegation that visited the country- Canadian opinion was “sharply divided”. 952 Nonetheless, Posner confidently predicted that most Canadians would err on the side of caution, sharing Stackhouse’s contention that as Canadian taxpayers, they should not support “the creation of a mini Maoist China in Ethiopia”. 953 History would prove both Stackhouse and Posner correct.

At least initially, Foreign Minister Clark easily quelled fears that either the brutal civil war or a corrupt Ethiopian government might disrupt aid. “The Government and authorities of Ethiopia,” he confidently asserted, “are doing everything that is possible in very difficult circumstances to ensure that aid that comes from the rest of the world to help starving people in Ethiopia, will get to those people.” 954 Macdonald insisted that a “quiet diplomacy approach” adopted by him and his team was effective at getting aid to where it was needed the most. 955 While publicly reassuring Canadians that the Ethiopian government was allocating Canadian aid responsibly, MacDonald channelled some aid through NGO’s who were able to funnel it to the severely afflicted provinces of Eritrea and Tigre. 956 Anxious to help, most Canadians trusted Clark and Macdonald to bring their hopes for Ethiopia to fruition.

However, by early 1988, it was difficult to deny the evidence of gross misconduct. Eye-witness accounts and official reports documented villages being burned and food being stored until rotten or sold to the highest bidders. Continued reports of looting, confiscations, rapes and killings were indeed deeply disturbing. Other key terms underscored within organization reports during this period were land rights abuses, displacement, war, and firing squads. Forced conscription was also taking place in both

951 Ibid.
953 Ibid.
954 Joe Clark, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984, 22.
955 Author interview with David MacDonald, March 28, 2017 and also in Charlton, 170. For press coverage of a Canadian delegation’s visit to the Ethiopian Highlands, in particular, see: “Canadians, UN reject Ethiopian Abuse Charges”, Ottawa Citizen, March 19, 1986.
956 Charlton, 170.
Ethiopia and Eritrea.  

A June 1986 report by Amnesty International documented the “torture, arbitrary detention and extra judicial execution of thousands of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, by the Ethiopian military”. Consequently, instead of sending cheques to their members of Parliament, Canadians were soon sending petitions demanding an “end to the hostilities in Ethiopia.” With the easing of the drought in 1986, many donors were also increasingly aware of the need to include long-term rehabilitation with relief assistance.

Consequently, by April 1988, the focus of discourse within both the Canadian government and the public sphere shifted from celebratory support for relief assistance to more pointed expressions of concern and criticism over the political and moral implications of providing aid to Ethiopia. A typical petition delivered by Liberal opposition leader John Turner, with “1,200 signatures from Vancouver and across the country” called on the government to lead “an international development and peace initiative for the immediate cessation of hostilities and internal violence in Ethiopia.”

Four years into the nationwide famine relief campaign, Canadians were arguably seeking more systemic change to deal with the circumstances in the Horn of Africa.

Winnipeg MP Bill Blaikie, the NDP’s foreign policy spokesperson, became an especially trenchant critic of the government’s relationship with the Ethiopian state. When inquiring about Ottawa’s ability to get food through to the Ethiopian provinces of Tigray and Eritrea, often described by parliamentarians as “rebel territories,” Blaikie insisted that Clark assure the House of Commons “that there is a place where Canada will draw the line.” Blaikie demanded to know when Canada would “say that the humanitarian need for food to get to starving people, regardless of the political circumstances is paramount in Canadian policy.” Blaikie’s criticisms would signal the

---

957 Eritrean Relief Association Papers, David MacDonald Collection, Box R12287-219, LAC.
958 “Ethiopia: Political Imprisonment and Torture”, in Eritrean Relief Association Papers, David MacDonald Collection, David MacDonald Collection, Box R12287-219, LAC.
959 John Turner, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 13 April 1988, 14424-5.
960 Ibid. For other examples include one presented by Howard McCurdy (Windsor Walkersville) with 1,200 signatures, and another from Carole Jacques (Montreal-Mercier) with more than 1,300 names.
961 Bill Blaikie, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, May 3rd 1988, 15083.
beginning- of- the end of the cause célèbre, as Ethiopian famine relief became increasingly too complicated for the general- public and the Canadian government to remain as fervently engaged as they were in November 1984. The spectacle of charity, asserts Sorensen, “was also part of the ideological narrative of African betrayal”. 962 The Derg’s ruthlessness and abuse of the charity of the West, was part-and-parcel of a steadfast perception of historical African rejection of the “benefits of the civilizing mission”. 963

By December 1988, Canadians clearly dissatisfied with the status quo in aid delivery to Ethiopia were also writing letters of protest to non-government agencies engaged in relief efforts in Ethiopia. In one such example, Matt and Peggy Taylor penned a thoroughly substantiated two-page critique and letter of appeal to John Martin, the Chief Executive Officer of the Unitarian Service of Canada (USC). Non-contributors to USC, the Taylors were writing to Martin to express their discontent with a report they had received in the mail from the organization in November of 1988. 964 The report entitled “Seeds of Survival” issued by the organization, was a demonstration of the USC’s continued commitment to the cause of famine eradication, by highlighting the organization’s assistance of Ethiopian farmers in achieving “self sufficiency”. Whilst underscoring their enthusiasm for the concept of the program, the Taylors utilized their letter as an opportunity to speak on behalf of the Smithers Human Rights Society and contest the underlying continued focus on addressing the issues of Ethiopian peoples versus the Eritrean peoples. Based on their examination of the USC’s report, the Taylor’s poignantly expressed that they did not see anything “in the literature about USC Canada’s approach to the survival needs of Eritrean people”. 965 In response to the information that was remiss, the Taylors provided an overview of “some literature about the Eritrean achievements in spite of savage abuse of human rights by Ethiopia an its military forces

962 Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 236.
963 Ibid.
964 Letter to John Martin, Chief Executive Officer of Unitarian Service Committee Canada (Ottawa), from Matt and Peggy Taylor of British Columbia, Dated December 15, 1988, found in David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
965 Ibid.
supported by both Western and Soviet aid”. 966 The ethical considerations fervently outlined by the Taylors are imperative to understanding the continued imminence of the geo-political divides of the cold war in shaping the public’s perceptions of foreign diplomacy matters in this period.

Demonstrating the shifting tides of Canadian public opinion on the Ethiopian famine, in this particular letter, the Taylor’s also cleverly articulated and factually justified their belief that advocacy for Eritrean peoples should be part- and- parcel of the USC’s work in famine relief in the region. The Smithers Society had recently hosted Mebrat Haile from the National union of Eritrean Women. Compelled by the information that she presented, the Taylors were using their subsequent research on the causes for Eritrean independence to make a case for Canadian intervention in the matters at hand. “From the point of view of justice, the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration”, they quoted from John Foster Dulles, US ambassador to the UN, speaking on a session on Eritrea in 1952.967 Specifically, the Taylors were requesting that the USC “appeal directly to the government of Ethiopia, the United Nations, Israel and the Soviet Union for a cease fire”, in efforts to end what they characterized as a 27 years long war.968 In support of their claims the Taylors emphasized the historical context of the current conflict. They underscored the fact that Eritrea was federated in 1952, only then to be “annexed in 1962 by the Haile Selassie regime unilaterally”.969 Ethiopia, it was

966 Ibid.
967 Ibid. * The Taylors utilize Dulle’s famous quote from the Proceedings of the Permanent People’s Tribunal of the International League for The Rights and Liberations of Peoples which took place May 24-26,1980.. It is noteworthy that the Taylor’s do not actually use Dulles full statement to the council, which is often fully referenced in several articles and books on the Eritrean cause for liberation: “From the point of view of justice, the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interests of the United States in the Red Sea Basin and considerations of security and world peace makes it necessary that the country has to be linked with our ally Ethiopia”.
968 Letter to John Martin, Chief Executive Officer of Unitarian Service Committee Canada, LAC.
969 Ibid. * Arguments posed by the Taylors are historically substantiated by the works of Canadian Sociologists Atsuoka Matsuoka and John Sorensen. In their seminal article, “Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea”, the pair outline the ways in which discontent in Eritrea grew as Ethiopia subverted the federation and finally annexed Eritrea in 1962. Eritrean nationalists began war against Ethiopia in 1961. Published in Dialectical Anthropology 26 (2001): 39.
widely argued had claimed Eritrea based on historical association, and an economic need for access to the Red Sea.\(^{970}\) In addition to its political utility at that time, the historical context provided by the Taylor’s is also noteworthy because it demarcates an irreversible historical shift in western discourses on Ethiopia, and underscores the historical and political diminishment of the previously heralded legacy of the Empire of Haile Selassie. The Taylor’s letter is also reflective of the political shifts which occur in the perspectives of famine relief agencies and advocates across Canada. The scholarship trajectory of John Sorensen and Atsuoko Matsuoka referenced in subsequent chapters is an academic manifestation of this phenomenon.

On one hand, as Sorensen argues, by “dismissing the nationalist movement in Eritrea as ‘secessionist bandits’, the Derg had ironically adopted the nineteenth-century nationalist terminology of the preceding regime that it had brutally deposed and attempted to excise from public consciousness, albeit domestic or international.\(^{971}\)

Moreover, the famine crises was initially kept under wraps by the Derg, because there was a “long standing anxiety about- and even outright resistance to- outside involvement”.\(^{972}\) As MacDonald cogently argued in 1988, “this country has existed for so many hundreds of years as an isolated kingdom, so you don’t change attitudes overnight, even in the midst of a crisis like the famine”.\(^{973}\) Eritrea’s contested annexation and federated political status was not news to the Canadian government by any means. However, with both domestic and international political implications to consider, the thorny subject was strategically subsumed during this period. In a subsequent interview with John Sorensen, David MacDonald (by then former Ambassador to Ethiopia), stated that : “Canada would never support a referendum in Eritrea because it might provide a bad example for Quebec (despite the fact that Quebec has held a referendum on separation from Canada)”\(^{974}\)

\(^{970}\) Atsuoko Matsuoka and John Sorensen, “Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea”, Ibid.

\(^{971}\) Ibid.

\(^{972}\) Canada’s Ambassador Speaks out”, The Chronicle-Herald, March 7, 1988. David MacDonald Collection, LAC.

\(^{973}\) Ibid.

\(^{974}\) Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 240.
By 1988, some like reporters like John Godfrey argued that there was simply “no right side in Ethiopia”.\(^{975}\) The technique of what Sorensen characterizes as “Neither-Norism”, was widely applied in the sporadic coverage of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict between 1989-1990, with both sides of the conflict blamed for the disruption of food supplies.\(^{976}\) Canada's Minister of External Relations, Monique Landry, publicly “attacked both sides for holding the civilian population hostage” and Conservative MP and Minister of Employment and Immigration Barbara McDougall lamented: “both parties have clearly placed their military and political priorities above humanitarian concerns”.\(^{977}\) The consensus was that “civil wars are always brutal”, and that all a “well-intentioned Canadian government can do is monitor what is happening on both sides”, to exercise whatever public or private pressure it can exert to “save the lives of innocent civilians”.\(^{978}\) Yet, in spite of the political rhetoric espoused, critics like Sorensen argued that “the commitment of the West to maintain the ‘territorial integrity’ of Ethiopia” during this period guaranteed that political priorities would ultimately supersede public outcries of humanitarian concern.\(^{979}\)

By the tail end of the relief period, thanks to the tireless efforts of NGO’s and other human rights advocacy groups, international scholars, and members of the East-African Diaspora, the politics of giving aid to the Ethiopian government of Mengistu Haile Mariam was rightfully problematized. The Derg was utilizing aid as a weapon of war, and withholding food was clearly a means of furthering its own political agenda. In March of 1988, *The Globe and Mail* asserted that “Ethiopia today is a land of heroes and villains”.\(^{980}\) “The heroes are easy to spot”, George Somerwill asserted. They were the “two young Canadian pilots who fly their helicopter, a tonne of wheat suspended

---

\(^{975}\) John Godfrey, “Muddling Through Africa”, *The financial Post*, May 9, 1988, David MacDonald collection, LAC.

\(^{976}\) Sorensen also references a 1990 CBC television report to this effect, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 240.

\(^{977}\) Ibid.

\(^{978}\) Godfrey, “Muddling Through Africa”.

\(^{979}\) Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 240.

\(^{980}\) George Somerwill, “Practice Gives Famine’s foes an edge”, *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday March 19, 1988: D3. David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
Heroes were also exemplary Ethiopians like the Catholic Priest, who supervised “the aid and development program in the government controlled parts of Eritrea”. The villains, however, Somerwill argued, “are harder to spot”. Villains were the bureaucrats who utilized food as a weapon, denied permission to transport planes to fly desperately needed supplies into Eritrean towns, and or the local rebel commanders who wilfully destroyed trucks that could have been utilized to carry grain. Overall, Somerwill argued, the famine situation was far more complex in 1988 versus in 1985, because the civil war was impeding the efforts of relief workers in the region.

By October of 1987, Macdonald was discussing “donor fatigue" as an imminent issue faced by aid agencies, "because it was becoming hard to keep appealing to public concern”. During that same interview, MacDonald praised the federal government in Canada for doubling its annual aid to Ethiopia to $20 million from $10 million. Canada was stated to be the largest international supplier of aid to Ethiopia, donating some $50 million dollars of food aid in 1986, but it was not without criticism as some within the Canadian government felt that this role had put “Canada too close to Mengistu”. Some NGO’s in the region such as Oxfam were more critical of Canadian famine aid in Ethiopia with the argument “that by acquiescing to Mengistu's order”, Canada had effectively “ensured that the bulk of its aid does not go where it is most needed”. Hence, while the images of starving women and children continued to elicit the empathy of the Canadian and the international public as a whole, the rhetoric surrounding the complexities of the political conundrums within the region became

981 Ibid.
982 Ibid.
983 Ibid.
984 Ibid.
986 Ibid.
987 Ibid.
forever off-putting. After this period, African famine, particularly in Ethiopia and Sudan simply evoked a “been there, done that attitude”. \(^{988}\)

### 4.3 “Bushels of Bread to Feed Ethiopians”: Religious Fervor and the Moral Imperative for Famine Relief

Communism was the ideological adversary. However, relief to the apocalyptic crisis was not a solely secular enterprise. “The inseparability of faith and action” was demonstrated at variant levels.\(^{989}\) In a clear cut illustration, disaster relief, the rehabilitation of refugees and the inauguration of the Canadian Foodgrains bank were accredited to the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada (MCC) and six other Protestant denominations.\(^{990}\) By the 1980s, Mennonites had developed a steadfast “reputation of humbly and efficiently serving the needy” in the name of Jesus Christ”, both in Canada and abroad.\(^{991}\) When a Campbellville Ontario couple decided to do something about the “starving of Ethiopia”, they instinctively donated their farm to the MCC.\(^{992}\) During the 1984-85 period, CIDA also approved a 3 year grant worth 5.7 million dollars for the MCC, without the added burden of detailed submissions and reporting.\(^{993}\)

On Sunday February 21, 1988, the congregation of St. Mary’s Anglican Church in Brinsley, Ontario did a “little consciousness raising” to start a money raising campaign for food aid to Ethiopia.\(^{994}\) The food drive, dubbed “Bushels of Bread” for Ethiopia was considered to be a meaningful way for the church in St. Mary’s to commemorate their church’s 125\(^{th}\) anniversary.\(^{995}\) Bushels of Bread was an ecumenical effort across

\(^{988}\) Moeller, 9.
\(^{990}\) Ibid.
\(^{991}\) Ibid.
\(^{992}\) Ibid.
\(^{993}\) Ibid.
\(^{994}\) Pat Currie, “Church Campaign, Bushels of Bread, to feed Ethiopians”, The London Free Press, February 20, 1988:B3. David MacDonald Collection, R12287-225, LAC.
\(^{995}\) Ibid.
Middlesex county, with major churches from Lucan to Strathroy engaged. The campaign was scheduled to run through Lent and end on March 27, Palm Sunday. The featured speaker for the fundraising campaign kick-off was Don Langford. Langford was a Kerwood area farmer and the “mission consultant” for the London Conference of the United Church of Canada. Langford had been to Ethiopia several times and was “intimately aware of the situation”. The goal was to raise $12,500 to buy 125 tonnes of grain to mark occasion. CIDA was matching the funds raised three-to-one. Three years into the relief campaign, the church was acutely aware that the public appeal of the Ethiopian cause was wearing off. Rev. Dog McKenzie conceded it was “becoming more difficult to stir concern for Ethiopia”, particularly with reports of donated food being utilized as a weapon of war.997

A team of 11 farmers and church delegates left for Ethiopia on March 1 of 1988. The team was financed by Partnership Africa Canada, a fund established to encourage partnerships between Canadian and African non-governmental groups.998 The Canadian team members represented the cities of London, Windsor, Sarnia, Belgrave and Sault Ste. Marie.999 The objective of the partnership was for Canadian farmers to offer “practical help” to their Ethiopian counterparts.1000 The aim was to have Canadian farmers visit Ethiopia for three-month, six-month, or two-year periods, and work with an Ethiopian farmers association. The Canadian partnership was supporting the work of the Ethiopian Orthodox church through food shipments, and provision of funds for the operating budget of the church vis-à-vis the contributions collected through the World Council of Churches. There was respect espoused for “one of the oldest branches of Christianity”.1001 In this vein, the Canadian delegation expressed that it also had something to learn from the Ethiopian church. “It is for us as Canadian Christians to experience how they are witnessing to their faith”, argued a member of the group. There

996 Ibid.
997 Ibid.
999 Ibid.
1000 Ibid.
1001 Ibid.
were lessons to be learned from how Ethiopians and the Orthodox church could keep their faith “under a Marxist government and in chronic conditions of famine and drought.”  

Church leaders challenged the idea that donor fatigue was taking over in Canada. In fact, the generosity and commitment of their congregants seemed to have no bounds. In February of 1988, two Roman Catholic Bishops in Ontario were cited disputing “the notion that Canadians were tired of giving to relief efforts in Ethiopia”. Hamilton diocese Bishop Anthony Tonnos and London diocese Bishop John Sherlock appealed to local Catholics to raise more funds for famine relief in Ethiopia. Tonnos, the Director of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace was actively engaged in raising funds for “Third World Countries”. The pair argued that the drought in 1988 was actually worse than the first round, and that people were effectively being kept alive by the food network established through the first famine relief efforts. There was a need for 1.3 million tonnes of grain, and the Ethiopian government was only providing the afflicted areas with 50,000. Canadians had pledged to meet 10 percent of that need. The real danger the piece acknowledged, was that food might not reach where it needed to go the most due to the ongoing civil war and the inefficacies of the Ethiopian government. Still, while agencies such as the Red Cross, Oxfam and others were complaining the public response had slowed down considerably, Tonnos asserted that he made a very gentle request to his congregants which yielded $158,000. The group had raised $8 million for Ethiopia during the last round of famine. Sherlock too argued that people were still willing to give but blamed the lack of wide-spread fervor on the media. He stated that there was no publicity about Ethiopia, and that was why people did not have the same sense of urgency about the matter. He concluded that “the media create reality and it is time that they acknowledge it”. Combatting famine in Ethiopia was indeed a widely embraced, and cross-cutting moral imperative in Canada.

---

1002 Ibid.
1004 Ibid.
4.4 The long-lasting Effects of the Aestheticization of Famine and Celebrity Humanitarianism

The overall Canadian response to African famine relief was “overwhelming”, and arguably enduring.\textsuperscript{1005} To be fully appreciated, the fervor and scope of the Canadian response must be contextualized within the prevalent international geo-political and socio-cultural paradigms of the time. The call to action in famine relief for Africa was pervasive around the world, particularly within the Western hemisphere. Other governments and citizens across the Western hemisphere also took up the challenge of famine abatement and eradication with variant degrees of unprecedented levels of fervor and commitment.

Cultural historians and economists have characterized the 1980s in both the neighboring U.S, and the U.K, as “a time of conspicuous consumption.”\textsuperscript{1006} A decade of greed, excess and pluralities in the West, signified by BMW’s and billion-dollar deals.\textsuperscript{1007} A decade also marked by big hair, big colourful clothes, and the mass-distribution of Western cultural values, music, fashion and movies across the globe. The 1980s was also a period which exemplified best the ways in which popular culture and world politics co-existed on a continuum.\textsuperscript{1008}

The western culture of excess exemplified by materialism and consumerism was hued by a raging Cold War, the disparate conservative politics of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, the boom and bust of housing markets, high interest rates and rampant inflation. Yet, those in the prime of their youth in the eighties across continents

\textsuperscript{1007} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1008} Rhys Crilley makes the assessment that popular culture and world politics exist on a continuum in “Where we at? New Directions for Research on Popular Culture and World Politics”, \textit{International Studies Review} (2020) 0: 2.
in the Western hemisphere contend that there was “no excuse for political apathy”. British Sarfraz Manzoor reminisces that “eighties politics, felt like a blood sport and it bled into popular culture”. This is the Western socio-political and cultural climate wherein the British led international movement known as Band Aid was born, and hyper-accelerated into an international singularity. Conceived within paradigms of both excess and political polarity, the international Band Aid phenomenon initiated by Bob Gedolf, and embraced by American and Canadian celebrities alike, was a larger than life socio-cultural/socio-political phenomenon in the Western hemisphere. With the engagement of celebrities in famine eradication, the politics of famine relief and abatement in the period transcended national cultural boundaries and consciousness.

Director of Research at the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute in the U.K, Tanja R. Müller asserts that one of the long lasting legacies of the Ethiopian famine of 1983-85 is “the emergence of Band-Aid and the subsequent increase in celebrity humanitarianism”. Müller argues that “in contrast to the nuanced understanding required by complex emergencies”, multiple medium fund raising campaigns adopted by NGO’s, in partnership with celebrity humanitarianism, offered “simple narratives of natural disaster” in their calls for compassion and ultimately “apolitical commitment” to the alleviation of suffering. Until the late 1980s, Müller argues that humanitarianism was predominantly defined as impartial and “apolitical relief to those in immediate need due to conflict or natural disaster”. The rapid growth of humanitarian action since the mid-1980 underscores a hegemonic agenda inherent within celebrity humanitarianism which “aims to reconcile the well-being of the West with the hardships of the global south”. Müller argues that this form of ‘marketized philanthropy’ was exemplified by

1010 Ibid.
1011 Müller, “The Ethiopian Famine Revisited’: Band Aid and The Antipolitics of Celebrity Humanitarian Action”, 61
1012 Ibid., 62.
1013 Ibid., 63.
1014 Ibid., 64.
the Live Aid phenomenon. A true international pop culture phenomenon, Live-Aid was the uplifting and sexy component to African famine and famine relief during this period. The aesthecization of famine during the 1984-88 period was not solely relegated to the depiction of emaciated starving Ethiopians, it was also arguably tied to the predominantly white, celebrity fuelled Live-Aid phenomenon. Inextricably linked to the African cause, Live-Aid also became an effective cultural aesthetic for rallying support and social mobilization. Live-Aid made social concern for the “African cause” a life-style choice, suggesting “that transformations of existing inequalities could be achieved through individual donations combined with consumption”.1015

In conjunction with the government and grassroots initiatives chronicled throughout this chapter, Canadians also engaged with the global Live Aid phenomenon spiritedly. On the weekend of July 13-14 1985, Canadians pledged more than $1.5 million to aid in African famine victims during a 21-hour telethon run in connection with Live-Aid.1016 The telethon was organized by Northern Lights for Africa, a foundation erected in early 1985 by Canadian rock stars and music industry members, and the only national organization permitted to run an independent telethon.1017 Maureen Jack, the Executive Director of the foundation and the telethon organizer proclaimed that she was “overwhelmed by the response”.1018 There were 800 volunteers from record companies, radio stations, the Red Cross and other agencies staffing the phone lines without breaks in Toronto’s Royal York Hotel, from 7:00 a.m. EDT on Saturday July 13th until 4:00 a.m. on Sunday July 14th.1019 Canadian musical legends such as Murray McLauchlan, Salome Bey, Jane Siberry alongside members of several other Canadian rock bands made pleas to the public in support of the cause. 1020 The phone lines in Toronto went strong for two whole hours after the Live Aid telecast had concluded on the Canadian West Coast. And

1015 Ibid.
1016 “Canadian Response Overwhelming”, S11.
1017 Ibid.
1018 Ibid.
1019 Ibid.
1020 Ibid.
by the time the all phone lines had closed, pledges from Canadians totalled $1, 504, 675.80. 1021

The money raised in Canada was slated to go to Canadian projects, in consultation with Band Aid officials. One such approved program was the Canadian Physicians for Africa Project, supporting Canadian doctors who volunteered at “small feeding stations” in the drought stricken areas. 1022 Veteran telethon organizers had initially been skeptical about the potential of Live Aid succeeding because of its appeal to “mostly younger people”, who traditionally did not respond to such benefits. 1023 However, Jack attributed the welcomed successes to children motivating their parents to give, because “what parents will tell their kid they can’t afford to give to starving people?” 1024 Critics recognized that Live-Aid was “a hyperbolic happening with the noble clichés cranked up as high as the bass speakers”. 1025 Yet, in alignment with the assessments of journalist Rick Groen, “only the most hardened cynics would bristle at the unbridled optimism”. 1026 Thus the narrative structure of African famine was also effectively constructed through depictions of the charitable efforts of Western nations. 1027

By this point, Canadian musical ensemble Northern Lights had raised nearly a $1 million dollars from the hit single Tears are Not Enough. 1028 Inspired by the release of the November 1984 British fundraising song “Do they know its Christmas?”, the Tears are Not Enough project was part and parcel of the international Band Aid phenomenon. 1029 In support of Band Aid, American musicians using the name USA for Africa, recorded We are the world on January 28 1985. 1030 With the faces and voices of super celebrities like Michael Jackson, Lionel Ritchie, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, Tina

1021 Ibid.
1022 Ibid.
1023 Ibid.
1024 Ibid.
1026 Ibid.
1027 Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse”, 236.
1028 “Canadian Response Overwhelming”, S11.
1029 http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/northern-lights-recording-tears-are-not-enough
1030 Ibid.
Turner, Cindy Lauper and Kenny Rogers, *We are the world* was the global anthem of the 1980s. *Tears are not enough*, the Canadian equivalent, was included on the USA for Africa album.\(^\text{1031}\) The Canadian song was composed by David Foster. The English lyrics were written by Canadian icons Bryan Adams and Jim Vallance, with contributions from Paul Hyde and Bob Rock of the musical group the Payolas.\(^\text{1032}\) The French version was written by Rachel Paiement. The Canadian star-studded troupe dubbed as “Northern Lights” was assembled in Vancouver by agent Bruce Allen, and the recording and performance of the song included a list of Canadian household names. Legendary Canadian performers such as Bryan Adams, Tom Cochrane, Bruce Cockburn, Corey Hart, Gordon Lightfoot, Murray McLauchlan, Joni Mitchell, Kim Mitchell, Anne Murray, Oscar Peterson, Carole Pope, and Neil Young demonstrated the commitment of their nation.\(^\text{1033}\) Released as a single in March of 1985, *Tears are not Enough* sold more than 300,000 copies.\(^\text{1034}\) The video featured NHL players, reaffirming the cultural cachet of famine relief.\(^\text{1035}\) On December 22, 1985, CBC Television aired a 90-minute documentary on the *Tears Are Not Enough* recording process, directed by John Zaritsky. This documentary later sold in home video format, accrediting the whole project with raising more than $3 million.\(^\text{1036}\)

Famine relief afforded Ethiopia a new form of political and cultural catchet during this period. A considerable amount of media coverage was concentrated on the celebrity fanfare surrounding African famine relief efforts. Famine relief “began as a spectacle of suffering” which was “centered on heart wrenching images of the famine victims at Korem”.\(^\text{1037}\) Through Live Aid, famine relief “transformed into a spectacle of celebrity and charity, as the world's richest pop stars performed in novel combinations and jetted from London to Philadelphia to participate in what was regarded as a media

\(^{1031}\) Ibid.
\(^{1032}\) Ibid.
\(^{1033}\) Ibid.* Other performers were Salome Bey, Liona Boyd, John Candy, Robert Charlebois, Rik Emmett, Ronnie Hawkins, Honeymoon Suite, Tommy Hunter, Paul Hyde, Martha Johnson, Geddy Lee, Paul Shaffer, Jane Siberry and Sylvia Tyson.
\(^{1034}\) Ibid.
\(^{1035}\) The African Famine and Canada’s Response, 28.
\(^{1036}\) http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/northern-lights-recording-tears-are-not-enough
\(^{1037}\) Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse”, 236.
In some ways, the Live Aid phenomenon exemplified the culture of excess that marked the 1980s. “Rock Colossus” drew attention to the plight of the African continent in the most spectacular way possible. Consequently, the culture of excess was venerated magnanimously through charitable giving to famine. During this period “total private charitable contributions by living individuals, bequests, corporations and foundations, reached record highs.” Canadians mirrored this Western trend. During the peak of the famine crisis, contributions by Canadian governments and voluntary organizations exceeded $170 million.

Part of an international phenomenon, there were several other noteworthy international musical fanfares specially orchestrated to help Ethiopian famine relief efforts during this period. Other chart toppers outside of We are the World and Tears are Not Enough included ‘Nackt Im Wind’ (Naked in the Wind), by Band Für Ethiopia in Germany and “Ethiopie” by Chanteurs Sans Frontières in France. In South Africa and EAT (East African Tragedy)- in Australia were two additional prominent national releases. In Latin America, the song Cantare Cantaras (I Sing, You Sing) was a single released by various Latin American icons dubbed as “Hermanos”. Released in 1985, the B-side was conformed by Herb Alpert's "African Flame"; the hit song was considered as an LP and it peaked number in Billboard's Latin Pop Albums in September 1985.

The Band Aid movement was widely criticized for not showcasing enough

---

1038 Ibid.
1042 http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/northern-lights-recording-tears-are-not-enough
1043 Ibid.
1044 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantar%C3%A9,_cantar%C3%A1s
1045 El tema cantare cantaras hermanos fue co-escrito por Albert Hammond, Juan Carlos Calderón y Anahi. Producido por Albert Hammond, Jose Quintana y Humberto Gática #AlbertHammond
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6gECV3Wu7Y and
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantar%C3%A9,_cantar%C3%A1s
African talent. To rectify this gap, Tam *Tam Pour L'Ethiopie*, also known as *Starvation* was recorded by African artists under the Virgin records label.1046 *Tam Tam Pour L'Ethiopie* was hyped as an essential release, “featuring African superstars on one side and English Two-Tone scene musicians on the other”. 1047 Unsurprisingly then, celebrity fueled humanitarianism in the magnanimous form that it took in 1984-88 period is another lingering aesthetic from this particular period of African famine and famine relief. This second media spectacle effectively broadened and extended public interest in the cause of African famine during this period. “Rock Colossus” facilitated the pervasion of representations and perceptions of the African recipient as “other”; forever an object of Western altruism and charity.1048 This concurrent media spectacle undoubtedly extended the longevity of the 'mini-series' of African starvation, by providing an all-star and predominantly white cast. At times it even tended to eclipse the issue that it was centered around.1049 In the end, “Rock Colossus” figuratively and literally transformed both the material realities and the aesthetics of famine relief forever. The endurance of the social memory of the Band Aid phenomenon is a direct consequence of the extensive and persistent international, political and cultural engagement with this period of African famine and relief.

The discursive construction of African famine in Canada, and subsequent relief efforts to Ethiopia in this period are best understood within a paradigm of intersecting geo-political and geo-cultural considerations. Some have argued that the Band Aid phenomenon was part- and- parcel of the Reagan administration’s efforts to resolve Cold War disputes through humanitarian assistance and ultimately “fulfil the desires of the Reagan doctrine”.1050 Alexander Poster argues that “the Reagan-era disaster relief policy represented a confusing intersection where Cold War security concerns collided with

1046 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Starvation/Tam_Tam_Pour_L%27Ethiopie
1048 The pervasiveness of representations of the African ‘other’ is also addressed by Müller, 72.
1049 Sorensen, Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 236.
global expectations of American beneficence”

The tenets of the period were evidenced in the narrative structures and techniques which were widely utilized to construct famine in the African region as a parable to “the perfidy of ideologically unacceptable regimes”.

Barbara MacDougall recounts that when the conservative party took over the Federal leadership in 1984, the world had not much changed over the course of the preceding thirty years. Global security concerns were initially those which had persisted since the late 1940s. The possibility of nuclear war over Europe, the Middle East, and Korea were prevailing. The world was effectively “frozen in a Cold War, divided between a democratic West, an undemocratic East”. The presumption was that the mostly “undemocratic South” was subject to influence by the ideological propensities of the West and East. But then, MacDougall asserts, the world changed rapidly during the 1980s. It is within this political and cultural paradigm that the effervescence of relief to Ethiopia was situated.

Relief to Ethiopia throughout the West was largely in response to public concern, but it was not in subordination to foreign policy objectives. Feeding “little commies”, it is argued by some, was “deemed more efficacious” than starving them. Famine in Ethiopia during this period was discursively constructed to show case Western altruism and goodwill, in an effort to discredit the “treacherous Third World regime and the machinations of the Soviet Union”. Canada, on the other hand, others have argued, had no obvious political agenda for Ethiopia, aside from improving its own international status by remaining a high-profile donor.

Lest we forget the engagement of ordinary citizens in far reaching examples of

---

1051 Ibid.,
1053 Barbara MacDougall, “Foreword”, in Diplomatic Departures: The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984-93, vi.
1054 Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 231.
good Samaritanism. The infectious culture of optimism was mobilized at the top. Joe Clark reportedly “worked the phones around the clock” to break apart the common Western front of apathy. Clark turned the desire of the West “to do as little as possible about the famine crisis” by convincing fellow Conservatives Ronald Reagan in the U.S and Margaret Thatcher in Britain to do otherwise. Clark also convinced Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Miriam to let Canada become “Ethiopia’s bridge to the West”.

4.5 Conclusions

The global response to what was widely referred to as the African crisis/ African Famine in the 1984-86 period was immediate and largely unprecedented in its scope and level of citizen engagement across the globe. This was no different in Canada. The Ethiopian/ African famine of 1984-88 served as a clarion call for global citizenship and altruism for Canadians from coast to coast. During this intersecting period in Canadian and Ethiopian history, the impetus to act was provided on 1 November 1984. What ensued was widespread social mobilization and action across the country, premised on conceptualizations of Canadian ideals and international citizenship. Canada’s UN Ambassador Stephen Lewis insisted that Canadians effectively demonstrated that they were members of “a generous, caring society.” Lewis further argued that the commitment of Canadians to multilateralism was real because, as he explained at one Forum Africa session, “the internationalism which we adhere to is rooted deeply in the psyche of Canadians.” The scale of social mobilization was reflective of the cultural, political, and economic ethos of the period. The optimism and determination of this period in humanitarianism was clearly infectious, and far reaching.

In March of 1986, one of David MacDonald’s four reports on African famine proudly declared that over the course of the past year, “world solidarity with Africa was

1057 Ibid.
1058 Ibid.
1059 Ibid.
1061 Ibid.
demonstrated by many countries and their citizens.”1062 During this ephemeral moment in time, narrow considerations known to cripple international relations were set aside, in a united desire to “help the African people”. 1063 It was argued that “the same human impulse that inspired Canadians was felt around the world”. 1064 Countless people from all walks- of- life, the report highlighted, were engaged with the cause, as “doctors and nurses donated their medical services”, and “rock musicians donated their time, talent and fame” across the country. 1065 Economist Richard B. Mckenzie asserts that the eighties can easily be mischaracterized as a decade of greed. 1066 In contrast, the prevailing ethos of citizens of the world demonstrated through African relief was that tears were not enough. Governments, charitable organizations, celebrities and ordinary citizens mobilized in unison for a common cause.

In their assessment of this era, political scientists Nelson Michaud and Kim Nossal argue that the Progressive Conservatives did not come into power in 1984 with a clearly articulated foreign policy agenda. 1067 Yet, forced to reckon with an international catastrophe within days of election, the Mulroney government demonstrated leadership in their handling of this particular international crisis. The Progressive Conservative response to the Ethiopian crisis in 1984-85, alongside the coordinating efforts of MacDonald and his team, set a benchmark for increased involvement of NGO’s in the policy-making and policy-implementation process. 1068 The implications to the magnitude of the national and international relief efforts was far reaching.

Actions taken and decisions made during this period had important consequences for Canadian aid policy and foreign relations. The creation of David MacDonald’s special ministerial role as coordinator for African famine relief signalled this. His role was

1063 Ibid.
1064 Ibid.
1065 Ibid.
1068 Nossal, “Opening up the policy preference;” in Diplomatic Departures: The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984-93,281.
specially created to cut through bureaucratic impediments which existed across both party lines and government departments. A longstanding hurdle to MacDonald was a historically rooted one. “I should have known this long before I took on that job in ’84”, MacDonald asserted. He quickly discovered once he agreed to do the job of famine coordinator that CIDA “had been constructed almost from the beginning - into two parallel components: Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa.”

CIDA, he argued, mirrored Canada’s own domestic historical, political and cultural situation. MacDonald encountered the sentiment “that anything that would make sense in terms of long term Canadian foreign aid relationships should be on the basis of Anglophone Francophone”. The irony was that in spite of overwhelming political and social mobilization for the nation during this period, Ethiopia still did not fit neatly within the binary paradigm of Canadian foreign policy objectives in Africa. Continuities in foreign policy objectives articulated during Expo 67 resurfaced.

Forum Africa consultations throughout the country also reflected a historically influenced two-fold engagement of Canada on the African continent. The public report on the country-wide consultations underscored the “strong regional and international flavor” of Forum Africa in Quebec.

Local NGO’s, universities and international students played an active role in the coordination of these sessions, versus the federal government. It was argued that the initial approach of coordination through the mayors and municipalities was not practical in Quebec. Instead, the forum objectives were thought to be better suited to the purview of the municipal governments. In Rimouski and Sherbrooke, local working groups were formed through the efforts of voluntary associations like the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace and the Desjardins Credit Union movement.

Media coverage of the Forum sessions was equally prevalent within the province. “By good fortune”, the timing of the sessions in Quebec coincided with the screening of the television series “Le Defi Mondial”, based on 

1069 Author Interview with Hon. David MacDonald, Tuesday March 28, 2017.
1070 Ibid.
1072 Ibid.
Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber’s book on major world problems. This was a great backdrop to discuss problems in Africa and solicit community engagement on finding solutions. Just before the Forum sessions, “Droit de Parole”, a popular Radio Quebec program featured panelists from the “Third World” who made personal statements to the NGO representatives present in the audience. It was estimated that 400,000 people across that province watched the episode entitled “would you be ready to do more for Africa?”.

Discussions and workshops held across the country were forward looking and productive, yielding policy recommendations and implications for the nation at large. The Quebec report had similar findings to the rest of the country. A high emphasis was placed on improving the efficacy of Canadian institutions and programs in Africa. Funding, cooperation and consultation were identified as three action areas. Supporting and training women in participation in all facets of development on the African continent was given prominence. Forum sessions urged for the development of a Code of Ethics of Development Aid. The implementation of the “New International Economic Order Resolutions” and disarmament negotiations were also targeted as key areas for development of Canada’s foreign policy toward Africa.

When asked to continue his work on the continent in the capacity of Canadian ambassador to Ethiopia, David MacDonald asked for neighboring Sudan to be included in the portfolio and took the post. He saw opportunities to further strengthen Canadian ties not just to the East-African region, but “to have significant relationships and conversations with very important representatives from across Africa”. Whilst Ethiopia’s political utility was understood at the Federal party level, during his time as Ambassador, MacDonald kept on reminding the Canadian government machination at the “official” level of the significance of Canadian presence in Ethiopia. MacDonald argued that Ethiopia was still important “because it was sort of like the capitol of Africa”.

---

1074 Ibid., 24.
1075 Ibid., 25.
1076 Ibid., 25.
1077 Author Interview with Hon. David MacDonald, Tuesday March 28, 2017.
Ethiopia still hosted “the OAU, the ECA, big institutions that brought all kinds of people and senior diplomats from other African countries together” he asserted. 1078 MacDonald requested a role as “the official representative to the Organization for African Unity and the Economic Commission For Africa”.1079 He was granted permission to become “Canada’s ambassador to the OAU and the ECA”. 1080 MacDonald saw the opportunity for more meaningful long-term engagement of Canada in Africa.

Ultimately, as Mark Charlton points out, the famine of 1984-88 contributed to the reassessment of Canada’s handling of aid in conflict-ridden regions.1081 In the aftermath of this period, in circumstances where CIDA lacks confidence in the overall priorities of the recipient government, Charlton explains that CIDA now resorts to “alternative [NGO] channels to ensure that the food is reaching the specific populations in need.”1082 Critics like Charlton have argued that that in spite of the “public relations” successes of the Mulroney government’s approach of “quiet diplomacy” during the Ethiopian famine relief efforts, there is lingering uncertainty over the ethics of providing aid to governments with ongoing internal conflicts and poor human rights records, especially when food aid is being utilized as a weapon.1083

History still recalls 1984-88 as the parable of Ethiopian famine and foreign aid, in light of the ensuing phenomenal fanfare and mass outpouring of western altruism. Still within living memory for many Canadians, the former famine relief campaign remains as the lingering beacon of hope for the permanent eradication of famine on the African continent. Canadians rose to the challenge of the African drought and famine. Canadian engagement with the famine crisis of 1984-88 was irrefutably multifaceted and pervasive across the political and social spectrum. Inarguably, the pervasive blending of politics and culture made this period of relief unique, both internationally and domestically. From celebrity fuelled Band-Aid, to civic and political beckoning to give to “the cause”, famine relief was primarily constructed as a moral imperative.

1078 Ibid.
1079 Ibid.
1080 Ibid.
1081 Charlton, 87.
1082 Ibid.
1083 Ibid., 70.
The exuberance of the culture of excess was manifest in the scope and scale of relief efforts. However, extreme acts of kindness were rooted in steadfast moral imperatives. The religious undertones to both the crisis and the humanitarian efforts rippled across the surface. As demonstrated by the multi-dimensional engagements of congregations across the country, combatting famine in Ethiopia was indeed a widely embraced, and cross-cutting moral imperative in Canada. Canadians were at the front lines of fighting famine in the “tragic land”. Even though the fervor for famine relief has dissipated greatly, famines around the globe still continue to be constructed as apocalyptic, and Biblical. Yet, the construction of famines as apocalyptic is antithetical to the repository of knowledge about why they occur and how they can be circumvented, if not altogether prevented.

By the early 1980s, food experts had already deemed that “Africa’s population was rapidly outstripping food production.” In contrast to existing expert assessments, many reports initially presented the famine of 1984 as an unexpected natural disaster. Drought frequently occurred, and continues to occur, in the afflicted regions; but bouts of drought are not “necessarily transformed into famine”. The ubiquitous naturalization of famine during the period constructed the crisis in reductionist terms; often ignoring the role of poverty, repression, conflict and climate change in the causation of contemporary famines.

Jean Ziegler argues that desertification is a particularly acute problem for the arid regions of Africa like Ethiopia. The Tigray region (affected by the famine of 1984-86) is particularly vulnerable, as “skeletal women and children” continue to try to survive on

---

1088 Ibid.
land that erosion has transformed into acres of dust.\textsuperscript{1089} In Ziegler’s assessments, due to relentless environmental degradation, we are all morally culpable for what ensues, “as the destruction of ecosystems and the degradation of vast agricultural zones worldwide – but above all in Africa- continues to be a tragedy for small farmers and pastoralists”.\textsuperscript{1090} Famine was, and continues to be, about much more than hunger. Famine includes social breakdown, economic deprivation and health crises.\textsuperscript{1091} Thus, from the outset, the oft espoused ideal of famine eradication in the former period was a far more complex goal than what the general populace desired, setting the scene for further public disenchantment, with a cause that was far more complex to solve than what altruistic donors desired.

In the immediate aftermath of the epic 1984-86 famine period, frontline workers were already predicting that the relief efforts delivered during the period would not be enough to abate future catastrophes from occurring. Canadian Aid agencies had forewarned that even most pressing problems faced by the people of the drought-stricken zones of Africa were not going to be overcome by March 31, 1986; when the Mulroney government had instructed David MacDonald, Canadian Emergency Coordinator for African Relief, to wind his office down.\textsuperscript{1092} By the tail end of the 1980s, in spite of the tremendous fund raising successes, the picture was still bleak. In December of 1987, The World Food Program reported that Ethiopia, Mozambique, Malawi, Angola, Somalia and the Sudan were in need of 2.3 million tons of food in the coming year, totaling to approximately twice of what had been pledged by the donor countries in that time.\textsuperscript{1093} The permanent eradication of famine, the cause for which all of this outpouring of support was intended, continued to prevail.

\textsuperscript{1090} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1092} “Famine Report Key: Keep up the good work,” \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, March 31, 1986, David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
\textsuperscript{1093} Canadian Press, “Act before thousands starve, Geldolf Says of Ethiopia Tour”, \textit{The Vancouver Sun}, 21 Dec 1987: C5.
After June of 1986, drumming up further public support for the ongoing cause was infinitely more challenging, because on the onset of what Susan Moeller characterizes as “compassion fatigue”. “The problem is”, MacDonald asserted in an interview with the Ottawa Citizen, “the average guy feels he has done enough now that food is reaching the refugee camps and the tv networks have turned their attention elsewhere.”  

He characterized the loss of public interest as a “donor tired-ness” snag; further compounded by the fact that the answer to the question of “what now?” was “not terribly dramatic- nothing to compare with TV pictures showing saucer-eyed children with distended stomachs.” Hence, “one of the lessons I learned out of the earlier famine situation”, MacDonald later reflected, is that “during the fall of 1984 and throughout 1985 people were more willing to respond to dying babies-the emaciated people”. 

However, when the famine and relief discourse switched to discussions of the needs of farmers, “such as seed and implements and draught animals and wells”, MacDonald argued that “not just individual interest” but “particularly government interest- died off”. The aesthecization of famine was effectively credited by MacDonald for the pervasive and successful engagement of both government and ordinary citizens during this period.

After four steady years of unyielding support and enthusiasm, Canadians were inarguably disenchanted with the politics of famine and the slow material manifestations of aid. The implications of Ethiopia being the highest recipient of foreign aid, and the cause célèbre nature of the Ethiopian famine were far reaching, ushering in a new definitive era of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian history and identity. In the mid-1970s revolutionary Ethiopia had briefly committed to radical social and economic transformation. An anti-famine systems had been implemented, ironically, prompted

1095 Ibid.
1096 Canada’s Ambassador Speaks out”, The Chronicle-Herald, March 7, 1988. David MacDonald Collection, LAC.
1097 Ibid.
by the political scandal of the unrelieved 1973 famine in Wollo, which had helped discredit the Emperor Haile Selassie.\textsuperscript{1099}

What is forgotten, or oft remiss from the narrative on this particular period of Ethiopian famine relief is the role of Ethiopian and other African actors in agitating and working for change. In addition to creating a specialist anti-famine institution (the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission), Ethiopia “enacted some of the most radical social and economic reforms witnessed in Africa, aimed at consigning famine to oblivion.”\textsuperscript{1100}

During the course of our interview session, David MacDonald diverted our discussion of Canadian efforts in famine relief, to underscore the importance of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC).\textsuperscript{1101} “What’s really interesting about the RRC, and I think that this is a really important part to the overall story” he argued, is that the RRC was part of the reason that there was so much focus on Ethiopia during the period.\textsuperscript{1102}

Macdonald asserted that what made the response in the 1984-88 period in Ethiopia significant, was the experience that the RRC/ Ethiopians had had in the 1970s, in the first famine in 1974 through to 77, because that was when the RRC was really established.”\textsuperscript{1103} He concluded that “when all these outside countries turned up, the United Nations and UN Agencies, and NGO’s and governments, it wasn’t as if the local government was starting from scratch”.\textsuperscript{1104}

In a New Year’s Editorial, the \textit{Globe and Mail} asserted that the “the African famine made a community of the world in 1985, a historic fact in itself”.\textsuperscript{1105} Mindfulness of a shared humanity during a humanitarian crisis enabled Canadians to demonstrate allegiance to a foreign cause in spades. One single episode of a devastating and enduring famine accompanied by an equally magnanimous episode of famine relief was the catalyst for forever dislodging the 3000-year legacy of Ethiopian history from prominence in Western thought. Just slightly before the famine of 1984, David

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1099} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{1100} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{1101} Author interview with Hon. David MacDonald, Tuesday March 28, 2017.  \\
\textsuperscript{1102} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{1103} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{1104} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{1105} Forum Africa: Canadians Working Together, 5.
\end{flushleft}
MacDonald would argue that Ethiopia was not on Canada’s list of key African countries of interest. “Maybe there was a kind of nostalgic thing with Haile Selassie up until the time that he was forced out” he concurred; but his final assessment was that “from a political standpoint, whether it was foreign affairs generally or humanitarian aid specifically : Ethiopia didn’t quite fit”.  

However, at some point during our interview, MacDonald asserts that one of his priorities as ambassador to Ethiopia was to do everything that he could to get members of Haile Selassie’s family out of prison. The impetus came from within the Federal government, inspired by members of the MacDonald tried to identify prudent opportunities to broach the subject with the Derg. “What I didn’t know”, MacDonald recounted during our interview session, was that “we always met in Mengistu’s office, I didn’t know that Haile Selassie was under the floor-boards of the office; that’s where they found his body.”  

The point is that famine relief to Ethiopia was tailored to fit. Ethiopia became a rallying point for relief efforts for Africa. In light of both the complexities of the Ethiopian famine and the politics of aid, the “Samaritan State” rallied in the 1984-88 period was an ephemeral phenomenon, but the prevalent representations of Ethiopians from this period were not quite so short-lived. As outlined in the opening of this chapter, the aesthetic of the starving Ethiopian was pervasive and instrumental to rallying both government and public support internationally. The epoch sealed the fate of Ethiopia “in the minds of many as forever associated with hunger and death”.  

Peripheral discourses on environmental degradation and future catastrophe prevention rampant during the famine relief period were eventually subsumed into overarching discussions of

---

1106 Author interview with Hon. David MacDonald, Tuesday March 28, 2017.  
1107 Ibid. *”Ethiopia’s Deposed Royals Worthy of Canada’s Mercy”, Ottawa Citizen, Press Clippings from June 1986-June 1987, David MacDonald Collection LAC.  
1108 Ibid.  
1109 CBC reporter Margaret Evans references the legacy of this period in Canada and beyond in the April 20, 2016 feature news report entitled “Ethiopia on the edge” for CBC’s program The National. [http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/670401603927](http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/670401603927); for international comparatives and references see: James Jeffrey. “Ethiopia Drought: How Can We Let This Happen Again? This Time Around Ethiopia is Competing With war-Torn Syria and Yemen for International Funds.” Aljazeera, January 25, 2016. [http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/01/ethiopia-drought-happen-160121084103587.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/01/ethiopia-drought-happen-160121084103587.html)
the politics of famine, but the jarring images of barren wastelands and dead cattle would remain imbedded within Western consciousness. Persistent representations of barren landscapes, emaciated humans and skeletal cattle effectively led to the steadfast perception of Ethiopia as the proverbial dustbowl of Africa, for decades to come. The long-lasting legacy of the imagery from this period still ubiquitously lingers within Western popular culture and consciousness. Nearly twenty years later, contenders in the 2005 popular TV series *The Amazing Race* exemplified this phenomenon in their reaction to the news that they were flying to Ethiopia. During that fateful episode, one contestant poignantly lamented that "it's going to be hot and sad and impoverished", whilst another moaned that "it's going to be depressing and Third World." Upon arrival, the one couple “couldn’t get over the green landscape”, asserting that "the animals aren't even as skinny." 

Haunting images and stark rhetoric from decades of civil war and famine during the past century still constitute a large part of Western consciousness of the East African nation. In 2016, Ethiopia was back in international headlines with another apocalyptic-scale famine. It was widely reported that the country was facing its worst drought in 50 years, a result of three failed rainy seasons, coupled with an El Nino effect warming the Pacific Ocean affecting global weather patterns. An estimated 10.2 million people were in need of assistance throughout 2016, with another 5.75 million children at risk of going hungry. Up to 2 million children were suffering from malnutrition, with 400,000 acute cases. The numbers were once again staggering and overwhelming, leading many to proclaim that this was evidence of “history repeating itself”. With a future saddled by the “uncertainty of what nature has called down upon it”, Ethiopia, was characterized by CBC’s Margaret Evans among many others, as once again “on the edge.”

---

1111 Ibid.
1113 Margaret Evans, “Ethiopia on the edge” for CBC’s program, *The National*, April 20, 2016. [http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/670401603927](http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/670401603927);
1114 Ibid.
Over thirty years later, the famine year of 1984-85 still remains the international benchmark for Ethiopian, and by implicit extension, continuous African suffering. As Müller argues, the dynamics that unfolded over the course of this particular famine still matter because of the deeply ingrained connection between Ethiopian famine and the Band Aid/Live Aid phenomenon. The latter has transported the archetypal “image of the innocent sufferer from the 1980s into the present”; generating a perpetual “representation of the African other as an object of charity”. Hence, this particular devastating famine in Ethiopia and the subsequent media coverage impacted the lives of migrants daily. In Canada, and other Western countries, being an Ethiopian became enshrouded in a post-colonial gaze of the impoverished subaltern. Stalwart representations of Ethiopia as the “dustbowl of Africa” and the ahistorical place of perpetual famine, starvation and war have stood the test of time. One informant poignantly characterizes the impact of African famine and African famine relief. It has been Elias Omer’s experience that people (generally Caucasian) will often strike up a conversation about Elias’s heritage premised on expressed sympathy for “the famine”. With questions like: “how’s your country now?” or “is it stable?” members of the Canadian general population vividly evoke the desperate images from the Ethiopian famines of the late 1970s and the 1980s. The accompanying discourses of government corruption shape perceptions of mass exodus from a region riddled with endemic strife and poverty. Elias states that “often times, people don’t believe me when I say that came as a student”. 

---

1115 Müller, 72.
1116 Author Interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
CHAPTER 4: Rooted in History: Embodied Histories and Self Representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada

“Ethiopia is significant, not only to who we are, but who we are not”.

Elias Omer

Concepts of history, memory, and identity buttress one another and have a fundamental relevance to the way human beings as individuals or groups not only distinguish themselves from others, but also engage in processes of narration, memorialization, and political struggles. Ethiopians in the Diaspora perpetually reference, invoke, revere, contest, and engage with representative elements of their cultural, political and historical identity, fashioning distinct forms of self-representation. To a generation of Ethiopians living in the diaspora, being Ethiopian and narrating Ethiopian history are symbiotically connected with events which have transpired in that nation, as much as they are connected to perceptions of this history by the outside world, reinforcing the opening proclamation by interviewee Elias Omer that: “Ethiopia is significant, not only to who we are, but who we are not”.

The Ethiopian and interrelated Horn-of-Africa Diaspora officially started to form in Canada, and the rest of the world, after the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974.

1117 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
1119 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
Ethiopian migration to Canada in significant numbers from 1984 onwards has been the major catalyst for the inconspicuous but politically charged, and symbolic existence of Ethiopian identities within a multicultural contemporary Canadian society. Through the use of five oral histories as illustrative case studies, an analysis of ethno-cultural publications and other forms of self-representation (e.g. ethnic establishments, cultural festivities, census data, music videos, and documentaries), this chapter underscores the ways in which interplays in history, politics and culture continue to shape representations and perceptions of Ethiopian and other interrelated Horn-of-Africa identities in Canada.

Based on an analysis of self-representations by Ethiopians in Canada, (whether they be textual, physical or in narrative form), it is evident that Ethiopians take great pride in their long and rich cultural history which precedes their dispersing into a global diaspora. Renowned signifiers of Ethiopian history examined in chapters one and two of this dissertation are also evidenced integrated into self-representations by members of the Diaspora today.

Histories of migrants and migrations do not begin in *medias res*. Contemporary representations of Ethiopian identity in Canada are best understood through the prism of individual narratives, in so much as they are through some knowledge of the political and social history of both Ethiopia and Canada. Continuity is an integral component to Ethiopian narrative constructions of history.1121 In her study on Ethiopians in Canada, Mary Goitom asserts that “the ties that migrants have with their places of origin shape them individually and also configure how they construct the social spaces in their new surroundings”1122. In alignment with Goitom’s assertions, this chapter explores how conceptualizations of being Ethiopian influence forms of self-representation. For a generation of Ethiopians living in the Diaspora – being Ethiopian is inextricably bound to conceptualizations of a homeland. Migration and settlement are processes therefore

“grounded by a sense of self that connects the past to the present”.1123 Culture, history and topography are evidenced throughout this chapter as the ties that bind.

Ethiopian migration and settlement in Canada from 1984 onwards signify the final intersection of Ethiopian and Canadian history examined within the purview of this thesis. First, the case made for embodied histories is outlined through an exploration of what constitutes an “Ethiopian” identity for the interviewees. It is evidenced that the tenets of Ethiopian expressions of identity are influenced by Ethiopian history, politics and culture. An Ethiopian identity is also articulated in response to mass perceptions of the same by the broader Canadian populace. Next, this chapter contextualizes prominent themes which emerged across the narratives of five separate interviewees. The case studies presented in this chapter are illustrative of the prevalence of Ethiopian rooted in expressions of love for country, and reverence for history and topography. Discussions of memories of homeland led into examinations of historical foundations for contemporary visual signifiers of Ethiopian identities. In this vein, both the ancient civilization of Axum and the Battle of Adowa (March 1896) are addressed as historical signifiers.

In spite of archival references to Ethiopians in Canada prior to the 1960s, Ethiopians officially start appearing in Canadian immigration statistics for the first time in 1966, with 27 people recorded as having Ethiopia as their “country of last residence”.1124 The sole mandate of many of these early migrants was to study abroad and return to their nation of origin to implement their learnings towards modernizing their native homeland.1125 Consequently, the number of Ethiopians recorded in Canada

---

1123 Ibid.
1124 Statistical Data Source: Department of Manpower and Immigration, Immigration Statistics 1966, Table 10, page 20. It is hard to discern if there were any Ethiopian immigrants to Canada prior to 1966. The data available prior to 1966 does not distinguish between different African source Countries. Only to highlight immigrant numbers from “British African Countries” such as Egypt were distinguished.
prior to the 1980s was negligible with less than 100 people recorded in the census data per annum between 1966-1979. By 1983 however, there were 571 Ethiopians listed as Landed Immigrants. An influx of immigrants to Canada from the war and famine riddled region is evidenced in the census data from 1984 onwards.

Whilst the Horn-of-Africa region was riddled with endemic bouts of famine and conflict from the early 1970s onwards, the 1980s was a particularly heightened decade for Canadian awareness of the African nation and its peoples. The Ethiopian famine commonly referred to as the African Famine (1984-1988) was the single biggest cause célèbre of the decade the world over. In conjunction with the extensive Canadian engagement in famine relief outlined in the preceding chapter (chapter three), forms of humanitarian internationalism were also evidenced in Canadian immigration policies of the same period. Special considerations were made to the Refugee Act in the 1983-84 period to allow for the quick processing and settlement of “victims of natural catastrophe” such as those from Ethiopia and Mexico. Thus, in addition to providing relief on the continent, Canadian political and social will also brought large numbers of Ethiopians into the country during this period; a fact which undoubtedly shaped perceptions of immigrants from the region for decades to come.

Between 1984-1996, Ethiopia consistently ranked as one of the top 10 source countries for “Convention Refugees and Members of Designated Classes” settling in Canada. Widespread engagement with famine relief efforts drew unprecedented attention to the plights of the continent and generated a steadfast narrative of the

\[\text{footnotes}
\]


\[\text{footnotes}
\]
Ethiopians and the Ethiopian famine as a parable for African destitution. In direct apposition to this phenomenon, Ethiopian history, topography and culture are prominently referenced in both public and private articulations of Ethiopian identities evidenced within the Canadian Diaspora.

Within the context of a broader contemporary global diaspora, self-representations by Ethiopians are often framed in deliberate apposition to the pervasive lack of awareness of their cultural, and historical heritage. Ethiopians who were born and raised in their homeland during the reign of the Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974), and then fled the nation during the rule of the Derg tell embodied histories of their nation of origin, reframing common reductions of their life experiences as displaced persons. Self-representations manifested through oral history are illustrative of the ways in which Ethiopians perpetually engage with representative elements of their cultural, political and historical identity. Ethiopians in the diaspora, Woubshet et al argue, often “look back to a time” when their history “was one of the richest and most powerful in the world”, leading some members of the Diaspora like Ato Mengesha to reflect and proclaim that “the history, the land- all this can be interpreted as, what did history do to us”. The prevalent factors for outmigration, shaped both the public perceptions and self-representations of immigrants from the region for decades after.

Prominent forms of self-representation and the causation factors of Ethiopian migration and settlement in Canada are an intertwined phenomenon. In alignment with the findings of Gabriele Proglio this chapter too illustrates how “diasporic memory enables the framing of strategic practices to resist the hegemonic narrative, which excludes, marginalizes, and dehumanizes people”. Narratives solicited for this study

1132 Oral history Interview 1 with Ato Mengesha Beyene, March 27, 2014.
allowed individuals to reclaim their identities through reliving their memories of homeland, and evocation of the historical symbolism and topography of their nation of origin. “The memories that you have”, Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi proclaimed, “mitigate for any feelings of displacement and experiences of discrimination that one might encounter in the diaspora”. He further elaborated that with a strong understanding of your past “…you don’t get the feeling that somebody is saying you are like this or like that”. As an immigrant empowered by knowledge of the past: “you are more than just that one study that says that you belong in that one pigeon hole; you have a history, you have a story.”

5.1 Contextualizing Oral-Histories As Case Studies in Representations of Ethiopian Identity

The richness of the oral histories featured in this chapter allow the reader some insight into the socio-historical circumstances from which the perspectives of the speakers were developed. Elements of the narratives featured throughout this chapter showcase individual experiences and perspectives, in alignment with the objectives of this chapter. However, the interconnections between memory, cognition and history were already manifest in how the participants elected to frame their narratives.

At its core, this chapter explores the ways in which the narratives of Ethiopian immigrants living within a context of a global Diaspora are truly reflective of the tenet held by oral historians that “lives are lived at the intersection of individual and social dynamics.” Whereas history is linear, the stories emanating from diasporic memory in this study were also “discontinuous and characterized by asides, ellipses, and spiral

---

1134 Author Oral History Interview 1 with Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi, December 11, 2013.
1135 Ibid.
1136 Ibid.
1137 Ibid, 43.

narrative structures”. At times, the narratives shared were fragmented and some further insights are offered when explanations are required. Yet, some of the excerpts from the in-depth conversations garnered for this chapter are also deliberately integrated in free-form or left as fragments to speak on their own; in order to best illustrate the nuances to the period and phenomenon of self-representation in question.

With the exception of Mary Goitom’s body of work, Canadian scholarship on the Horn-of-African diaspora has largely focused on ethnic disparities as principal points for identity formation upon migration. To date the most comprehensive scholarship available on the nature of Ethiopian and other interrelated Horn-of-African identities in Canada has been done by Sociologist John Sorensen. Sorensen’s body of work on the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora is integral to interpreting contemporary iterations and contestations of Ethiopian history. Of particular relevance to this chapter is

1140 Proglio, 134.
1143 In his extensive examination of the different ethnic denominations present in the Toronto area, one of Sorensen’s primary arguments is that identity formation by Ethiopians (and other inter-related East Africans) is premised on both national and ethnic classifications which involve a fluid set of beliefs about appropriate roles and behaviours that are often contingent on the structures that are available to support their reproduction within migrant communities. Utilizing Fredrik Barth’s concept of Ethnic Boundaries and applying a mixed methods approach, Sorensen
Sorensen’s seminal article “The Politics of Social Identity”, as it is particularly instructive in deconstructing the different terms of ethnic reference (both historical and contemporary) used to identify the heterogeneous group of people collectively recognized by the Canadian government as Ethiopians until 1991. The processes of identity formation amidst various “Ethiopian” ethnic groups underscored by Sorensen in a Canadian context, is imperative to understanding the underlying tensions alluded to or outright addressed throughout this chapter. However, this dissertation instead examines the ways in which members of the Diaspora perpetuate and maintain preceding historical signifiers as means of asserting both their heterogeneity and historicity.

Concepts such as hegemony and fragmentation addressed by Sorensen et al are also explored, through the perspectives offered by the participants. The self-representations collected for this study did acknowledge the existence of irreparable fissures in hegemonic narratives about Ethiopian identity and nationhood; but the insights offered are more nuanced and much easier to understand with contextual awareness of Ethiopian history and what it means to be Ethiopian as expressed by the participants. In light of the age range and experiences of the participants interviewed for this chapter, the final section of the chapter explores how the “time of the Derg” manifested in each discussion as an influencer on expressions of identities. Whilst there is an abundant amount of scholarly political analysis of the period available, the time of the Derg (1974-1991) is a distinctive period of Ethiopian history still shrouded in much silence about the day-to-day experiences of the ordinary citizens who lived within it. There have also


Political analysis of the period are provided in Chapter 3. The Red Terror Martyrs Musuem was established in Addis Ababa in 2010. The Canadian Human Rights Museum has an exhibit showcasing the atrocities committed during this period as well: Geoff Kirbyson, “Museum provokes mixed emotions CMHR preview inspiring and heart-wrenching for viewers and
been very few artistic attempts to describe this period to the outside world, as those who lived within it were hampered by censorship and “legions of informants”.1147 And those who left Ethiopia were silenced by “the exigencies of exile and fear for those who were left behind”.1148 As such, the first-hand narrations offered by participants in this study are rare exemplars of unpublished and publicly unspoken insights into an under-represented topic in Ethiopian studies.

Collectively, the narratives and reflections of Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Ato Osman Omer, Etye Esther Tsegaye, Ato Mengesha Beyene and Elias Omer all exemplify the extent to which their individual life trajectories and stories can be situated within larger frameworks of historicizing, contextualizing, and interpreting Ethiopian migration and settlement in Canada. Ato Osman Omer arrived in Canada during the early 1980s, as did Tye Esther Tsegaye. Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi arrived in the early 1990s, whilst both Ato Mengesha Beyene and Elias Omer began calling Canada home in the new millennium. Irrespective of their time away from their homeland, each participant spoke to the centrality of Ethiopia to their identity. In alignment with the assessments of Mary Goitom, Ethiopians interviewed for this study spoke to the fact that their homeland was the primary habitus in which their present self was developed, and where their history is embodied.1149 In the poignant words of Ato Mengesha, “as an Ethiopian, you praise yourself, or life as a country” implying that as an Ethiopian migrant, one can only ever make sense of their identity within the present, through some knowledge of his/her

---

1148 Ibid.
collective past.  

Yet, for many Ethiopians, navigating their daily lives and negotiating their identities as Black bodies in a Canadian context is nothing short of a complex and multifaceted political act. In spite of the distinctions between the myriad of African/Black identities existent in contemporary Canadian society underscored by scholars Wisdom J. Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu, in the present, to be an Ethiopian or an East-African in Canada is simply perceived as being an émigré, Black or “other” by the mass Canadian populace. Prevalent perceptions of Blackness in Canada are devoid of any social and historical contextualization of the individual’s country of heritage. In this vein, Elias Omer articulated his encounters with questions regarding his identity. Elias surmised that most people see him “and they see just a Black Man”. Sometimes, he continued, “they confuse me for a Rasta/Jamaican because I wear my hair in braids or dread[s].” Based on his extensive experiences working with members of the general public, “most Canadians”, Elias lamented, were painfully unaware of the integral differences between the Black bodies and identities which navigate their socioscapes. In this same vein, Elias declared: “I hate when people ask me if I am, or introduce me to

1150 Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014.
1152 Author Interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
1153 Ibid.
1154 In contrast, Elias asserts that regardless of their educational background or occupation, “people that are travelled have a different, deeper understanding of what Ethiopia is”, because “people who have travelled to South America, Europe, Asia, or Africa have different perspectives”. Thus worldliness and intercultural competency are valued tenets to Elias, (and many of the others interviewed for the larger study from which this chapter is sourced) who espoused a great deal of praise for the people he encounters who differentiated themselves from the majority of North Americans immersed in their insular cultures and world purviews. Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
others as an African; even more then when people ask me if I am an Eritrean or Ethiopian.”

In similar fashion, Ato Osman Omer spoke of how he frequently encountered the question on his nation of origin. When asked: “where are you from?” he asserted that he frequently responds with “Ethiopia”. He then wryly chuckled and proclaimed that at times he has received the follow-up question: “is that in Asia?” “God help me” he sighed, signifying his bemusement and frustration by the ignorance he has faced. To Elias, Ato Osman and many others living with a diaspora, the lack of awareness demonstrated by those who have never had to study a world map is inexcusable. There is a contingent of migrants who lived and breathed within an education system that drilled into them a sense of their place on a map. Ethiopians were educated to learn their geographic proximity to all the other nations of the world. Thus the fact that Canadians are unable to recognize that there are cultural, linguistic, political and historical differences between the fifty-four recognized states within the perimeters of the African continent is inexcusable, and reflective of a deeply insular and North-American centric world-purview. In juxtaposition to their indistinctness in contemporary Canadian society, Ethiopians interviewed for this chapter both explicitly and implicitly referenced the topography in which they were raised, and the socio-historical circumstances which led to their migration to, and settlement in Canada.

Through narrative, the Ethiopians interviewed here instead placed their homeland on the historical and cartographic map of the world. Concepts like Amel, Abeb and Behal respectively comprised the foundational tenets of Ethiopian culture and respectability discussed by the interviewees. Even in migration, these concepts remain as guiding

1155 Author Interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
1156 Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
1157 Albeit, it is noteworthy that to Ethiopians and other Africans, it is often not the act of being called an African that is offensive, but rather the reductive and dismissive nature of the act, which is not respective of the individual’s cultural heritage and migration trajectory, political agency, and national history. An assertion supported by Tettey and Puplampu in their argument that homologous definitions of blackness in Canada are flawed representations which “lose sight of the dialectics of identity construction”. Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P.Puplampu in “Continental Africans in Canada: Exploring a Neglected Dimension of the African-Canadian Experience”, in The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging. Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P.Puplampu eds. Calgary: University of Calgary Press:11.
principles for the ways in which Ethiopians distinguish themselves from “others”. An integral concept to conceptualizations of an Ethiopian identity, Behal is the Amharic equivalent term for culture, custom, and tradition combined. Amel refers to the way in which one conducts themselves in the world. There is a degree of cultural humility associated with the term Amel. It is customary to greet your elders with Ato and or Etye, as much as it is to kiss loved ones and strangers with a hello and a hug.  

A common thread for all of the interviews conducted with first generation immigrants featured in this chapter was the centrality of Ethiopia, and by extension Ethiopian culture (Behal and Amel) to who they are as individuals. Their roots strongly influence how they elect to conduct themselves in the world- whether it be here in Canada, back in Ethiopia, or in any of the other nation states that they resided in temporarily over the course of their journeys of migration and settlement. Etye Esther reinforces this perspective in her staunch declaration that, she does not “believe that who you are changes with where you are”, because to her and the others interviewed in this chapter, being an “Ethiopian” is a primary identifier for life.

5.2 Rooted In History: Identities Rooted in expressions of love for Country, Reverence for History and Topography

Cultural theorist Madan Sarup underscores the transformative power of telling one’s story in his assertion that when “asked about our identity, we start thinking about our life-story”, and in turn “we construct our identity at the same time as well tell our life-story.” Ethiopians do this particularly well. Stories shared by first-generation participants in this study were often intentionally allegorical; an innate practice for a generation within the Diaspora born and raised in Ethiopia. It is a practice attributable to what anthropologist David Palmer has assessed as “the great worth that Ethiopian society places on oral traditions as a primary and traditional means of conveying culture, while at

1158 Ibid.
1159 Author Interview II with Etye Esther Tsegaye, July 1, 2013.
the same time transmitting feelings, attitudes, and traditional values”.

During his deliberation about his path to Canada, Ato Osman Omer broke off in mid-sentence to lament: “walking in the snow, I ask myself: how did you get here?”. He continues, “my fingers are cracked and I am standing there dreaming like a crazy person…growing up, I never wore a jacket.” Natalie Losi describes the state of the immigrant in the position of “either/or”. She asserts that immigrants often stand between at least two shores, two cultures, two ways of thinking, and that they live this transition as a schism or dichotomy. In juxtaposition to his present reality as a Black émigré postman in South-Western Ontario, forcibly acclimated to the cold, unforgiving Canadian winter of Western Ontario; Ato Osman, the son of an Ethiopian farmer fondly integrated memories of the fruit orchards, villas, and lush landscapes which prevailed in the Dire Dawa region throughout his childhood. Gabriele Proglio also asserts that “subjects who experience diasporic memory are suspended within several temporalities” and that “their condition of being in Diaspora explains this condition”. Ato Osman continued: “I love my country very much”, expressing an attachment to a homeland, topography, and a world purview instilled in him by a mother who passed before he left his country in 1977.

Dire Dawa played a prominent role in articulations of an identity by each of the five interviewees featured in this study. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s assertion that

---

1162 Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014. *This particular lamentation is contextualized later in the interview session when he points out what he meant by standing in the snow. A Canada Post employee/ Post-man by trade, Ato Osman was by all accounts a mail carrier extraordinaire forcefully acclimated to the cold, unforgiving Canadian winter of Western Ontario, through pounding dozens of kilometers of hard concrete on his daily route.
1163 Ibid.
1165 Ibid.
1166 Proglio, 135.
“hometown is an intimate place”, resonates throughout each of the narratives shared. Born and raised in the Dire Dawa region during the 1950s and 1960s, Ethiopia continues to profoundly color Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi’s sense of identity. As he recounted, “the people in Yemen used to call us Weledein,” meaning “the people born in Ethiopia”. Weledein [sic], he further elaborates, was a term used to refer to those born outside of Yemen- specifically Ethiopia. He declared: “they don’t use this term for those people born in -for example Kenya, or those from Egypt or the West, the term was exclusive to only those who came from Ethiopia”. In spite of the fact that political circumstances in Ethiopia forced Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi’s father to return to Yemen in 1972, members of his extended family were able to remain in Ethiopia and retain their property. His grandmother was of Adere descent and this entitled members of their family to retain the property that they had built and the titles that they had amassed. Identifying as being from Ethiopia is still a central tenet to his identity.

Self-representations by Ethiopians are deeply intertwined with concepts of history, memory and identity. In this vein, the Ethiopian concept of Tizita comes to the fore as the narrators recall memories of their homeland, intertwining recollections of their developmental years in Ethiopia with concepts of tradition and culture. As a poignant example, a self-professed collector of all things related to Ethiopian history, Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi opened his second interview session by sharing memories of his childhood hometown of the city of Dire Dawa, located in the Eastern Ethiopian province.

1168 Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Interview 1, December 11, 2013. At the time of our interview in 2013, Ato Mohammed’s family still owned property in Harar, but he had not had a chance to revisit his hometown. When I connected with him in 2016, he had had an opportunity to revisit Ethiopia and his family. A life changing experience.
1170 Tizita is the Amharic word for memory, nostalgia, or longing. Also a popular song form, the concept of Tizita was addressed by each interviewee.
of Hararege in Ethiopia. His grandparents settled within a township in Dire Dawa known as “Al-Jazeera” in the 1920s, established for the staff of the Ethiopian railways and other amenities such as hydro. Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi’s reverie for his grandfather’s lead role in engineering activities in the Dire Dawa region, led into a discussion of how the period of Italian occupation of Ethiopia forever changed that nation through an increase in construction projects and mechanical expertise. This assessment provided a segue for Ato Mohamed Al-Ademi to discuss the Emperor Haile Selassie’s return to Ethiopia and his reinstatement to the throne in 1941-42. He stated: “what the Emperor did was actually quite unique; I mean he forgave the Italians and allowed them to stay”.

“That act alone” he argued, “is indicative of Ethiopian culture”.

Discussions of Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi’s grandfather’s engineering activities in the Dire Dawa region lead to in-depth discussions of the family and the region in which he was raised. Ato Al-Adeimi’s narrative painted a picture of an Ethiopia from the 1920s - 1960s which was economically and culturally vibrant and imbued with great promise for development and growth. The Chief Mason of the builders and in charge of maintenance of the railroads en route to Djibouti, Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi meticulously overviewed his grandfather Alwan Al-Ademi’s instrumental role in finding the main source of the riverbed in the area connected to the township of Al-jazeera. Predominantly occupied by Somali and other Muslim lowland inhabitants, Muslim inclusion in the ongoing projects in this region of Ethiopia for the first half of the twentieth century is underscored by Ato Mohamed Al-Ademi as important. He placed an emphasis on the inclusivity which defined his experiences in Ethiopia during this period.

In addition to the presence of various Muslim ethnicities in the region, French presence in the building of the railroad in Dire Dawa was another prevalent theme throughout his narrative. As were memories of Italian, German and American presence in the region, which all respectively shaped and informed his memories and interpretations.

1172 Ibid. * Noteworthy that he points out that this is a topic that is understudied, and one that he encourages me to explore fully upon the completion of this thesis project.
1173 Ibid.
of a cosmopolitan post-World War II childhood in Ethiopia. The presence of large groups of ex-patriots in Ethiopia was a point made by each of the participants in this study. References made to the presence of various nationalities in the country speaks to the significance of bilateral and cultural relations fostered by both individuals and organizations from Western countries in Ethiopia.

Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi characterizes the intermixing of cultures in the Dire Dawa region during the 1950s and 1960s as integral to his conceptualization of life in Ethiopia, and indicative of the “the mosaic and integrative social fabric of Ethiopian society”\(^\text{1175}\). The integrative mosaic that he described was premised on inclusivity. However, as Ethiopian geo-political affiliations shifted in the 1960s and early 1970s, the Arab populations within the country were alienated and increasingly unwelcome. This shift in politics and attitude served as a major impetus for members of his immediate family to return to Yemen. Hence, in September of 1972 he arrived in Eden, in the middle of a heatwave. Forced to leave his hometown for good at the age of 18, he surmised: “I landed and I thought to myself, this is not a country in which I can stay; it is not Dire Dawa.”\(^\text{1176}\)

Like Ato Mohamed Al-Ademi, Ato Osman Omer also made references to the influential presence of the Italians and French in the Dire Dawa region. Both Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi and Ato Osman Omer pondered upon the implications of Italian presence in the vignettes of their childhood, and their national narratives. Ato Osman Omer spoke of the fact that there were a lot of Italians “left behind in Mekele and Kazeera”.\(^\text{1177}\) Consequently, memories of the “big villas” erected during the period of Italian occupation punctuated his vivid descriptions of the thriving landscapes that he

\(^\text{1175}\) Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Interview 2, February 19, 2014 and Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Interview 1, December 11, 2013.\(^\text{*}\) It is also interesting that both Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi and Ato Osman Omer spoke of the Italians who remained behind in Ethiopia after the Italian occupation ended in 1941. During his interviews, Ato Mohammed spoke of the Italian presence in the region as an understudied subject matter, in addition to outlining the extensive cultural and topographical influences that their presence had brought to the region. There were extensive conversations regarding the mechanic shops, construction efforts and coinage.

\(^\text{1176}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{1177}\) Ibid.
traversed in whilst growing up in Ethiopia. The integral structure of the mosaic in which he was raised was complicated. This was alluded to in the visibility of the Italian population that remained in a Post-World War II Ethiopia, and the big white villas which became a status symbol “occupied by the privileged citizens of the country, including Oromos”.\textsuperscript{1178} Ethiopian engagement with the memory of the period of Italian occupation from 1936-1941 is complicated. Italian generational presence in Ethiopia is still an understudied topic. The fact that all of the discussions of hometowns encountered for this research integrated the presence of other nationalities, but particularly Italians, signals the historically complicated nature of Ethiopian identities.

Ato Osman Omer concluded his set of his reminisces with: “I still live in the memory of Dire Dawa; I am mentally there, even though I am physically here”.\textsuperscript{1179} The implications to Ato Osman’s lamentation are manifold. By all metrics of measurement, he has built a fulfilling life for himself in Canada, including a family with a wife and two successful adult children. Yet, it was clear throughout our conversation that Ato Osman Omer was drawn to the life that he once had. So-much-so that he shared that his “retirement is getting close”, and maybe it was time for him to return to his homeland. His hope in 2014 was that maybe he and his wife could go to live there, because the longing that he felt was “getting to his psyche”.\textsuperscript{1180} He professed: “I love my country very much”, expressing an attachment to a homeland and a world purview instilled in him by a mother who passed before he left his country in 1977. \textsuperscript{1181}

\textsuperscript{1178}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1179} Ibid. *Ato Osman Omer’s lamentation is not unusual, in fact it is a typical experience of immigrants. In an overview of psychic malaise and migration, Natalie Losi describes the state of the immigrant in the position of “either/or”, as they often stand between at least two shores, two cultures, two ways of thinking and they live this transition as a schism or dichotomy, in Lives Elsewhere: Migration And Psychic Malaise, Translated by Brett Shapiro, (London: Karnac, 2006): 3.
\textsuperscript{1180} Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1181} Ibid.
Rooting Self-Representations and Prominent Contemporary Visual Signifiers

The self-representations featured in this chapter show evidence of continuities in both representations and perceptions of Ethiopian history and identity discussed in the previous chapters. At present, archetypal symbols and signifiers of Ethiopian history outlined in chapter one and two, such as like the ancient civilization of Aksum, the Battle of Adowa and the Emperor Haile Selassie remain visible, inconspicuously incorporated into personal narratives and other forms of self-representation such as ethnic establishments across the Canadian milieu. In a Canadian context, signifiers of Ethiopian identity examined outside of oral histories range from restaurants and other ethnic businesses, to the multimedia publications and celebrations of Ethno-cultural associations across the country.

Ethiopian attachment to homeland and topography as identifiers in self-representations is not unique to the narratives featured in this chapter. Immigrants, geographer Elizabeth Chacko argues, “bring with them understandings of places from which they hail, identifying themselves by a plethora of place-based labels.”1182 As demonstrated by Chacko’s research on Ethiopians in both Washington and Los Angeles, Ethiopians in the global Diaspora do this particularly well. Through her examination of ethnic sociocomerscapes, Chacko argues that “the names of many of the establishments such as Addis Ababa, Merkato, Lalibela, Axum and Awash and Blue Nile hark back to toponyms of places and geographical features in Ethiopia”.1183 In alignment with

Chacko’s findings, research conducted for this dissertation also demonstrates that toponyms of places and geographical features in Ethiopia are also popular forms of self-representation by Ethiopians in Canada. More than celebrating memories of a homeland, the names, images and celebrations associated with Ethiopian businesses and publications are deeply steeped in historical narratives and symbolism. Currently, there are several businesses and restaurants across the country which invoke the legacy of the Abyssinian empire and the stalwart narrative of a 3000-year-old legacy. Names such as Queen of Sheba, King Solomon, evoke the prevalent legacy of the nation discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, and are often accompanied by the symbolism of the image of the Lion of Judah. Replica images of the classic Kingdom of Aksum/Axum (100-700 AD) and the holy city of Lalibela are also prominent names and visual identifiers which have contemporary resonance.

Political statements about history are also made across the country, simply by the hanging of portraits of the renowned Emperor Haile Selassie. The evocation of the legacies of the Queen of Sheba, the Abyssinian empire, the civilization of Aksum, the Battle of Adowa, and the Emperor Haile Selassie all reinforce the existence of a steadfast, and once prolific narrative surrounding the “golden age” of Ethiopian cultural and historical prominence. Fikru Negash Gebrekidan also makes the argument that in Black studies, “the Ethiopian past epitomized a golden age in which Africans enjoyed relative prominence in world history”, one that has since diminished considerably.


Members of the Ethiopian Diaspora are invested in keeping this legacy alive through recollection, representation, and commemoration. Across the Canadian socioscape (and the broader Ethiopian Diaspora across the globe), Axum (Aksum) is one of the most commonly utilized visual signifiers for Ethiopian establishments. Woubeshet et al argue that the classical civilization of Aksum was the early beginning of what is today modern Ethiopia. Considered to be one of the four major civilizations of the early period, alongside Persia, China and Rome, Aksum was a complex civilization built and controlled by an indigenous African people, a point that has received much attention from scholars of classical and ancient history.

---

1185 Map of Ethiopian Restaurants in Toronto, Canada: https://www.google.ca/maps/search/Ethiopian+restaurants+in+Toronto+/@43.6850599,-79.3952183,13z/data=!3m1!4b1


As evidenced in Chapters one and two, the obelisks of Aksum were once ubiquitous and prolific signifiers of Ethiopian history and identity. The obelisks influenced and informed perceptions and representations surrounding the Horn of Africa nation and its peoples for much of the twentieth-century, when knowledge of classical history mattered and had cultural cachet. Most poignantly, why within a Canadian context, Aksum figured prominently in the discourses on Ethiopia and Ethiopians during the Abyssinian crisis and subsequent Italo-Ethiopian War (1934-36), and once again during Ethiopian participation at Expo 67 in Montreal.\footnote{Evidence of the prominence of Aksum as a signifier in the mid-twentieth century is found in “Pearson Lights Flame to Open Expo 67 and Calls it Monument to Man”, \textit{New York Times}, April 28, 1967: 18. This article has a photo enclosed of the Ethiopian Pavilion featuring two obelisks (replicas of the monument of Axum) speaks to the ubiquity of the towers.} It was no accident that headlines surrounding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of 1934-35 and war (1935-36) centered around the ancient Ethiopian city making declarations such as “African holy City Captured” and “Tribal Troops Circled: Holy War Looms With Fall of Aksum.”\footnote{Full citations: “Italy Prepares Coast Defence: France Applying Brakes in Move For Penalties: African holy City Captured”, \textit{London Evening Advertiser}, Tuesday October 8, 1935: Front Page; “Tribal Troops Circled: Holy War Looms With Fall of Aksum; Financial Isolation is Near”, \textit{The Halifax Herald}, Tuesday October 15, 1935: Front Page.} Part of an epoch, the legacy of Axum was captured in representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians at Expo 67 in Montreal. The Ethiopian Pavilion at Expo cone-shaped with colourful- purple and red with golden decorations” was deliberately designed in reminiscence “of the ceremonial umbrellas of the priests of the ancient Ethiopian city of Axum”\footnote{“Ethiopia”, \textit{Expo Official Guide} (1967): 139. Library and Archives Canada, \textit{Expo Collection}. Also see: Full Page Advertisement, “Ethiopia His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I First Head of State to Visit Expo 67”, \textit{The Montreal Gazette}, Monday, May 1, 1967: 21.}.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{figure27.jpg}
\caption{Ethiopia Tall Pillars}
\end{figure}
Curating a carefully cultivated image, it was deliberate that French architect Jacques Benoit designed the entrance of the Ethiopian pavilion at the top of a tall flight of white stairs “flanked by lions representing the 13 provinces of the empire” enabling the visitors to “look down on a replica of the Church of St. George at Lalibela, its interior containing the Crowns of Axum, 1,000 silver crosses and other objets d’art.”  

Three white plastic obelisks erected beside the pavilion (replicating the originals in Ethiopia) would find their way into a much coveted feature piece in the New York Times. With the proverbial eyes of the world fixed on Canada during the opening of Expo, it was with great pride that the Expo organizers documented that “the press appeared as enraptured as the general public”, and that most notably, that The New York Times had observed that “Expo 67 bids to be one of the great international shows of the century”. The obelisks of the Ethiopian Pavilion were one of the few iconic images selected to represent the diversity of Expo 67 in this same segment of The New York Times, marking their ubiquity and cultural relevance for a long period of time, and reaffirming the cultural cachet of their history evoked by contemporary Ethiopians.

Ethiopian presence and representation at Expo 67, covered in chapter 2, was testament to a long period of historical, political and cultural relevancy of Ethiopia and Ethiopians. In present day Canada, the obelisks of Axum are evoked in homage to a preceding and long-standing visibility of Ethiopian history in the West; intertwined with the significance of the civilization of Aksum, the Abyssinian Empire, Lalibela and the Solomonite Dynasty. The age of relevance for master narratives of civilization has all but disappeared in the twenty first century. Yet, contemporary members of the Ethiopian Diaspora still harken back to this long period of relevancy with reverence. In the present, the iconic obelisks of Axum are arguably oft hung in prominence as testament to: the existence of a powerful and expansive indigenous African civilization (5000-2000 BCE),

---

and the resilience and triumph of an African peoples in the face of colonization (the Battle of Adowa in 1896 and the Italo-Ethiopian War and Occupation 1934-1941).\footnote{Woubshet et al, “The Romance of Ethiopia: A Critical Introduction”, \textit{Callaloo}, Volume 33 (1) 2010: 8.} Axum was the first African polity to print its own coinage as currency. The insignia on one side of the coin was in \textit{Ge’ez}, the other side was in Greek. Woubshet et al argue that these minted coins and their legacy of empire were “prescient harbingers of the intense battle over power and status that would later mark Ethiopia’s imperial legacy and its subsequent Afro-Marxist upheaval”.\footnote{Ibid.} In the summative words of historian Harold Marcus, Aksum may have disintegrated and faded from prominence after the seventh century, but “it never disappeared and always reappeared in fact.”\footnote{Harold Marcus’s \textit{A History of Ethiopia} (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994 edition): xvii.}

In addition to its visibility across socioscapes, Aksum was also referenced by the interviewees featured in this study. Concurrent to its contemporary use as a prominent signifier in self-representations, awareness of the expansive nature of the classical empire is also fundamental to understanding the long-rooted socio-historical connections of Ethiopians with places such as modern-day Djibouti, Yemen, Egypt, Sudan and their peoples. At its peak in the third century CE, Aksum covered a vast region including parts of southern Egypt, northern Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia.\footnote{Ibid.} To a generation of Ethiopians, the evocation of Aksum is integral to understanding Ethiopian history from both within and outside of the Horn-of-Africa region. Aksum speaks to the inherent cosmopolitanism and diversity of the region. Ato Mohammad Al-Adeimi asserts that “you have to read the history of Arabia and Ethiopia, you have to read both, to understand how the influence has affected both sides”.\footnote{Author interview with Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Interview 1, December 11, 2013.}

Through the prism of the life trajectory of his paternal grandfather and grandmother, and their role and influence in the city of Dire Dawa, one gleans insight into the diverse fabric of Ethiopian society influenced by historic relations to neighboring

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{1195} Ibid.
\bibitem{1197} Ibid.
\bibitem{1198} Author interview with Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Interview 1, December 11, 2013.
\end{thebibliography}
kingdoms and empires.\textsuperscript{1199} Ato Mohamed Al-Adeimi’s family narrative exemplifies a long rooted economic, cultural and political connection between Ethiopia and Yemen.\textsuperscript{1200} Renowned for their engineering and construction expertise, Yemenis like his grandfather Alwan Ali Al-Adeimi travelled to and settled in the city of Dire Dawa in search of the engineering projects and economic prospects available to outside consultants during the early 1920s, preceding the period of Italian occupation of Ethiopia from 1936-1941. Alwan Al-Ademi married a lady of ‘Adere’ (Oromo) descent from Harar and set his roots in Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{1201} Discussions of his childhood in Harar took on historical significance, as the city was once a thriving epicenter for Islamic studies in Ethiopia. This point led Ato Mohammed Al Adeimi into a discussion of the significance of the historical relationship of Islam to Ethiopia. “Islam”, he asserted was saved by an Ethiopian \textit{“Bilal l’Habesha”}, and this fact he argued “is not given enough attention by Historians of Ethiopia”.\textsuperscript{1202} To Ato Mohamed Al-Ademi, the co-existence of Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia for centuries is critical to understanding the integrative fabric of Ethiopian society. And it is through Axum and the relationship between Arabia and Ethiopia that long rooted nature of “the Christian and Muslim bond” that he discusses at length is evidenced.\textsuperscript{1203} Awareness of the civilization of Axum both literally and figuratively explains the inherent cosmopolitanism of contemporary Ethiopian society, in so much as it explains why Ethiopians in the Diaspora continue to evoke the ancient city as an integral component to their self-representations and articulations of Ethiopian history and identity. There are continuities in the ways in which “Ethiopia’s golden age” is invoked within oral historical narratives.

\textsuperscript{1199} Ibid., Interview 2, February 19, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1201} Author interview with Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Interview 2, February 19, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1202} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1203} Ibid.
Evocation of the legacy of Axum is often intertwined with contemporary reverence displayed for the Emperor Haile Selassie and the 3000 year old legacy which he represented. In her examination of Ethiopian “modernity”, Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis asserts that “the distinct narratives, myths, and stories that each nation embodies” raise important issues around “how the various layers of imagined community to which an individual may feel a personal sense of attachment cohere together in socially meaningful ways”. Wolde Giorgis’s historical points have contemporary relevance. Within the context of a dispersed global Diaspora, her focus on an “ephemeral ideological formation of the historical imaginary of the nation” is cogent. Wolde-Giorgis asserts that in Ethiopian history, “the unifying ideology between the rulers and the masses was a successful strategy that defined the ways the nation was presented”. The legacy of the Ethiopian empire was the primary source of loyalty and solidarity, and the rallying image in the discourse of modernity. Members of the Diaspora still rally around these same images of loyalty and solidarity, in their boundaryless transnational communities. Evocation of symbols of the legacy monarchical rule in Ethiopia like Axum, herald the antiquity of Ethiopia and Ethiopian exceptionalism.

Descriptions of life in Al-Jazeera by Ato Mohamed Al-Ademi inevitably led into discussions of how his family’s property backed onto the summer palace of the Emperor Haile Selassie in the Harar region. The Emperor’s slight frame, but larger than life presence was conveyed through the memories that Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi shared. It is hardly insignificant that Ato Al-Adeimi referenced his memories of the Emperor’s returns to his summer home. Traversing through crowds of citizens gathered around to catch a glimpse of the messianic figure returning to the countryside, the emperor would often throw pieces of Ethiopian birr and silver out of the window of his car to those

1205 Ibid.
1206 Ibid., 86.
1207 Ibid.
1208 Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Interview 2, February 19, 2014
welcoming him back to the region with outstretched arms. In similar fashion, Etye Esther Tsegaye’s fond accounts of her athletic achievements in her youth are intertwined with her memories of the sports education that was incorporated into the Ethiopian school curriculum by the Emperor. Etye Esther was outlining her participation in a gymnastics competition, when she paused to lament that “all those beautiful things from the time of Haile Selassie are gone”.

However, the legacy of “highland culture” that Axum and the monarchy signify are not uncontested. When our conversation eventually turned to that of the Emperor Haile Selassie, Elias appeared unimpressed by the previous leader of Ethiopia. Discussions about the Emperor ensued in follow-up to Elias’s remarks about how when people see him “in person”, they think that he is Rastafarian. In light of that fact that he is tall and he sports dreadlocks in his hair, Elias asserted that people often mistake him for Jamaican. Even though he does not contest the confusion too much, he acknowledged that those with knowledge of Rastafarian beliefs are very aware of the Emperor Haile Selassie. However, in contrast to the reverence for the late Emperor that he encounters, Elias made it a point to state that his “perspective of the Emperor is very different”. He argued that whilst most people that he has met, speak and think highly of the Emperor, he professed: “what he has passed on to us, is not something that I am proud of”. Elias’s comments are reflective of his personal history and experiences growing up in a generation immersed in discourses and critiques of the past. He specifically spoke of the legacy of Mekora Bet Ayelem and the complications of an Ethiopian identity articulated strictly through a prism of “highland culture” and the

[1209] Ibid.
[1210] Interview 2 with Etye Esther Tsegaye, July 1, 2013.
[1211] Atusoko Matsuoka and John Sorensen assert that representations which place an emphasis on the “antiquity of Ethiopia” (called Abyssinia until the nineteenth century), including the Emperor Haile Selassie are emblematic of a ruling hegemonic class “which presided over a system in which the majority Oromo population and other minorities were subordinated to hegemony of highland elites identified with the Amhara ethnic group”. In “Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea”, Dialectical Anthropology 26(2001):39.
[1212] Interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
[1213] Ibid.
[1214] Ibid.
historical legacy that this has manifested into in the present. However, one also gets the sense that Elias is slightly conflicted on the negativity of the Emperor’s historical symbolism. Whilst being critical of the legacy that the Emperor signifies, Elias asserted that in the absence of other comparable Ethiopian signifiers since the emperor: “it’s good to have that identity, that person, that positive message. In that way, I feel proud of being an Ethiopian”.  

Before our conversation concluded, Elias returned to the subject of Emperor Haile Selassie once more. He declared that it would bug him to leave our conversation with solely negative impressions of the Emperor’s legacy. Admittedly, not a fan of the Emperor, Elias qualified his perspectives on the once emblematic Ethiopian leader. He repeated that his disdain and questioning of the greatness of the Emperor stemmed from his perspective that “not everyone was equally valued” during the time of the Emperor. In this tenor, Elias spoke of the social divisions which existed beneath the surface during the rule of the Emperor. Divisions which he articulated as: “if you were from specific groups you were more valued”. From Elias’s perspective, these divisive and hierarchical distinctions among the Ethiopian populace were not invented by the Emperor. Rather, he argued that the “families from his time, had given birth – inheriting both negative and positive legacy; a legacy that started long before him”. In essence, Elias professed that it was actually the written history of the men and women of power which he contested, more than the Emperor himself. The people in power who he believed perpetuated the legacy of superiority. To illustrate his point better, Elias provided an analogy. He directed me to look into a published fictional work entitled “Fikir Eske Mekaber” (Love Until The Grave) by Ethiopian author Haddis Alemayhu.

Elias characterized the book as a fictional work, equitable to that of William

---

1215 Ibid.
1216 Ibid.
1217 Ibid.
1218 Ibid.
1219 Ibid.
1220 Author Interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet: “a book of the poor people”. 1221 One, which he said represents how people lived during that period; a book that speaks about how people lived during that time”. 1222 *Fikir Eske Mekaber (1968)* is considered to be a classic of modern Ethiopian literature. Acknowledged as a critical examination of the “socio-political, legal and customary system of traditional Ethiopia”, 1223 *Fikir Eske Mekaber* provides an examination of Ethiopian society embedded in a critique of the injustice of the reigning “land tenure system, the hierarchies that thrived with the philosophy and social background behind them”. 1224 These inequitable practices assailed in *Fikir Eske Mekaber*, are what Elias characterizes as legacies inherited by the emperor during his oral historical interview. The book goes into further critique of the Orthodox Church, a historically daring and taboo move that earned the author the wrath of the elites of Ethiopian society during the period of its publication. 1225

Elias’s confliction in his opinions of both the symbolic and affective power of Emperor Haile Selassie’s reign are exemplified through his reference to *Fikir Eske Mekaber* and Haddis Alemayhu. Within the purview of this dissertation, Elias’s reference to *Fikir Eske Mekaber (1968)* is illustrative and affirmative of the prevalence of “history” on articulations and conceptualizations of Ethiopian identity. The author Dr. Haddis Alemayehu’s life and works spanned the twentieth century, and are reflective of the Ethiopian generational ethos that is imbued within the oral histories recorded for this research. His works have been studied and scrutinized in the Ethiopian academe, from the elementary to the doctorate level. 1226 And even though ‘Fikir Eske Mekabir’ is the most renowned of his works, it is not irrelevant that Dr. Haddis Alemayehu’s works span three generations of Ethiopian life in the twentieth-century. 1227 Credited for his literary craft,

---

1221 Ibid.
1222 Ibid.
1224 Ibid.
1225 Ibid.
1226 Ibid.
1227 Ibid.
his plays and essays “mirrored Ethiopian life” and provided both political assessments and implications.\textsuperscript{1228} His famous trilogy of generation is comprised of two other works entitled: “Yelmizhat” (Nightmare) and “wonjelegnaw Dagna” (The Criminal Judge).\textsuperscript{1229} All the titles have resonance to Ethiopians in the Diaspora who lived and breathed similar experiences. Most significantly, it is in Dr. Haddis Alemayehu’s articulation of “\textit{Tizita}” (to remember) that tears were shed within the confines of the oral historical interview sessions conducted for this dissertation. To Dr. Haddis Alemayhe, \textit{Tizita} was an autobiographical essay in recollection of his ordeals, hardships and survival of his exile in Fascist Italy.\textsuperscript{1230} His recollection would become the anathema of a generation that “had to pass through during the invasion of Ethiopia by Fascists”.\textsuperscript{1231} The concept of \textit{Tizeta} was brought up by each of the participants at a juncture in their narratives that elicited a particularly difficult memory. In each of these separate moments, each participant took pause to articulate the cause for their melancholy, demonstrating the ways in which ancestral linkages, cultural pride and a longing for space and place are integral tenets of articulations of Ethiopian identities within the Diaspora.

Adowa (also spelt Aduwa, Adua, or Adwa) is another prominent historic and contemporary signifier of Ethiopian history and identity oft referenced by members of the diaspora. In \textit{The Battle of Adwa: African Victory in the Age of Empire (2011)} historian Raymond Jonas aptly characterizes the once famed battle as a part of “our global heritage”; a pivotal moment in time that paved the path to significant world events in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{1232} On March 1, 1896 an Ethiopian army led by Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II and his wife Empress Taytu won, what scholars have framed as “a spectacular victory over a European army”, effectively turning the “world upside down”.\textsuperscript{1233} Jonas’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1228} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1229} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1230} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1231} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1233} Ibid. *Other influential historical monographs attesting to the symbolism of the Battle of Adowa include: Bahru Zewde’s \textit{A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1974}, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991; The collected edition of works \textit{The Battle of Adwa: Reflections On Ethiopia’s Historic Victory Against European Colonialism}, edited by Paulos Milkias and
characterization of this event as pivotal moment in “our global heritage” is addressed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. The battle of Adowa played an instrumental role during the second Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-36, and effectively paved the path to significant world events in the twentieth century.1234

More importantly for the focus of analysis in this chapter, Adowa is a fixed historical moment that indeterminately shaped the global narrative on Ethiopia and Ethiopians for more than half of the twentieth-century. This interpretation continues to prevail within historical scholarship but has all but dissipated from mass social consciousness. A decisive “Black” /Ethiopian victory over a “White” Italian army laid the foundations for most populous interpretations of “modern” Ethiopian history throughout the twentieth century. Chapters one to three of this dissertation demonstrate how this emblematic victory from the late nineteenth-century formed the basis for a collectivist and often symbolic pan-African Ethiopian identity and shaped the global narrative on Ethiopia and Ethiopians for more than half of the twentieth-century (1896-1967). Etye Esther Tsegaye sums up the outcomes of the nineteenth-century battle best in her declaration: “in my country, we have never been colonized-as much as we are free, we are God fearing people.”1235

Throughout Canada and much of the Western world, a late nineteenth-century victory of a Black army against all odds characterized perceptions of Ethiopian political and cultural significance into the 1930s and beyond. Knowledge of the first Italo-Ethiopian battle (March 1896) and its unprecedented outcome had political and cultural cachet in the 1934-35 period. Headlines were made worldwide over Italians seeking to “avenge the defeat of 40 years ago by taking Adowa”, and the subsequent “Fall of

1234 Jonas, Ibid.
1235 Author Interview with Etye Esther Tsegaye, July 1, 2013.
Historic Adowa”.\textsuperscript{1236} However, for many contemporary Ethiopians, the subsequent Italian victory in 1936 is narrated as an irregularity in the twentieth-century trajectory of Ethiopian history. Ethiopian victory at Adowa (1896) and the restoration of the Ethiopian Imperial throne in 1942 are conflated within Ethiopian self-representations and narrations of early twentieth-century history. Italian victory in 1936-38 is often narrated as an ephemeral occurrence, in-light-of the fact that the Emperor Haile Selassie was restored to his throne from exile in 1942. Contemporary assessments of Adowa by Ethiopians are in alignment with once steadfast representations of the Emperor Haile Selassie and the legacy which he represented, as addressed in chapter 2.\textsuperscript{1237} Many Ethiopians encountered over the course of this research place an emphasis on the centrality of Ethiopian strength and unity in their proclamation that: “nowhere in the world can they classify us as colonized –it was an occupation!”\textsuperscript{1238} Today, the first Battle of Adowa (March 1896) remains as a fixed historical moment which continues to shape representations and perceptions of Ethiopian history.

It is in the absence of a general awareness of Black history within Canada, much less Ethiopian or African history, that every March, various Ethio-Canadian cultural associations across Canada host elaborate commemorative events and publish editorials in their newsletters and websites.\textsuperscript{1239} The energy of these events is often infectious and upbeat. Attendees get the distinct sense that they are there to celebrate something of significance. The events are typically interactive engaging various members of the communities across Canada. Dramatic reenactments are integrated into the programme.

\textsuperscript{1236} Full Citation: Italians Avenge Defeat of 40 years Ago by Taking Adowa”, The Evening Telegram, St. John’s Newfoundland, Monday October 7, 1935: 4; “Fall of Historic Adowa” London Evening Advertiser, Friday October 4, 1935: Front Page.

\textsuperscript{1237} For more information see Chapter two of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{1238} Interview 1 with Ato Mengesha Beyene March 27, 2014.

\textsuperscript{1239} The obscurity and or invisibility of “Black” and or “African” History in Canada is addressed by various scholars, most poignantly for this dissertation by Henry M. Codjoe in his piece “Africa(ns) in the Canadian Educational System: An Analysis of Positionality and knowledge Construction”, in The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging. Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P.Pulampu eds. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press):66, 79. *Throughout his chapter, Codjoe asserts that within Canadian society there is a mismatch between the African-Canadian students culture and that of Canadian schools and society as a whole, Blacks, including Ethiopians and other Africans are essentially erased, marginalized and or homogenized.
Children and adults are adorned in traditional garb, narrating roles of Emperor Menelik and Empress Taytu on the eve of the Battle of Adowa. The walls of the halls are adorned with poster board presentations of research compiled by students of all ages. Adult members give lectures on the significance of the history to their intergenerational audiences. Documentaries and music videos related to the battle are cued to run throughout the programme. As a collective act, it is in the face of historical obscurity, that celebrating Adowa affords communities and their invitees the opportunity to remember Ethiopian historical exceptionalism – as uncolonized. Simultaneously, it is also in the spirit of pan-Africanism and African unity that most ethnic association publications, celebrations and narratives on Adowa underscore the imperative to come together and celebrate a legacy of resistance to foreign domination and victory. Historical memory has traditionally been an effective political tool in rallying the Ethiopian nation, often utilized to “foster unity” and “legitimate existing hierarchies of power”. A central tenet to Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis’s “charting of Ethiopian modernity and modernism” is the assertion that discourses on Ethiopian national identity were established in the late 19th century. Narratives on the nation which flourished during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie were continuations of the rhetoric which flourished during the time of Emperor Menelik. Contemporary evocations of these legacies are exemplars of the steadfastness of this phenomenon. Evocations of historical legacies are

1240 One particularly notable Music Video about the Battle is the 2012 production of Tikur Sew (Black People) by Teddy Afro: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuyfK7NLo8Y
And last but not least, my personal participation as both an audience member and a guest lecturer in Adowa day commemorative events by the London Ethiopian Community Association held at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, March 2013 and in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in March 2015, and March 2018 (For more information on the Association visit: https://eccalondonontario.com/about-us/welcome/).
1243 Ibid.
also illustrative of the importance of continuity in Ethiopian conceptualizations of history.

Adowa is the lynchpin to understanding the venerable past that a generation of Ethiopians allude to within the context of their individual life narratives. Adowa is also an integral component to contextualizing selective constructions and contestations of representations of Ethiopian identity. In spite of the unifying power of the narrative, at present the act of representing and remembering Adowa is fraught with politics of identity. The act of public commemoration and reflection on the event is a political stance deeply rooted in a utopian and idealist perception of Ethiopian history. Ato Osman Omar proclaimed that the battle of Adowa was a demonstration of how the “bravery of our forefathers kept the Italians at bay.”\(^{1244}\) He underscored the fact that whatever quarrels were existent within the framework of the “Abyssinian empire”, the leaders of the regions worked in unison in the late 19\(^{th}\) century to defeat a common enemy. He concludes that it is inarguable that in that moment of Ethiopian victory, “Menelik made Ethiopia one by force, whether we agree or disagree”.\(^{1245}\) Speaking to a virulent contemporary debate on the outcomes of the Battle of Adowa, Ato Osman maintained that “the people of the South suffered a lot”. He acknowledged that in that moment, “somehow, they got conquered and they became one”; and that “if Menelik was smart, he would have put in a federal system”. Yet, he concludes that “we are not going to rewrite history”, albeit, “that was a mistake.”\(^{1246}\)

### 5.3 Fragmentation in Identity Formation

Participants who took part in this study addressed increased identity fragmentation within the Diaspora through the prism of their own lives and experiences. Their narratives were reflective of why they elected to identify as an Ethiopian, and markedly did not dwell on why others would not. It was clear from this micro-study that

---

\(^{1244}\) Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.  
\(^{1245}\) Ibid.  
\(^{1246}\) Ibid.
identifying as Ethiopian in the contemporary Diaspora is a choice influenced by individual life experiences and principles.

When asked how he self-identifies, Elias Omer did not falter in his response that he proudly identifies as an Ethiopian. The youngest of the first generation immigrants featured in this chapter, Elias Omer elaborated further by expressing the disdain that he feels when he gets the question “are you Habesha? or Amhara?” from others from his region of origin. He made it a point to declare that he typically does not “find it important to answer”; as these types of questions he argued are “habitually designed to divide you and I.”

Ethiopian identities have always been multifaceted and complicated. Ethiopians, Goitom affirms, “originate from a heterogeneous society whereby difference is the norm because of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity”. Many Ethiopians can claim ancestry to more than a single ethnic group, and Elias is no exception. He freely cited that his mother is of Tigrayana and Amhara descent, whereas his father was a blend of Eritrean, Oromo, Amhara and Yemeni descent. Contrary to any monolithic perceptions that external observers may have about people from the region, Elias’ mixed ethnic heritage is reflective of the norm in Ethiopian society, and not the exception. Elias’s response to the identity question and his multi-ethnic composition is typical of most Ethiopians in the Diaspora. Elias was addressing political undercurrents to ethnic identifications within the context of a Canadian Diaspora, when he boldly proclaimed that “Ethiopia is the unifying answer”.

Over two decades after the establishment of a sizeable Horn-of-Africa Diaspora in Canada, Sorensen’s individual and collaborative works provide the necessary socio-historical and political contexts required to understand the premise of this historical

1247 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
1248 Ibid.
1250 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
1251 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.* For more on this topic see the works of John Sorensen.
As evidenced within Sorensen’s works, fragmentation within the Horn-of-Africa Diasporic groups heightened over the course of two decades, often in nebulous and complicated ways. Other emergent scholarship on Eritreans, Oromos, Hararis and Tigray groups in Canada underscored the hegemonic nature of an Ethiopian identification. Data collection for the National Household survey mirrored shifts within the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora. Eritrean was added as a category for identification on the census survey after the country attained independence from Ethiopia in 1991. By 2011, in addition to Ethiopian and Eritrean, the ethnic identifiers of Amhara, Oromo, Harari, Oromo and Tigrian were all categories of identification available to descendants from the Horn-of-Africa region to select from. The prevalence of mixed ethnic

---

1252 Sorensen’s monograph Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa (1993) is particularly informative to this research nexus, as it provides the historical context required to engage with the prevalence of history in contemporary articulations and contestations of Ethiopian identities. Sorensen and Matsuoka have also collaborated on other articles and chapters focused on Eritreans in Canada which have bearing on the assertions of this chapter, and the larger dissertation project from which it is drawn; primarily that conceptualizations of “history” continue to have bearing on self-representations in the present- for all members of the interrelated Horn-of-African Diaspora. Other works of particular relevance are: “Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea” (2001), “Eritrean Women in Canada: Negotiating New Lives” (1999) and “Eritrean Canadian Refugee Households as Sites of Gender Renegotiation” (2008). Full Citations are: Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorensen: “Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea.” Dialectical Anthropology 26: (2001): 37-63; “Eritrean Women in Canada: Negotiating New Lives”. Canadian Woman Studies, 19 (3), 1999: pp104-109 and “Eritrean Canadian Refugee Households as Sites of Gender Renegotiation,” in Doreen Indra, ed., Engendering Forced Migration (Broadview press, 2008): 218-241.


1254 http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/td-td/Rp-eng.cfm?Lang=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=0&PID=105396&PRI D=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&Theme=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=
heritages within the diaspora is also evidenced in the National Household survey data collected within the past decade.\textsuperscript{1255}

Table 1: Statistical Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces (ranked from highest to lowest)</th>
<th>Number of People Respondents identifying as being of “Ethiopian” Ethno-Cultural Heritage</th>
<th>Number of People Identifying as Ethnic Identities still Counted within the Current Ethiopian Nation</th>
<th>Total Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>22,560</td>
<td>3,260</td>
<td>25,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>13,225</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>15,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>3,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>2,545</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While the existing scholarship has brought to the fore integral questions about constructions of identity, it does not adequately fill in the gap to understanding why select members of the diaspora who are from an Oromo, Tigray, Harari, or Weledin background might still elect to identify as an “Ethiopian”. Remiss from much of the scholarship on the Ethiopian diaspora to date, the participants in this study are reflective of the complicated and “integrative fabric of the Ethiopian cultural mosaic”, both within and outside the perimeters of their original national boundaries.\textsuperscript{1256}

\textsuperscript{1255} See Table 1 enclosed with compiled data from the 2016 National Household surveys where many respondents claim membership to more than a single Ethnic group. \url{www.statcan.gc.ca}, but still identify as Ethiopian.

\textsuperscript{1256} The term “Integrative Mosaic” was utilized by Ato Mohammed to describe his hometown of Dire Dawa, Ethiopia and his experiences growing up immersed in Ethiopian culture. A settlement worker within a Canadian Framework, Ato Mohammed used terms from his profession and review of the scholarly literature in assessment of both Ethiopian society and the Ethiopian
Infused with an avid embrace of the pluralism, each of the five voices featured in this study offered reasons as to why they still identify as Ethiopians. The tenor of Elias’s response to his identity question is reflective of a sense of shared history and topography identified within all of the voices featured in this chapter. The cultural and physical topography they were raised in provides a heterogenous perspective. On the one hand, the emphasis that each of them placed on the cosmopolitanism of their heritage is an explicit rejection of the broader obliviousness to the uniqueness of their historical and cultural heritage. On the other hand, the cosmopolitanism of their experiences placed an emphasis on why lived-experiences continue to dictate identifications.

In his settlement trajectory, Elias professed that he had had little time to seek out formal connections to the Ethiopian community. He did not attend the local Ethiopian Orthodox church or partake in the local Ethiopian Association activities. Yet, even though Elias did not have day to day interactions with Ethiopians, he had established some Ethiopian connections within his locale. He fondly spoke of the East African Café in Kitchener as a hub where members of his “community” could be found congregating on any given day. He was sure to underscore the fact that the East African Café was a communal hub for both the Ethiopian and the Eritrean community, as well as others from the East-Africa region. With conversations free-flowing in Amharic, Elias placed an emphasis on the fact that there are distinctions to be made amidst the patrons. However, he asserts that distinctions between Eritreans and Ethiopians were often articulated during conversations, but “not in a bad way”. He only recalled a few times when patrons

diaspora, throughout our interview sessions. This quote is from an interview with Ato Mohammed, from February of 2014.

1257 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014. Even though there was a local Ethiopian Association, until 2014 Elias had been unsuccessful at connecting with them formally. Instead, he had remained well-versed on the development of events and activities within the community through much more informal means. According to Elias, a local Ethiopian owned and operated mechanic shop was reputed to be the central hub for the dissemination of community information. A site for the frequent exchange of community news, vibrant discussion of politics and tea and cookies, on the account of Elias, the ethnic shop was not a “typical” contemporary Canadian mechanic shop.

1258 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014. For more information regarding the café see here: https://www.eastafricancafe.com/

1259 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
were very serious about being identified as Eritrean. In his experience, he argued, the
overwhelming sentiment is that “we are all from the same region.” 1260

Elias was not ignorant to the decades of civil war and strife that had plagued
relations between Ethiopians and Eritreans. On the contrary, it was in light of his
awareness that he elected to underscore the familial nature of the two groups in his
discussion. He surmised that since Eritrean independence in 1991, the long-standing
relationship between peoples from that region has been dismissed and become taboo to
discuss within academic scholarship and outside circles. Yet, he argued that for migrants
from the Horn-of-Africa region, the politics of identity are often far too complex to make
clear-cut distinctions between ethnic and regional boundaries distinguishable on a map.
He spoke of how his own family had members on both sides of the map. Elias’s
assessment succinctly encapsulated a common phenomenon. With all of the focus on the
disparities between the groups in the 1980s and 1990s, scholarly focus completely shifted
away from the ties that truly bind - particularly blood relations between peoples in the
region.1261

The politics of identity manifest themselves in a similar fashion for Ato Osman
Omar. Discussions of ethnic identity, family history, politics and national history were
intertwined throughout the duration of his interview session. Everything political was
personal, and everything personal was political, as he traversed back and forth from a
narration of his life experiences and trajectory, to an analysis of the major historical
events which impacted him and his nation of origin. Ato Osman Omer and I had started
our conversation going through the series of questions that were emailed to him in

1260 Ibid.
1261 Laura Osman, “Ottawa Celebrates Peace in Ethiopia and Eritrea After Decades of Conflict”,
ottawa-1.4773400; The Associated Press, “Eritrean Diaspora watches Ethiopia Thaw with Hope,
hope-mistrust-return-1.4756704
Embrace Open Border After Long Conflict”, NPR, December 4, 2018,
https://www.npr.org/2018/12/04/671260821/peace-is-everything-ethiopia-and-eritrea-embrace-
open-border-after-long-conflict.
advance. Upon reflection on the third question on the questionnaire, “How do you identify yourself?” He proclaimed: “I am an Ethiopian, an immigrant from Ethiopia who is also of Oromo Ethnicity.” Ato Osman Omer was cognizant of the politics, and very deliberate in his assertion of a dual ethnic identification. When asked if a separate Oromo identity was something that he related to, he firmly responded with: “not really, I identify with being an Ethiopian”. As an Ethiopian, he evoked his “right to agree or disagree with the politics”. He proclaimed: “I never think that I will claim that I am from a different homeland”, in spite of all of the ongoing political agitation and debates both within and outside of Ethiopia with regards to Oromo rights and sovereignty. Discussions of ethnic identity, politics and history were intertwined throughout the remainder of the conversation. To Ato Osman Omer, the debates du jure regarding the national language of Ethiopia and the consideration of English as an alternative to Amharic were ludicrous. He countered the tenets of the ongoing debates with the assertion that “language learning should be instituted as a federal system”. Ato Osman Omer favored an inclusive modality. He argued that the language debates were not as democratic as they claimed. Instead, he argued for a language system which would be reflective of the regions in which different dialects are spoken, at the same time as promoting one common language such as Amharic. In spite of the virulent nature of ethnic debates, he contended that “things will get better”. He offered:

1262 Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
1263 Ibid.
1264 Ibid.
1266 Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
1267 Ibid.
1268 Ibid.
You cannot undo what has been done for 150 years. Respect everyone learning their language. Having vengeance to kill the Amharas is not the solution. Let’s have peace and let’s everybody do something rather than fight, fight, fight! Guerilla warfare is not going to work. Things have changed. Things will get better!”

The end of the Cold War spurred changes across the African continent, including the onset of democratization in Ethiopia. Democratization in Ethiopia was marked by what has been dubbed as the “Federal Period” of Prime Minister Mele Zenawi (1991-2012). After the fall of the Derg in 1991, political discourse in Ethiopia was dominated by ethnic considerations. A system of ethnic federalism was instituted by Zenawi to appease the ethnic liberation groups that were engaged in war with the Derg regime for over three decades. However, decentralization completely failed on many fronts, and the Ethiopian government under Zenawi eventually resorted to a strategy of a “continuation of power”. This approach was first utilized during the imperial period, it was co-opted through the period of socialism, and continues in the present. As such, national identity, ethnic identity, ethnic struggle, religion, war and memory are all recurrent themes addressed by the participants of this study.

When asked about discourses surrounding the rising ethnic conflicts and religion-based tensions in Ethiopia, Elias Omer pointed to the fact that there are “so many religions that have existed in peace.” The centrality of the city of Dire Dawa within the lives of all of the interviewees for this chapter is testament to Elias’ point. Ato Mengesha Beyene’s life story was articulated primarily through the history of his connection to the YMCA during our first interview session. Praising the “revolutionary influences” of the organization on Ethiopian culture and society through “vocational training and arts, physical activities and leadership courses”, Ato Mengesha Beyene spent a great deal of time meticulously overviewing the structure and function of the

---

1269 Ibid.


1271 Ibid.

1272 Ibid., 27.

1273 Ibid.

1274 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
YMCA.\textsuperscript{1275} Ato Mengesha Beyene was employed by the YMCA in Ethiopia for more than two decades, starting in the early 1960s. He professed that the YMCA had impacted his life tremendously, and that if he is “perceived as innocent and good spirited today”, it is all attributable to the YMCA’s teaching and guidance.\textsuperscript{1276} Ato Mengesha Beyene had extensive experiences working in different branches across the different provinces within Ethiopia. He declared that: “Dire Dawa was one of the most active, vibrant branch[sic] in the Ethiopian history.”\textsuperscript{1277} When he reflected upon the meaning of each letter of the acronym, he paused when he reached the letter C. He argued that “the letter C in YMCA stresses Christianity”, and it might have hindered the YMCA’s progress with Muslims and other religions in Ethiopia, “but that was not true.”\textsuperscript{1278} Inevitably, a discussion of the YMCA, also inexorably led into an overview of the integrative mosaic nature of Ethiopian society during the 1960s and 1970s. He declared: “so anyway, the C to me did not play a part in what I have experienced in life - for example, Dire Dawa is indigenously Muslim”.\textsuperscript{1279} He continued that when it came “to the YMCA, Board members were from the Muslim Community, in Dire Dawa and Asmara

\textsuperscript{1275} Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014. A self-professed enthusiast and historian of all things related to the YMCA, it was his passion for the YMCA which facilitated our connection for an interview session. I sent him an image of a finding from the collection at LAC, and it turned out to be his transfer papers from the YMCA in Addis to the one in Dire Dawa. Papers can be found in: YMCA Ethiopia: Canada 1963-1968, Box MG 28 I 95, Vol .70, Library and Archives Canada.

\textsuperscript{1276} Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014.

\textsuperscript{1277} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1278} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1279} Ibid. His knowledge of the history of the organization was infinite. After extensively overviewing the roots of the organization in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Ato Mengesha proceeded to tell me that “the first African YMCA was founded in Egypt.” A declaration that he would rectify through the following assertion that: “the first general secretary of the Ethiopian YMCA was Egyptian, so you can conclude that Ethiopia is the second African YMCA that was established”. Admittedly, I was unprepared for the extent to which the history of the YMCA would predominate our initial interview session on “Ethiopian history” and identity. However, in homage to the customary respect for your elders, I indulged with little interruption. In retrospect, I am glad that I did. Ato Mengesha’s chronicle of the influences of the YMCA on his life and those of many others reinforced a fundamental tenet of this author’s scholarship that the engagement of immigrants with Western institutions pre-migration invariably shapes their world purviews, and ultimately shapes articulations of identities in resistance to steadfast representations of Africans as “inferior”, uneducated and other.
too”.\textsuperscript{1280} Through the prism of his employment with the YMCA in Ethiopia, Ato Mengsha Beyene’s narrative exemplified deeply embedded tenets of Ethiopian history and culture: historical and contextual evidence of the ability of a variety of ethnic and faith-based groups to co-exist in several regions of the country.\textsuperscript{1281}

One of Ato Mengesha’s proudest moments in this particular interview session came during a discussion of his memories organizing “the Mediterranean Armed forces competition for volleyball” during his time stationed in Asmara. Further articulations of the cohesive and polyvalent nature of Ethiopian society and culture during the period ensued. He poignantly recalled that “Kanyo station was America by itself”.\textsuperscript{1282} Asmara was home to an integral military base in the region, and the participants in the event were comprised of expats from all over the world. The internationalism inherent in his story, along with the narrations of the others interviewed for this chapter speak volumes to the “overlapping histories” embedded in their individual experiences.\textsuperscript{1283} Ato Mengesha Beyene concluded the segment with an assertion that pre-existing cultural concepts of inclusivity, premised on an avid embrace of pluralism have been eroded from Ethiopian culture. He cited the phenomenon of cultural erosion as evidence of the ways in which

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1280} Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1281} Author interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014. Ato Mengesha’s record with the YMCA is noteworthy. In a letter from Owen Manchester, (Division Director of the YMCA in Addis Ababa) addressed to “friends” in North America, it is evident that Ato Mengesha played a critical role with the Ethiopian YMCA. Manchester wrote: “As I become closer to the people, out of the masses of thousands whom the YMCA serves and who are making it move and progress, some names are beginning to stand out as people I am close to—names that were strange a year ago, like Attillio, Tsetghai, Makkonen, Yihdego, Mengisha, Johannis, Omar, Teclu, and many more. They aren’t strange anymore, they are real, warm, loving people who are our friends. Perhaps if I tell you about just a few of them you will get a little feeling of what we are doing and the people we are working with.” Letter from Owen Manchester, representative of Young Men’s Christian Association of Ethiopia, Asmara, addressed to “friends”, December 1, 1968. Found in file folder YMCA Ethiopia: Canada 1963-1968, Box MG 28 I 95, Vol .70, Library and Archives Canada.
\textsuperscript{1282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1283} In their introduction to the recently published edited collection Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories (2016), historians Karen Dubinsky, Sean Mills and Scott Rutherford make the argument that in spite of some general awareness of the Third World in their “daily lives, most Canadians know relatively little about the historical foundations of the complex nature of the country’s entanglements with non-western societies”. \textit{Canada and The Third World: Overlapping Histories}, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016): 1.
\end{footnotesize}
“religion is tied to politics”. A change and diminishment in Ethiopian collectivity which he asserted “came after Mengistu”. “You see”, he argued “the Derg policy was to divide and conquer”. However, Ato Mengesha Beyene proclaimed that “not even Mengistu dared to go too far”. In spite of the secular Marxist ideology upon which the revolution was premised, Mengistu “never dared to touch the Ethiopian church; even his fanatics fasted and had the cross in their offices”.

5.4 Whence Came the Time of The Derg: Narratives of Trauma and Resilience

_The Mengestu Coup?_ “It was a Thursday afternoon”, I remember because the Ethiopian soccer team used to play on Thursdays. I used to work at the Arat Kilo YMCA, we were driving to go to the games. And the planes were unusually speedy, the jeeps were everywhere.

Ato Mengesha Beyene

Regardless of their political or ethnic affiliation, the onset of the time of the Derg has left a profound impact on the psyche of at least two generations of Ethiopians. If an Ethiopian migrant interviewed for this chapter was not physically affected by the rule of the Derg, they were sure to be psychologically marked by it. Members of the Diaspora who were alive during this transitory period in Ethiopian history articulated the imprint of a Marxist totalitarian regime in a myriad of ways. For all but the youngest interviewee for this chapter, the onset of the Derg was a moment of rapture in their life story. The political shift clearly delineated what was before, from what came after.

In the middle of the Somali-Ethiopian war (July 1977- March 1978) which significantly impacted the Eastern part of the country, Ato Osman Omer’s father advised

---

1284 Author Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014.
1285 Ibid.
1286 Ibid.
1287 Ibid.
1288 Ibid.
1289 Author Interview 2 with Ato Mengesha, August 14, 2014.
1290 Specifically- physically affected through violence (torture), displacement, the loss of material wealth, the loss of freedom to move across the nation state as desired or required.
his children that they were in danger, and effectively told them to get out of the country while they still could. His family had already lost one child to the war and did not want to risk losing more. Ato Osman Omer briefly recounted his cloak and dagger experiences of fleeing Ethiopia in 1977, during the peak of the so-called “Red Terror Years”. Descriptions of atrocities were not central to his narrative, as much they were an implied presence in his pre-migratory experiences. Like many others, he exited Ethiopia through Djibouti with a few of his male siblings and cousins, heading to Saudi Arabia. He eventually made his way to Europe, at the behest of relatives and friends already settled there. After attempting to settle within several other nations across the globe, including in Greece, Italy and Sweden, he finally arrived in Canada during the early 1980s.

In the midst of her retell of her academic and athletic achievements as a young adolescent female, Etye Esther wistfully lamented: “never in my wildest dreams would I have ever thought that I would leave my country”. This attestation followed in-depth discussions of her formative teenage years, and the influential value of education to her life trajectory. Tye Esther’s chronicle of her challenges in continuing “good education”, abstractedly elicited a memory of the “time of the Derg”. Etye Esther Tsegaye’s full narration provides insight into the quintessential experiences of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians who remained in the country during the period of transition, and whose lives were consequently irrevocably transformed by the country’s political transition from the imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie to that of the Communist-Marxist inspired Military Junta of the Derg. After several years of hardship and unfulfilled promises of attaining top notch education from her father, Etye Esther had finally been graced with an opportunity to attend the Empress Menin School for girls in Addis Ababa. She surmised:

*When I was starting to have a good life... the Derg didn’t give me that chance neither. I hate politics, I didn’t want to be involved in politics. Every..., I can say 99% of Menin School was against Mengistu. Most of them are ended up dying in*

1291 Author interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
1292 Ibid.
1293 Author Interview with Etye Esther Tsegaye, May 13, 2013.
Memories of this transitional period in her life, and integral piece of Ethiopian history, elicited mixed feelings for Etye Esther. On the one hand, she smiled as she recalled the brazen nature of her classmates’ political activities. In this vein, she shared stories of how her and her classmate Ghenet were the only two who were not as politically engaged: “my classroom we were only two of us, we were not these things”. However, it was in light of their reluctance to participate in outright political rebellion that their other classmates designated the two of them as lookouts for their incendiary activities. She chuckled and stated: “we have power, whatever, so our jobs ….Ghenet was standing by the window, me in front of the door watching for any police...umm , what do you call it cadre?”. Admittedly not a subject matter worthy of laughter, for the consequences for getting caught were grave, and the conversation turned somber as she lamented: “Ghenet …uhhhh. I have their pictures and names and everything. We had two Ghenets, one died and one we have still alive”.

Narratives about this period were naturally fragmented. The gravitas of the period elicited several pauses for thought. Interviewees wandered into reflective moments frequently, as they gathered thoughts about what they wished to talk about next. The gaps in narrative were not long and uncomfortable silences; they were simply pauses allowing participants to think about moments that they had not fully thought about in some time. When Etye Esther resumed her narrative. She rhymed off the names of two other classmates whom she spoke of in reverence:

Elenias Tsedke, she almost shot, one time, but most of her high school was in prison. Sinudu…the Ghennet who was killed was my best friend. She is not the Ghennet I am telling you about. Ghenet the one that passed away was my best

[1294] Ibid. *The Empress Menen School for girls was founded by Empress Menen, Emperor Haile Selassie’s wife.
[1296] Ibid.
[1297] Ibid.
Etye Esther Tsegaye’s friendship with Ghennet predominated a good portion of our discussion of a period of revolution and tumult within Ethiopia’s capital city. Through portrayals of bravery and rebellion, Etye Esther Tsegaye took the time to personify members of the movement. With Menin being an all-girls school, Etye Esther’s narrative is illustrative of a unique and gendered element to the revolution. She declared: “Ghennet was **ihappa**, this Ghennet they used her beauty.” With beauty purportedly “out of this world”, her friend Ghennet utilized her looks to advance the tenets of the student cause. As Etye Esther described, with Ghennet being “beautiful and Jolly”, nobody suspected her “to anything”. A declaration that would elicit a story of her deceased friend’s wiles. United in their love of Indian movies, Ghennet and Esther frequented either Cinema Ethiopia or Cinema Empire to catch the latest releases. However, because of her political activities, “Ghennet would go to prison almost all of her high school life”. An inconvenience to their enjoyment of new releases at the cinema; but a barrier that could be overcome, as Etye Esther Tsegaye told of how “she even bribed a **cadre**, came to the movie”.  

These fond memories were told against the backdrop of life in a military state, and they revisit an old wound. At this juncture of the interview, Etye Esther’s voice trailed off and her animation disappeared. She seemed jolted back into the past, and into the gravity of the unimaginable feelings that accompany such an occurrence. A small window of silence allowed her to formulate her thoughts, and she declared that: “high school was another trial.” “Anyway”, she continued, “so she skipped from prison one day, just to go to movie with me. Can you believe it?”. Her exuberance in narration resumed as she reenacted her somber warning to her friend. “Do you know that

---

1298 Ibid.
1299 Ibid.
1300 Ibid.
1301 Ibid.
1302 Ibid.
1303 Ibid.
they will shoot you if they find out?!”, Etye Esther Tsegaye mimicked her younger self chastising her since departed friend Ghennet. She was met with: “they will shoot me anyway”. Etye Esther went on to empathically declare “she was so brave, I honestly don’t understand her.”

Through the prism of her friendship with Ghennet, Etye Esther provided a glimpse into a definitive experience of life in Ethiopia for youth. Her experiences with the student movement of the 1970s were integral in shaping her world purview. When asked what exactly it was that her friends did to protest, Etye Esther narrated as follows:

*one day what they do is...you know we have uniform right? They out their bras high and their belts, and right here they put the papers. They go up to the 4th floor and they just open their dress. The university is full of papers. The same day they go to Temes...you see the schools are together there ...so they go to Temes, Mênên, University and at the other Medhanealem, Medhenalen school. And so they have a day where they do this. They couldn’t handle them.*

Etye Esther professed “I will never forget it, because I will tell you why”. She narrated what happened after her classmates had dropped the pamphlets down from the top of the roof. A soldier had entered the room that she was guarding, and he was yelling: Out!”. She continued, “before he said to all school classes out, we were out”. The four of us, we were searching. We were kneeling, gun on our back and so he said, “whoever did this, come out or they are dead.” She stopped that thread of thought to say: “you know how we are dead? We are kneeling and walking on our knee …it’s asphalt, all our school is asphalt.” They crawled from building to building on their knees as instructed for the fear of being shot was imminent. “But you know what?” she declared, “God said that you are not dying today”.

---

1304 Ibid.
1305 Ibid.
1306 Ibid.
1307 Ibid.
1308 Ibid.
1309 Ibid.
1310 Ibid.
1311 Ibid.
During a discussion on his experiences working within the Ethiopian government in Ethiopia, Ato Mengesha meandered into a conversation about his encounter with Mengistu Haile Mariam. “I remember one time, we were training street girls to make them productive workers and to be self-sufficient” he began. The training program was conceived after the ministry that Ato Mengesha Beyene was working for had received “a donation from the Korean government of 300 sewing machines.” Campaigns to recruit street girls and train them in the Addis region, particularly in Kebele were afoot. Particularly proud of the positive outcomes of his leadership role in the local initiative, Ato Mengesha Beyene described how his efforts were integral to the successful training of vulnerable street girls who were otherwise prone to being sexually abused in the TeJ Betes. Ato Mengesha paused his narrative, to reiterate that if there was anything that was a mark of pride for him, it was his hand in the development of this particular training center.

Ato Mengesha narrated how one-time Mengistu Haile Mariam was coming to Gulule to visit the center. He resumed his narration by painting the scene of frenzy that ensued in preparation for the visit. It was fully expected that the president and his cadre would swoop in and survey the scene as quickly as possible. Ato Mengesha spoke of how, during the visit, Mengistu Haile Mariam glanced at him from across the room and then proceeded to approach him. When face-to-face, Mengistu asked: Ane tawokim? (Don’t we know each other?) to which Ato Mengesha replied: “Balefuwe, Bete Ye Mengist, meteche neber le Tennis” (I previously came to the palace for a tennis match). In response to Ato Mengesha, Mengistu Haile Mariam said: “no, no, no. Dire Dawa YMCA.” During this part of our interview, Ato Mengesha expressed his astonishment by this recollection. He looked at me across the table and said: “after how many years is this ?!” Finger counting subsequently ensued, and it was determined by Ato Mengesha that the original YMCA encounter would have been in 1965, and the second encounter would have occurred in the early 1980s. “Mengistu”, Ato Mengesha proclaimed, “must

---

1312 Ibid.
1313 Tej Betes are liquor houses. Tej is a type of mead or honey wine common to Ethiopia and Eritrea.
1314 Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014.
have had a good memory indeed”. When I asked “Ante neh metastemerew?!” (you were his teacher?) Ato Mengesha responded with: “that’s what he says to me”. Imitating Mengestu Haile Mariam, Ato Mengesha recounts: “Dire Dawa yeneberk geze, Harar iyeyemathah, military wun, Militarywun taselethen ena tachawuthen neber”. [During the time that you were in Dire Dawa, you used to come to Harar to train the armed forces in different sports competitions]. Ato Mengesha chuckled and declared: I never knew him then, but I had heard these stories that he came from Harar. Can you imagine?” I wryly replied: “no, what a small world”.

Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi was in Addis Ababa simply visiting; the day that the emperor “was taken from the palace in a small Volkswagen car”. Ato Al-Adeimi elaborated on the significance of this moment through vivid recollections of the Ethiopian royalty leaving the country through Dire Dawa shortly thereafter; smuggled through to Djibouti to Germany, US and Canada, marking the end of an era. He attested to the somber mood of the nation, and the eerie feeling that this was the beginning of the end of an era. The iconic Volkswagen scene of the emperor is reenacted in caricature form in the opening scenes of Ethiopian-Canadian musician The Weeknd’s (a.k.a Abel Tsefaye) video for his song *The Knowing* (2012). Images of the Emperor Haile Selassie are integrated several times into seven minute futuristic and dystopic video. However, the caption *Addis Ababa, August 1974* provides the context for the rupture (napalm) that marks the start of the Weeknd’s misadventures in the video; metaphorically speaking to the dissonance experienced by generations of Ethiopians after 1974.

### 5.5 Famine and Historical Displacement

The onset of the period of the Derg also shifted Western perceptions and representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians for a myriad of reasons outlined in Chapter 3.

1315 Ibid.
1316 Ibid.
1317 Ibid.
1318 Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Interview 2, February 2014
1319 Ibid.
The impetus for mass migration of Ethiopians to Canada during the 1980s was also the major cause célèbre of the decade the world over (1984-1988). The 1980s was a particularly heightened decade for Canadian awareness of the African nation, drawing unprecedented attention to the plights of the continent and generating a steadfast narrative of the Ethiopian famine as a parable for African famine.\textsuperscript{1321} When asked about his experiences during this period in history, Ato Osman Omer’s tone distinctly became irritated. He proclaimed: “yes, being from Ethiopia and all those jokes about being hungry!” It was clear that he had experienced the undesirable side effects of the cause célèbre of the period. Ato Osman Omer then proceeded to recount a particularly notable incident during a lunch hour at work. Upon his entry into the common lunchroom, he recalled how he visually scoured the room for friends, when a colleague beckoned him over to sit with a group. When he arrived at the table, another member in the group made the odious joke: “uh oh, watch out- he’s going to eat our leftovers!” \textsuperscript{1322} While no Ethiopian immigrant denies the existence of famine, there is a great disdain for the prominence of famine as a signifier of Ethiopian history and topography.

The dragnet created by the cause célèbre nature of Ethiopian/African famine relief typified the topography of sub-Saharan Africa and its peoples. Famine, perpetual poverty, and conflict became the new master narratives of the continent. In contrast to prevalent and steadfast Canadian perceptions of his homeland, Ato Osman Omer vibrantly described how his father was the owner of a beautiful fruit orchard in Dire Dawa, which once yielded enough business to support a family comprised of twenty children. With a

\textsuperscript{1321} Ato Osman Omer explicitly addresses his experiences with public perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during the peak of the famine relief period in Canada 1984-1988. Author interview, March 9, 2014. For more on the Canadian mobilization for Famine Relief see: Nassisse Solomon, “‘Tears are Not Enough’: Canadian Political and Social Mobilization for Famine Relief in Ethiopia, 1984-1988”, in The Samaritan State Revisited, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2019).

\textsuperscript{1322} Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014. For more information with regards to Canadian involvement in famine relief and the political and social ramifications see: Nassisse Solomon, “‘Tears are Not Enough’: Canadian Political and Social Mobilization for Famine Relief in Ethiopia, 1984-1988”, in The Samaritan State Revisited, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2019) and Tanja R. Muller makes the assertion that the Ethiopian Famine was a Watershed event for humanitarian action in “The Ethiopian Famine Revisited: Band Aid and The Antipolitics of Celebrity Humanitarian Action”, Disasters, 2013, 37(1):61.
middle-man purchasing the fruits and other produce from his father to sell in the open market, Ato Osman proudly asserted that “this was how business was kept”.\textsuperscript{1323} Memories of the family orchard elicited colourful reminiscences of a temperate climate, and delectable “mangoes, tangerines and dates”.\textsuperscript{1324} The images that he evoked were in clear apposition to prevalent representations and perceptions of Ethiopia as a drought stricken and barren landscape; an image that a majority of Canadians held as the sole reality about Ethiopia at the time of his migration.\textsuperscript{1325}

The typologies of Ethiopian famine were also addressed by Elias Omer. When asked about his encounters with representations of famine, he remarked: “when they (outsiders) think of Ethiopia they think of that famine; the statistics of that famine are what they know”.\textsuperscript{1326} When further interrogated about the effects of perceptions and representations of famine to Ethiopians, Elias responded with: “Famine is taboo in Ethiopia.”\textsuperscript{1327} He argued that in the aftermath of that historic period a majority of Ethiopians:

\begin{quote}
would blame the weather and natural disaster, without denying the political aspects. People were denied their right to food, safety and at the same time the climate also betrayed them. [They] both have equal responsibility.\textsuperscript{1328}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1323} Author Interview with Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1324} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1325} Ibid. * It is also noteworthy that by the late 1980s, with famine unabated – the “starving Ethiopian” was a form of racist social satire. An unshakeable shroud that would haunt Ethiopians living in the West for decades to come. The latter images have since arguably been ascribed to narratives on the African continent as a whole, but they were instrumental in shaping the vernacular on Ethiopia and Eritrea during the latter part of the twentieth-century, and have in-turn influenced the life experiences and perspectives of the descendants of this immigrant cohort born and raised in Canada. African Canadian scholars Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu also make the argument that abject poverty, disease, civil conflict and political corruption are prevalent signifiers of “African” representations in Canada. For further information see: “Border Crossings and Home Diaspora Linkages Among African-Canadians: An Analysis of Translocational Positionality, Cultural Remittance, and Social Capital”, In \textit{The African Diaspora in Canada}:157.
\textsuperscript{1326} Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1327} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1328} Ibid.
Simply referenced in our discussion as *Seba Sebat* (77)\(^{1329}\), Elias distinctly remembered the murmurings of his elders in solace, and their prayers to not have repeats of the sufferings and fate of the nation during the *Seba Sebat*. Famines were endemic in Ethiopia throughout the 1970s and 1980s.\(^{1330}\) However, *Seba Sebat* marks what is known to the rest of the world as the Famine of 1984. Based on the ancient Coptic calendar, the Ethiopian calendar is 7 years behind. Elias concluded his analysis of famine as taboo with: “*Seba Sebat* was a tragic event, but it is one that is viewed as something that should not continue to happen”.\(^ {1331}\) The reality is that Ethiopians are painfully aware of the implications of famine, from the loss of life to the disproportionate impact that it has on the poorest of the poor. However, the cultural typology is different for Ethiopians than it is for Westerners. When discussed with Ethiopians, the topic of famine is typically narrated as an albatross, or altogether avoided. Elias declared: “as I see Ethiopia, I see a history of healing; famine’s not representative, in terms of finding or defining an identity, but a landmark.”\(^ {1332}\)

The ideological parables of famine, poverty and “Third World” ineptitude inherent within discourses from the 1984-1988 period of famine, continue to inform mainstream representations and perceptions of the region and its peoples well into the present.\(^ {1333}\) One particularly poignant illustration of the steadfastness of this narrative was evidenced in an episode of the popular CBS television series *The Amazing Race* which aired in January 2005.\(^ {1334}\) Upon their arrival in the historic Lalibela region,

\(^{1329}\) *Seba Sebat* translates to 77 in English.
\(^{1331}\) Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
\(^{1332}\) Ibid.
\(^{1333}\) For more on this see: Sociologist John Sorensen’s “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, *Discourse and Society* 2(2) April, 1991): 223-242, and Susan Moeller’s *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York, 1999).
entrepreneurs Jonathan and Victoria were filmed climbing up the lush hill side of the Amhara region in Ethiopia, renowned for its rock-hewn churches. The couple distinctly expressed surprise at the green and flourishing landscape which surrounded them. In a subsequent newspaper editorial on this particular episode published in the *Vancouver Sun*, journalist Lisa Kidane captured the essence of the TV couple’s wonderment. Kidane surmised:

*It's fitting that the married entrepreneurs, initially viewed as top contenders for the million bucks, petered out in Ethiopia, a country that has experienced its own reversal of fortune. Twenty years ago the war-torn East African nation was in the throes of a terrible famine. Images of starving Ethiopian children were a nightly news staple, and parents admonished their kids to "finish your dinner -- children are starving in Ethiopia. The country has recovered and now "Ethiopia is arguably Africa's best kept secret," according to the Lonely Planet website. The travel site warns, however, that tourist infrastructure is lacking and that "checking your e-mail rivals courier pigeon for speed."*

Kidane captured the essence of the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian history and identity, in her assessment of “Ethiopia’s historical reversal of fortune” after the 1984 famine. The metaphor of “a reversal of fortune” is often evoked by members of the diaspora who perpetually engage with, or outright contest the typecast of their homeland as the parable for famine from 1984 onwards. Within this prevalent contemporary paradigm of Ethiopian identity, it is hard for mainstream Canadians to envision that there was a longer period in history in which the “Ethiopian” or “Abyssinian” Empire, fraught with imperialistic overtones, was held in a much different regard. Not as an impoverished aftermath of the decolonization fervor of the 1960s era, but at the forefront of a world which culturally privileged ancient civilizations, and actively sought out allies in a corner of the world which had once coveted access to the Red Sea and the Middle-East. Ethiopia’s pervasive political, cultural and historical cachet irreversibly dissipated after the 1974 coup, and it was inarguably decimated after 1988 when the fanfare surrounding famine relief waned considerably.

---


1336 Ethiopia’s political relevance is addressed throughout Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation.
In response to resolute perceptions of his region of origin in the twenty-first century, Elias states: “as a practitioner, a community development worker- it makes me sad; it makes me sad that all they see is Ethiopia as the most disadvantaged nation in the world – and only that.”\textsuperscript{1337} Hence, it is also in opposition to the disappearance of knowledge about their historical and cultural heritage, that Ethiopians engage in various form of self-representation which evoke a once deep-seated historical tradition; demonstrating why contemporary representations of Ethiopian identity in Canada are best understood through the prism of individual narratives, in as much as they are through some knowledge of the political and social history of both Ethiopia and Canada. In contrast to steadfast mainstream perceptions and representations of his homeland, Elias argued: “Ethiopia has a History. Ethiopia has experienced changes, they are tangible”.\textsuperscript{1338}

5.6 Conclusions

Narrative, Edward Said writes, is the means by which people “assert their own identity” and in turn legitimize the “existence of their own history”\textsuperscript{1339} Contrary to their inconspicuous existence within a vast multicultural milieu, most contemporary Ethiopian self-representations are deeply rooted in the culture, history, topography and politics of Ethiopia. For Ethiopians featured in this chapter, their life stories and trajectories are deeply intertwined with the historical progression of the Horn-of-Africa nation, highlighting the centrality of Ethiopian history, culture and politics in firmly rooting their expressions of identity.

As much as 40 years after the formation of a Horn-of-Africa Diaspora within Canada, members of this distinctive immigrant group elucidate the complexities of representations and perceptions of an “Ethiopian” identity within Canadian society. Ethiopians and members of other interrelated Horn-of-African groups living within the context of a

\textsuperscript{1337} Author interview with Elias Omer, August 24, 2014. 
\textsuperscript{1338} Ibid. 
contemporary global Diaspora embody the tenets of Said’s argument that “appeals to the past, are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present.”

Through an analysis of individual narratives and visual signifiers, this chapter demonstrated the utility of knowledge of the past, to conducting and interpreting examinations of the present. This chapter provided glimpses of insight into why, and how Ethiopians perpetually reference, invoke, revere, contest, and engage with representative elements of their cultural, political and historical identity; fashioning unique forms of self-representation.

Collectively, the individual experiences and life trajectories of first-generation Ethiopian immigrants featured in this chapter bear the inscriptions of the major political, cultural, and historical shifts in twentieth-century Ethiopian history; in so much as they demonstrate the effects of the pervasive unawareness of their distinct cultural and historical heritage within their present milieu. Hence, when interpreting contemporary iterations of Ethiopian identities in the Diaspora, some contextual knowledge of the political and cultural history of the Horn-of-Africa region and Canada’s relationship to it, is integral to understanding both mainstream Canadian perceptions and self-representations by members of the diaspora. This Canadian case-study is illustrative of the ways in which prominent signifiers of Ethiopian history throughout the twentieth-century (examined in chapters one to three) are integrated into self-representations by members of the diaspora.

Increased Ethiopian migration to Canada after 1984 has been the major catalyst for the inconspicuous and politically charged proliferation of Ethiopian identities within contemporary Canadian society. For much of the twentieth century (1935-1991), international and domestic political objectives alongside accompanying paradigm shifts and cultural interests strongly shaped and defined the nature of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians throughout the Western world. However, the prevalent awareness of Ethiopian history and identity addressed throughout Chapters 1

1340 Ibid., 3.
and 2 of this dissertation have all but vanished from popular consciousness. Instead, as this chapter has demonstrated, self-representation has become the most prolific manner in which iterations of historically rooted Ethiopian and other interrelated Horn-of-Africa identities are visible within the Canadian milieu. In the new millennium self-representation is has been the primary means by which historical signifiers of Ethiopian history are visible across the Canadian milieu.

Perceptions and representations of Ethiopian history and identity evolved dramatically over the course of the twentieth-century. What it means to be of Ethiopian heritage in Canada has also evolved accordingly. Through examinations of narrative and other exemplars of place-making, the foundations of Ethiopian self-representation in Canada were explored throughout this chapter. This chapter showcased the ways in which members of the Diaspora perpetually reference, invoke, revere, contest, and engage with representative elements of their identities, in dialogue with the extraneous world. Narratives spoke to the absence of knowledge about their cultural heritage and current political circumstances within Canadian society. The oral histories examined for this chapter also underscored the ways in which reclaiming historical relevancy is fraught with the politics of identity construction from within the expansive Ethiopian or Horn-of-Africa Diaspora. The life stories and opinions expressed were inherently political. However, each of these individuals was cognizant of their own subjectivity. As Ato Mengesha Beyene cogently expressed: “how I envision Ethiopia in the 1960s is not true of the ways in which another perceives it in the 1970s; again, what was his motto? his politics?”

From the outset, the objective of this dissertation has been to demonstrate the existence of continuities and moments of rapture within perceptions and representations of the past. The time of the Derg (1974-1991) is a period of rapture in any study of the trajectory of perceptions and representations of Ethiopian history. At the macro-level, the onset of the time of the Derg in 1974 dislodged Ethiopia’s longstanding place on the

1341 Interview 1 With Ato Mengesha March 27, 2014.
mantle of western civilization and master narratives. It also brought to fore age-old
challenges and fissures in centralized and authoritarian administration of a myriad of
ethnic legacies. At the micro-level, the time of the Derg disrupted steadfast concepts of
nationhood, community, culture and “brethren” internally. The narratives of Ato Osman
Omer, Ato Mohammed Aldeimi, Ato Mengesha Beyene, and Etye Esther all attest to this
fact.

However, the imprints and implications of this period have yet to be fully
chronicled and scrutinized. Unlike the “distant” past, Ethiopians who lived through this
period are just starting to find the words to speak about them. And scholars are just
beginning to investigate the meanings attributed to them. Consequently, the recorded
experiences and perceptions of ordinary citizens who lived through this period are
currently far too few and in-between. Outside of the video for the song The Knowing (2012)
marking the onset of the Derg period as one of disjuncture and displacement, this
period is seldom evoked as a marker of a shared identity across the Canadian milieu.
Other prominent Canadian connections to this period have also recently been made with
the release of the documentary Finding Sally by Tamara Dawit. The document tells
the story of Selamawit (Sally), Dawit’s aunt, whose diplomatic family immigrated to
Ottawa in 1968 and was influenced by growing up in Canada. Sally became a communist
rebel during Ethiopia’s Red Terror period, and returned to her country to aid in anti-Derg
activism and advance women’s issues. She was killed in 1977. As illustrated by this
documentary, the children of the Diaspora are starting to explore the impact of this period

1342 This point is underscored by the following study: Bridget Conley’s Memory from the
Margins: Ethiopia’s Red Terror Martyrs Memorial Museum, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan,
2019.
1343 One such work which stands out is: Helene Moussa’s Storm & Sanctuary: The Journey of
1344 The Weeknd, The Knowing (Official Video), YouTube, February 24, 2012.
1345 The documentary was released in 2020. For further information visit
https://findingsally.com/; Other elements to the documentary are also available here: “The Day
My Sister Disappeared”, CBC Docs, NDA, https://www.cbc.ca/documentarychannel/features/the-
day-my-sister-disappeared, “1960’s Canada Gave Newly Immigrated Ethiopian Sisters The
Freedom to Be Vocal About Global Issues”, CBC Docs, (NDA),
https://www.cbc.ca/documentarychannel/features/1960s-canada-gave-newly-immigrated-
ethiopian-sisters-the-freedom-to-be-voca; all accessed February 2021.
on their families. However, the imprints and implications of this period have yet to be fully chronicled and scrutinized in scholarship. Subsequently, the recorded experiences and perceptions of ordinary citizens who lived through this period are currently far too few and in-between.\textsuperscript{1346} The excerpts featured in this chapter are among the very few documented experiences.

Yet, the silences and lacuna of scholarship on the effects of the period on ordinary citizens also tells a narrative of its own. In her analysis of the implications of this period in Ethiopian history, Bridget Conley argues that “memorializing violent history does not settle a question about the meaning of the past.”\textsuperscript{1347} Instead, she argues, that memorialization localizes, materializes and invokes questions “for a new set of protagonists in the present”.\textsuperscript{1348} Ethiopian-American author Mazza Mengiste’s novel \textit{Beneath the Lion’s Gaze} (2010) is one such beginning a long road of cultural and historical consonance.\textsuperscript{1349} However, the road is quite jagged and paved with a “desire to lay the past to rest and seek justice for years of pain, loss and terror”.\textsuperscript{1350}

Whilst the narratives featured in this study underscored the ties that bind (culture and topography), they also underscored root causes of fragmentation (history and politics). The narratives offered to this study implicitly engaged with the dialectical tensions present within a politically disparate diaspora formed over the course of forty-years of contentious and forced mass out-migration from the Horn-of-Africa.\textsuperscript{1351}

\textsuperscript{1346} One such work which stands out is: Helene Moussa’s \textit{Storm and Sanctuary: The Journey of Ethiopian and Eritrean Women Refugees}, Ontario: Artemis Enterprises, 1993.
\textsuperscript{1347} Conley, 2.
\textsuperscript{1348} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1349} Mazza Mengiste \textit{Beneath the Lion’s Gaze}, W.W. Norton and company, 2010. * In order to understand the need for cultural consonance, it is equally important to read Aida Edemariam’s review of the aforementioned work in \textit{The Guardian} https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/apr/24/beneath-lions-gaze-maaza-mengiste
Discussions of identity fragmentation forced moments of reflection for each participant. Each participant provided ruminations which underscored the coalescence of micro histories and macro perspectives.

In contrast to their inconspicuous heritage in the present, for a cohort of interviewees born and raised in Ethiopia through the seismic political and cultural shifts of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, articulations of their personal life trajectories were deeply rooted in memories of their homeland. The ebbs and flows of their life stories were embedded within the shifts that occurred in their nation of origin. For each of the participants, their affinity for the history, culture and topography of their “homeland” in coalescence with their memories of their “home-town” informed their expressions of identity. In alignment with the sentiments of most of the participants in this case study, Elias articulated that “there has been so much development and change but not in terms of culture.”

Aside from being deeply personal, the micro-histories shared and the narratives collected during the course of this study are also illustrative of the ‘realpolitik’ implications of historical discourses and representations. In narrating their personal experiences, participants featured in this chapter would almost always interrupted an account of their own personal narrative to further elaborate upon the implications of the social institutions and themes that arose within each of their life trajectories. If, as Gabriele Proglio suggests, we think of history as a physical map, then each of the stories featured within this chapter “are located both outside and within its folds”. Indelibly influenced by their memories of Ethiopia under the reign of the Emperor Haile Selassie (1932-1974), and further impacted by the political and social transformation of Ethiopia


1352 Author interview with Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
1354 One of the most striking elements about the interviews conducted with 5 members of the diaspora is the ease and fluidity with which all the individuals shifted between telling stories about their own personal life trajectories and discussing elements of the “history” of Ethiopia.
1355 Proglio, 134.
under the Marxist-Leninist Derg Military regime (1974-1991), the generation of immigrants featured in this chapter lived in Ethiopia through facets of these historical touchstones, and their life trajectories and narratives fundamentally embodied and personified these markers of Ethiopian history and identity within a Canadian milieu.1356

Yet, the narratives and self-representations of Ethiopians manifest within a socioscape that has little to no awareness of the significances of their past. For a myriad of reasons outlined in the previous chapter of this dissertation, the time of the Derg also shifted Western perceptions and representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians. Over three decades after the famine of 1984, the prevalent images of emaciated peoples and desertified topographies utilized to rally social action toward famine relief (1984-1988), still continue to frame mainstream representations and perceptions of the Horn-of-Africa region and its peoples. Dagmawi Woubshet, Salamishah Tillet and Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis attest to the fact that to the outside world, the revolution of 1974 effectively rendered “Ethiopia’s monarchs relics” of a distant past; and that by the late twentieth-century, “images of famine and abject poverty –not obelisks, rock-hewn churches, and grand mosques” became the most pervasive references for Ethiopia in the West.1357 This was no different in Canada.

In the present, stalwart representations of Ethiopia as the “dustbowl of Africa” and the ahistorical place of perpetual famine, starvation and war continue to stand the test of time. Therefore, it is in opposition to the disappearance of knowledge about their historical and cultural heritage that Ethiopians continue to engage in various form of self-representation which evoke a once deep-seated historical tradition.1358 Most of the symbols of Ethiopian history evoked by members of the diaspora in the present, were once prevalent signifiers of Ethiopian history and identity visible within a mainstream

1357 Ibid., 10.
Canadian consciousness, illustrated by the prevalent discourses and representations of the Horn of Africa nation during the Abyssinian Crisis (1934-35) and Ethiopian participation in Expo 67.\textsuperscript{1359} Notwithstanding their awareness of the archival information, Ethiopians in the context of a contemporary Diaspora harken back to these periods in the twentieth-century to articulate the widespread cultural cachet of their history, and the implications of its disappearance from mass consciousness. Ato Mohamed Al-Deimi reinforces this central tenet of this chapter in his assertion that knowledge of the distant past is imperative to understanding, and asking “what’s happened in the last 2000 years?” \textsuperscript{1360}


\textsuperscript{1360} Author Interview 1 with Ato. Mohamed Al-Adeimi, December 11, 2013.

“When navigating through cultures, History lets us have a definition. History legitimizes our Identity. It is History that makes us unique, that makes us who we are.”

Tsegereda Yohannes

Voices of the children of the diaspora are illustrative of the ways in which representations and perceptions of ‘Ethiopian’ and other interrelated Horn-of-Africa identities are perpetually navigated, negotiated, celebrated, or outright contested within contemporary Canadian society. As much as 40 years after the formation of an Ethiopian Diaspora within Canada, children of the Diaspora elucidate the complexities and intricacies of representations and perceptions of “Ethiopian” and other interrelated identities within Canadian society. Significant increases in migration to Canada from the Horn-of-Africa region since the 1980s have resulted in Ethiopians and other interrelated peoples from the Horn-of-Africa region carving out spaces to self-represent within facets of Canadian society. Self-representation is the most prolific manner in which variations of historically rooted Ethiopian, and other interrelated Horn-of-Africa identities are visible in the Canadian socioscape today.

Children of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora perpetually engage with elements of both their ascribed and prescribed identities. The histories of the second-generation inexorably embody the life-trajectories and experiences of their parents. Yet, also entrenched in Canadian society from birth into adulthood, children of the Diaspora

1361 Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.* The name is Tsegereda Yohannes is a pseudonym. Tsegereda identifies as Eritrean-Canadian, and as part of the to be of the 1.5 generation. She willingly took part in this study to provide her perspectives and experiences of the Habesha experience in Canada, in order to contextualize the roots of contemporary East-African identities from the perspective of an Eritrean-Canadian youth. In light of her extensive engagement with the Eritrean-Canadian community in her hometown, and her involvement in research related to her community, Tsegereda is considered to be a subject matter expert for the purposes of this study.
traverse through life in Canada influenced by the cultural, historical and political
purviews of their families, and further informed by their own experiences of navigating
and negotiating “a place” within Canadian society.\textsuperscript{1362} For all of the aforementioned
reasons, the narratives of Canadian born children of Ethiopian / East-African heritage
signify the final intersection and overlap of Ethiopian-Canadian history examined within
the purview of this thesis.

The experiences and perspectives of the youth of the East-African Diaspora
featured in this study signify intersections in histories which are particularly visible in the
formation of numerically small, but greatly symbolic Diasporic communities within
metropoles such as Toronto, Ottawa and mid-size urban centers like London, Ontario.\textsuperscript{1363}
For the purposes of this research, semi-structured and discovery focused interviews were
conducted with second-generation youth from each of the aforementioned cities.
Reinforced by findings from other available scholarship on Habesha, the voices and life
experiences of six Habeshas aged between 20- 32, are case-studies reflective of the
continued influences of the roots of the Horn- of-Africa Diaspora. The life experiences
and perspectives of Tsegereda Yohannes, Selam Meles, Aida Abdella, Hannah Haile,
Mariam Abebe and George Lencho are prisms through which representations of
historically rooted Horn-of-Africa identities can be located and contextualized within
contemporary Canadian societies.

Youth featured in this chapter engaged with elements of representations and
perceptions of Ethiopian culture, history and identity throughout their daily lived
experiences. The histories that the youth tell throughout this chapter embody the
experiences of their parents. However, the perspectives of the youth in telling the

\textsuperscript{1362} Similar assertions are made in other examinations of Habesha youth and communities in
North America. In particular see: Elizabeth Chacko’s “Identity and assimilation among young
506; and Mary Goitom’s Doctoral Dissertation Becoming Habesha: The Journey of Second-
Generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Youth in Canada (PhD diss. University of Calgary, 2012).
\textsuperscript{1363} Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-010-
histories of their families, reinforce their uniqueness as both descendants of a particular-historical heritage and as natives of a completely different geographical and cultural milieu than that of their parents. The perspectives of the youth featured in this chapter ultimately reinforce their unique position both as descendants of a particular-historical heritage, and as natives of a completely different geographical and cultural loci from that of their parents. As a consequence, this chapter is thematic and exploratory by design.

Research on the African Diaspora has demonstrated that the overlapping effects of mobility and transnationalism result in the negotiation of identities for both parents and children.¹³⁶⁴ On the one hand, second-generation Habeshas, alongside other continental Africans in Canada, “cannot escape connections to their home continent, even if they chose to”, because who they are perceived to be and represented as within mainstream Canadian society, is inherently “related to where they come from.”¹³⁶⁵ Simultaneously, as defined by Stuart Hall, the cultural identity of the second-generation is also voluntarily comprised of elements “which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common.”¹³⁶⁶ As a prime example, youth from the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora find historically and culturally rooted commonalities in identifying as Habesha. Thus this chapter begins by contextualizing the application of the term Habesha as an identifier. An overview of what it means to be Habesha in Canada, and how the historic term applies to youth specifically, is of the utmost importance to understanding what the term signifies today. Understanding what it is to be Habesha also frames the researcher-participant nexus which yielded the findings chronicled in this chapter, and the tenets for why participants took part in this study in the first place.

In her examination of second-generation Ethiopians and Eritreans in Toronto, Mary Goitam makes the argument that first-generation Ethiopians and Eritrean

¹³⁶⁵Ibid., 157.
immigrants created spaces for belonging in Canada, through “consolidation of their identity from their experiences of fragmentation”\textsuperscript{1367} Goitom’s works affirm the fact that “first-generation Ethiopian and Eritreans are active, if not, deliberate actors in their children’s identity formation and development.”\textsuperscript{1368} Consequently, the lived experiences of the youth of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora are exemplars of what African-Canadian scholars Wisdom J. Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu identify as “processes of diffusion and syncretism that characterize contemporary migration”.\textsuperscript{1369} Processes of diffusion and syncretism such as mixed languages, hybrid practices, and hyphenated collective identities permeate the lived experiences of youth, fostering feelings of “in-betweenness”.\textsuperscript{1370} In alignment with Goitom’s findings, the youth interviewed for this research too effectively “bridged several worlds” throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood.\textsuperscript{1371} As a result, the narratives of the youth featured in this chapter traversed between several mindsets (world purviews) and continents fluidly.

This chapter therefore examines the politics of self-representation by youth to illustrate the ways in which the youth are equally influenced by their micro-histories in-so- much as they are influenced by the Canadian social and geographical milieu in which they were raised. Interplays in politics, history and culture continue to influence self-representations of the Horn-of-Africa descendants within Canada. Micro-histories, family migration and settlement trajectories, mainstream representations and perceptions, along with senses of belonging all play an equal role in defining the ways in which youth both interpret and articulate their identity.

\textsuperscript{1368} Mary Goitom, “Living in Our Own World”: Parental Influence on the Identity Development of Second-Generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Youth During their Formative Years”, International Migration & Integration 17, September 8, 2015: 1163.
\textsuperscript{1370} Tettey and Puplampu, “Border Crossings & Home Diaspora Linkages”, ibid.
In order to best situate the politics of self-representation by youth in Canada, an overview of the socio-historical context from which the narratives of youth of the Horn-of-African Diaspora are developed is integral. The chapter locates and roots the second-generation within both a Canadian and East-African historical framework. Identifying intersections in histories, politics and culture provides the necessary socio-historical context from which the narratives and experiences of the second-generation can be contextualized. The Horn of Africa Diaspora in Canada developed in size during the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, marking the experiences of the second-generation born doing this period as embodiments of a particular historical trajectory. Historical knowledge of the push factors of migration (macro factors) from the Horn-of-Africa region contextualizes the micro-histories which are discussed throughout. An awareness of the post-migration phenomenon of heightened ethnic identification and fragmentation in the settlement processes is also of importance to understanding what participants are referring or working through individually.1372

The second-generation of the Diaspora featured in this chapter were also born and raised within a Canadian social climate when the ideological parables of famine, perpetual poverty and general “Third World” ineptitude were the predominant representations and constructions of African identities within mainstream Canadian society. This chapter contextualizes the manifestation of this phenomenon as a direct outcome of the famine relief period of 1984-88. Youth interviewed for this chapter inevitably addressed the ways in which they experienced and subsequently engaged with the effects of the ideological parables of famine and representations of perpetual poverty. The lingering effects of the aestheticization of famine are evidenced in mainstream media representations and popular culture incarnations like Starvin’ Marvin.

Whilst the satires juxtaposing the wealth of North America to the poverty of Sub-Saharan Africa continue to bleed through several mediums, Starvin’ Marvin is arguably

1372 For contextual information on the fragmentation of identities see the works of John Sorensen referred to throughout this dissertation. In particular, “Essence and Contingency in the Construction of Nationhood: Transformations of Identity in Ethiopian Diasporas”, Diaspora 2:2 (1993):201-228.
the most vivid and enduring representation. *Starvin’ Marvin* was introduced as a token starving African caricature in the premiere season of the hit satirical Comedy Central cartoon *South Park* in 1997. Reflective of the “invisible social machinery of social inequality and oppression”, caricatures of Ethiopian/African poverty such as *Starvin’ Marvin* reproduce “pathogenic social relations of exclusion and marginalization vis-à-vis ideologies and stigmas”. The positionality of youth as hybrid subjects offers more nuanced insights into how reductionist representations like *Starvin Marvin* are engaged with, deconstructed and ultimately contested.

The chapter also overviews the topographies of settlement and expressions of identity that the youth engage with in their locales. It is demonstrated throughout this chapter that there are similarities in what it means to be *Habesha* throughout the three sites of the Canadian Diaspora explored in this dissertation. Yet, it is also noted that there are distinctions to be made about the access that youth have to elements of their ancestral heritage based on both their individual life trajectories (micro-histories) and the metropole or locale in which they reside. The overarching theme which emerges from the interviews is the emergence of Ethiopian food as the most prominent contemporary cultural identifier.

The participants in this study spoke to the myriad of ways in which they straddled growing up in households which embodied Ethiopian and other interrelated histories, whilst navigating life within a multicultural Canada. However, as “Black” youth born and raised during the period of increased migration and settlement by the Horn-of-Africa diaspora, the participants in this study also spoke to the ways in which the colour of their skin determines their level of belonging in a country that they were born in. Therefore, this chapter integrates throughout an overview of what it means to be a *Habesha*,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1374}} \text{Tettey and Puplampu,“Border Crossings & Home Diaspora Linkages Among African-Canadians”, 149.}\]
Ethiopian-Canadian/Eritrea-Canadian within the broader framework of what it means to be a Canadian.

National histories, micro-histories, and migration trajectories each play a role in defining the ways in which the youth both interpret and articulate their identity. As evidenced in other scholarship, youth “are influenced both by a distinct ethnic/racial history, as well as a personal history grounded in “Canadian experiences”. Inarguably, in addition to the influences of their respective familial and social influences, mainstream discourses are equally influential in shaping the tenor of the narratives, as interviewees elect how to navigate, negotiate, celebrate, or contest elements of their historical and cultural identities within contemporary Canadian society. Subsequently, within this chapter, the politics of self-representation by youth are examined to illustrate the ways in which the youth are equally influenced by their micro-histories in-so- much as they are influenced by the Canadian social/ geographical milieu in which they were raised.

6.1 What it means to be Habesha

The term Habesha including its variations (Abesha, Habesh, Habashat, Habasa, Habeshi) are all historically and culturally rooted self-descriptive identifiers applied by members of the Diaspora from the Horn-of-Africa region. The use of Habesha dates back to antiquity, and it is often invoked in contemporary colloquialisms as “a self-descriptive cultural” identifier to connote a shared or common ancestry amongst peoples of Horn-of-African heritage. Understanding what it means to be Habesha is imperative to

---

1376 Even though the origins of the term(s) are contested, scholars and lay historians agree that the term dates back to antiquity, and it was used in Medieval Arabic texts to describe the Eritrean-Ethiopian/ Ethiopian-Eritrean region. Dan Connell and Tom Killon assert that the term is derived from “Abyssinia”, and is “today applied to members of the Tigrinya-and Amharic-speaking Christians in Ethiopia”. They also argue that “Habesha defines the culture that was produced by the fusion of Semitic and Cushitic elements in the Eritrean-Tigrayan highlands and that flowered as an original civilization during the Aksumite period”. For further information see: The Historical Dictionary of Eritrea. (United Kingdom: Scarecrow Press, 2011):279.
understanding the politics of self-representations by youth of the Horn-of-Africa diaspora.

_Habesha_ has historically been utilized by members of dozens of ethnic groups from the Horn-of-Africa region, irrespective of religious, linguistic or geographic differences. Western observers of Ethiopian and Eritrean society have long documented the colloquial liberal use of the term _Habesha_ as “sufficient self-identification”, whereby in the past, “Amhara, Tigre, and Agew refer to themselves as _Habesha_ (Abyssinians)” in everyday speech.¹³⁷⁷ Within a context of a heightened and politically charged homeland and diaspora, some take the opportunity to make distinctions about use of the term. There is an argument that there are specific ethno-cultural tribes associated with the use of this term, primarily Amharas, Eritreans and Tigrays. However, it is still common fare for individuals who are not from these particular ethnic tribes to utilize the term to self-identify. Over the course of this research alone, three participants who were of Oromo or “Gurage” (self-applied) heritage utilized the term liberally throughout their respective interview sessions to self-identify. Self-referential terms such as _Habesha_, signify the historical and politicized nature of contemporary and historic “Ethiopian” identifiers.

In the present, there is a historically rooted unifying element to the application of the term _Habesha_. Goitom explores the recalibration of the term in her work on _Habesha_ youth in the Canadian diaspora.¹³⁷⁸ She argues that within a contemporary context, an evocation of the term signifies “a unity in diversity”.¹³⁷⁹ The binding factors for unity in heterogeneity include: unique history, distinct cultural cuisine, unique styles of dress, diverse music and dance, and specific cultural expectations within households.¹³⁸⁰ Goitom characterizes _Habesha_ as a “supra-national/ethnic term”.¹³⁸¹ She argues that an

¹³⁷⁸ Goitom, “Becoming Habesha”, 231.
¹³⁷⁹ Ibid.
¹³⁸⁰ Ibid.
¹³⁸¹ Goitom, ““Unconventional Canadians”, 183.
emphasis on the use of the identifier by youth epitomizes “a true merger, a synchronicity of their civic and racial identities.” Thus there is a consolidation of community which occurs through the application of the term.

In alignment with findings from Goitom’s studies of Habesha youth in Toronto, the youth interviewed for this chapter argued too, that there is an ease in forging and maintaining relationships with other Africans, particularly Habeshas. Tsegereda Yohannes poignantly clarified this phenomenon in her assessment:

“This you do not have to explain why it is that you eat with your hands, why you braid your hair, and why you lie to your parents about somethings- why you celebrate Christmas and Easter at different times…”

“The shared experiences” of growing up Habesha in Canada make the identifier relatable to those with Ethiopian or Eritrean heritage. Consequently, Habesha will be utilized throughout this chapter interchangeably with the terms: children of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora, East -African Diaspora, Eritrean or Ethiopian-Canadians, as contextually appropriate.

6.2 Identifying Intersections in Histories, Politics and Culture: Socio-Historical Context for the Stories and Experiences of the Second-Generation

Contemporary iterations and contestations of Ethiopian-identities by youth should be historically, geographically and demographically situated. Twentieth-century developments in Ethiopian history have had profound explicit and implicit effects on the lives of youth of the Horn-of-African Diaspora born and raised within Canada. First and foremost, this particular Diaspora group developed significantly in Canada as a direct outcome of political persecution, civil war and ethnic strife within the East African region,

---

1382 Goitom, “Becoming Habesha”, ibid.
1383 Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.
from 1974 onwards. The onset of the time of the Derg and the ensuing decades of civil wars, famine and the pursuit of better economic opportunities all precipitated the out-migration of the parents of the second-generation from the nation state of Ethiopia. In Canada, the interrelated but heterogeneous Diaspora group developed in size during the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, marking the experiences of the second-generation born doing this period as embodiments of a particular historical trajectory.

This historical trajectory and experience is what Goitom is implicitly referencing when she makes the assertion that many from this region consolidate their identities “from their experiences of fragmentation”. The processes of fragmentation are overviewed at length in the works by John Sorensen and Atsuko Matsuoka referenced throughout this project. In alignment with the heightened political fragmentation of the members of the Diaspora from this region, this study refers to the peoples from this region collectively as either members of “the Horn of Africa diaspora” or “the Ethiopian and its interrelated diaspora”. However, in contrast to the existing scholarship, this micro (illustrative) case-study underscores the ways in which hard and fast delineations between groups of the Horn-of-Africa are not always so easy to make. Assertions and evocations of ethnic identities for the youth interviewed for this study, mirrored the political inclinations of their households. Ethnic identifications also reflected the lived realities of the youth interacting with other members of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora youth in public spaces such as schools, clubs, sporting activities and other sites of recreation. There is a great degree of tacit knowledge required to navigate this

---

The case-studies therefore speak to both the ease and the intricacies of belonging to this particular and broad Diasporic community.

The micro histories of the families of the youth featured in this chapter mirror the trajectory of Ethiopian, or Horn-of-African migration and settlement in Canada. The individual stories and experiences of the youth are inextricably infused into the historical frameworks of both their country of citizenship, and the region of origin of their ancestry. To Selam Meles and the other youth featured in this chapter, the national history of their ancestral homeland made more coherent sense when examined through the perspective of her family’s experiences. During her interview, Selam professed: “I think that my mom came 3 years before she had me.” She asserted that it was “20 years ago, probably in 1991”. Her mother had “lived in Greece for 8 years before that.” Selam knew that her father left Ethiopia to pursue a Master degree in England. She outlined how chain migration had influenced her father’s settlement in Canada. Her paternal uncle had migrated here first, after his start in either Italy or Russia, and he sponsored her father to come to Canada shortly after. Her parents met in Canada. She continued, “I think that they all left when Mengistu …”, but then she trailed off to explain: “I don’t even know much about Ethiopian history”. She elaborated that her parents only ever reference politics vaguely, “as the reason why they left the country.” The narratives of youth featured in this chapter also mirror the silences and absence of detail which characterize an inter-generational telling of history, by the cohort of Ethiopians who fled from the Derg during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.

The narratives that Hannah Haile remembered about her family’s migration trajectory showcased the secrecy and discretion surrounding her parents’ escape from

---

1387 All of Goitom’s works referenced throughout this chapter support this assertion.
1388 Author interview with Selam Meles, February 14, 2014.
1389 Ibid.
1390 Ibid.
1391 Ibid.
Derg rule in Ethiopia. Understandably unclear of all of the facts, Hannah admitted to having used to listen to the stories that her parents shared out of obligation, and not interest, prior to our interview session. Hannah’s parents met and married in Ethiopia. She stated that they both left Ethiopia in the 1990, just prior to the toppling of the Derg in a coup d’état. Political émigré’s, they fled together from Ethiopia with her two older siblings, and Hannah was born in Canada. Hannah’s parents had both held fairly prestigious and coveted government jobs in Ethiopia. Hannah understood that her parents had opportunities to go to either Saudi Arabia or the United States, but that they deliberately elected to come to Canada. She stated that “shortly after they got here, the government in Ethiopia shifted and they lost their diplomatic rights”. Both of her parents were granted foreign asylum, but not refugee status in Canada.

Migration was of course experienced differently by those who were exiled, and those who emigrated “seeking educational and employment opportunities”. Yet, in alignment with Sorensen’s assertion that a sense of involuntary departure hued the experiences of his research participants from the 1980s, the interview participants in this study too inadvertently expressed being marked by the feelings of “uprooting and dislocation” that their parents experienced. In 2015, Hannah, the youngest of three children, was the only one still living at home full time. Her father was then a manager at a local convenience store, and her mother was a Personal Support Worker (PSW). On leave at that time due to challenges with her own health, Hannah asserted that her mother still “misses the good old days”. When subsequently asked about the role of “history” in her life, Hannah responded with: “historical narratives play a role in my life, but not history”. Yet, she continued, “my dad, every single year and every few years he likes to talk, he went through a lot”. Contrary to her initial assertion regarding the role of

1393 Author interview with Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
1394 Ibid.
1396 Ibid.
1397 Author interview with Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
1398 Ibid.
1399 Ibid.
history in her life, the more Hannah spoke about her family’s migration trajectory and experiences, the more evident it became that her family narrative could only be contextualized with some understanding of both Ethiopian and Canadian history.

Upon further reflection on her parent’s present circumstance and their migration trajectory, Hannah applied a cultural metaphor to signify their experiences. She surmised that “they left and ‘started from the bottom’”, referencing a song of the same name by popular Canadian Hip Hop artist Drake. Hannah spoke passionately about how the lyrics to that song have deeply shaped her own outlook on her family’s experiences. ‘Started from the Bottom’, expletively refers to the hardships of racialized people ‘making it big in Canada’, and the raw emotive power of the song is striking.\(^\text{1400}\) Hannah’s family’s migration trajectory is reflective of the political impetus of thousands of citizens to leave Ethiopia during the early 1990s. Her family’s settlement trajectory in Canada coincided with the historical peak period of the settlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Canada. Simultaneously, the hardships and loss of social standing that her parents experienced during the process of migration and settlement is also reflective of the experiences of many other African groups settling in Canada, and North America in general.\(^\text{1401}\) Hence, the narratives and perspectives of youth of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora featured in this study signify intersections in histories which are particularly visible in the formation of numerically small, but greatly symbolic Diasporic communities within several metropoles across the country.\(^\text{1402}\)


6.3 Claiming Hybrid Identities Rooted in A History of Fragmentation and Cohesion

Awareness of the history of the migration and settlement trajectory of the East-African diaspora is integral to properly contextualizing the self-representations of the youth. Born during the 1980s or the early 1990s, it was in light of the ongoing Eritrean wars for independence (1961-1991) and the political struggles of the Oromo Liberation Front (1973 – present), that many of the children of the Horn-of-Africa diaspora were raised in a social climate of heightened, politicized and sometimes polarized ethnic identities within Canada.\textsuperscript{1403} Diasporic settlements across Canada are imbued with the effects of these discordant roots. Contemporary iterations of East-African identities in Canada, such as Habesha, Ethiopian, Amhara, Harari, Tigrian, Oromo, Gurage, are all imbued with the effects of transnational historical political and socio-cultural developments.\textsuperscript{1404} The political struggles of some of these groups are still ongoing.\textsuperscript{1405}

Subsequently, the experiences and interpretations of the youth featured in this chapter personify some of the complexities of dealing with fragmented identifiers within the context of their own families, and a broader multi-cultural Canadian social fabric. Concurrently, at a macro level, scholarship on second-generation youth of African descent in North America has demonstrated that “hegemonic discourses of Blackness invoke a process of de-territorialization or ‘dis-Africanization’ for those who come from


\textsuperscript{1405} Galen McDougall, “Hundreds Rally In Edmonton To Ask Canada To Take A Stance Against The Ethiopian Government”, CTV News Edmonton, Friday July 10, 2020. \url{https://www.iheartradio.ca/610cktb/News/Hundreds-Rally-In-Edmonton-To-Ask-Canada-To-Take-A-Stance-Against-The-Ethiopian-Government-1.12938634}. 
diverse nations within Africa.” Youths of the Horn-of-Africa diaspora also expressed dealing with this experience, whilst navigating their own complex ethnic heritage.

Youth such as Tsegereda Yohannes mitigate for this phenomenon by negotiating and navigating constructions of their identities through interpretations of their personal histories, inclusive of both the history of their ancestry and that of their site of birth (North America). Born in Texas, U.S.A., Tsegereda’s family moved to Toronto in October 1987, when she was a couple of months shy of being five years old. Her family relocated to Canada on the recommendation of a friend who resided here and assured them of the suitability of the country to raising a young family. Tsegereda vividly recalled some of the challenges that she had in navigating a new country. She asserted that her struggles to find “her fit” within her new locale started on her second day of Kindergarten. She recalls being singled out as “different” by her teacher because she told the class that she was from Eritrea, when the class was examining a world map to showcase the diversity of the cohort. Tsegereda asserted:

I could tell instantly that she did not know where that was. I thought then, I know more than her. It was only in hindsight that I realized that that country didn’t even exist.1407

Eritrea achieved independence from Ethiopia in 1991. It was only soon after Eritrea’s declaration of independence that the Canadian government started recognizing and counting members of the Canadian population who identified as Eritrean separately. However, identifying as Eritrean was very important to Tsegereda and her family long-before this historic milestone. The primacy of her identification as Eritrean was instilled in her from a very young-age and evidenced by the aforementioned Canadian classroom mapping/naming exercise. She argued: “as Eritreans, we have a long history of people telling us who we are; a history of colonization by Italians -having others tell us who we

1407 Author Interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.
are.”

She proceeded to argue that it was for this reason that her identification as Eritrean was an important element to both her sense of place and identity.

Similar to the findings of other studies on Habesha youth, the participants in this study articulated that their expressions of identity were influenced by the environment in which they were raised. For Tsegereda, the pride that she expressed in her Eritrean heritage was deeply personal and political. Cultural pride was actively fostered in her household. Her family’s migration trajectory and engagement in the Eritrean liberation cause throughout the late 1980s informed her interpretations of both Eritrean and Ethiopian history. She argued that “Eritrean history is one of struggle.” Tsegereda’s father left Eritrea in the 1970s when his own father died, forcing him to leave his homeland at a young age. He spent much of his life apart from his siblings. Ever since she could remember, Tsegereda’s father was engaged in community activities within the diaspora. In the early days of her family’s migration and settlement in Canada, the broader Eritrean community was their extended family. When there was an influx of refugees in the early 1990s, she argued that “people looked out for one another”, they opened their homes and their wallets to welcome their kinfolk. For much of her narrative, Tsegereda placed an emphasis on the collectivist nature of the community that she strongly identified with.

The Eritrean community church that Tsegereda’s family attended was an integral hub for cultural transference, networking and rooting community. She argued that the church had a great deal of influence in the way that children of her community were

1408 Ibid.
1409 Tsegereda Yohannes had an opportunity to visit her ancestral homeland in the early 2000s. Tsegereda discussed at length the lingering influences of colonial rule on the physical landscape of the Eritrean nation. Like the Ethiopian elders featured in Chapter 4, she too discussed the distinctive villas which punctuated the landscape, and the subtle influences of Italian culture in the local cuisine and language.
1411 Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.
1412 Ibid.
raised. Beyond the church-based activities, her engagement with the community also included sporting activities coordinated by the broader Diasporic Eritrean community which spanned across North America, as networks were established on both sides of the border. In her late teens and early 20’s, Tsegereda admitted to looking forward to soccer festivals across the borders during the long weekends, particularly on American Independence Day. She characterized this former period of her life as filled with “day long events and night parties.” Her account attested to the close-knit nature of a community forged into diaspora at the turn of the century. In the absence of blood “family” here, country-kin became family from the late 1980s onwards. And Tsegereda’s parents were leaders in the community. She proclaimed that:

the community was different back then. People would stop by to say hello; you would go to a wedding even if you did not know who they were. People took the time to get to know each other. Informal networks were established as people were interested.

As an adult, Tsegereda also perceived community activities in the early days of her migration, as part-and-parcel of the broader Eritrean Liberation movement. Even though the political fervor subsided after Eritrean independence in 1991, at the time of our discussion in 2014, Tsegereda ruminated over how her father still read the daily news and attended church events regularly. He was still vested in keeping apprised of the developments of his homeland.

Since 1991, several ethnic groups within the umbrella of the current Ethiopian state have increasingly started to identify as “other”. This phenomenon is best exemplified by the 2011 National Household Census data. The contemporary


\[1415\] Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.

\[1416\] Ibid.


\[1418\] Ibid.
implications of ethnic and cultural pluralism were engaged with, mediated, or outright contested by the youth in their narratives.

Being mindful of the importance of navigating this subject matter in a culturally and historically conscious manner, this study sought to explore and understand was the ways in which the history of ethnic struggle in Ethiopia impacts and manifests in self-representations by youth in the present. The youth who participated in this study addressed the various manifestations of these transnational socio-historical developments within their daily lives, as applicable. Admittedly, given the small sample size, none of the other youth came from overtly political families. However, each of the youth interviewed did address all of the considerations that they have when asserting and expressing their identities including their national ancestry, and their family’s ethnic and religious composition. The breadth of the discussions that stemmed from a question about identity and identifiers illustrate the nuanced ways in which their inherited cultural heterogeneity and their Canadian nativity impacted their world purviews.

Beyond consuming her cultural music and food, twenty-two year old Selam’s experiences with her “community” were illustrative of a more complex and distinctly Horn-of-Africa diaspora phenomenon.1419 When asked the question: “how do you self-identify?” Selam instinctively responded with “I am from Toronto, I was born there, I identify as Ethiopian-Canadian”.1420 After issuing her response, Selam almost immediately reverted back to the original question, and began to discuss the multitude of ways that she was perpetually exposed to questions about her identity. If anyone ever asks her where she is from whilst she is in Canada, Selam declared: “oh I always say Ethiopian, cause I know what they mean”. In contrast to this declaration, she continued: “my first instinct is to answer Canadian, if I go outside of the country”. Reflective of an increasingly mobile generation of Ethiopians in the diaspora, Selam spoke of how much she enjoyed travel. She asserted that in those instances that she was out of the country, her response was “a no-brainer”, and then described how the Canadian national flag was the emblem on her travel gear. A renown visual signifier, her Roots wear clearly

1419 Author interview with Selam Meles, February 14, 2014.
1420 Ibid.
demarcated her nationality on the international stage. But she still argued, “if someone asks me where I am from here, I am always like Ethiopia, I even say Toronto, it’s just a weird thing”.\textsuperscript{1421}

Selam then proceeded to outline the specificity of her responses as contingent upon who was asking the question. To Selam and all the other who participated in this study, the context of when and how the identity question was posed often shaped their responses. When questioned why, Selam paused to mull over her instinctive habit. She chuckled, “I kinda guess what the person is trying to get at when they are asking me the question”. To illustrate her point further, she stated: “if it was first year and I was in residence”, the question, “so where are you from? is implied to mean “like what town?”", in which case she argued that she would assert her Toronto identity. “Other than that”, she declared, “I almost always identify as being Ethiopian first”. When prompted with an inquiry about when she got those types of questions, and who typically posed them; Selam responded that her inquisitors varied from peers to older people, but that most inquiries came from her peer group. She underscored the fact that the questions about her roots were mostly from people who were not sensitive to the intricacies of her conceptualizations of identity. She elaborated: “mostly from people who are not … who are like not visible minorities”.\textsuperscript{1422} Most of her elementary and high-school education was completed in predominantly white schools. She then argued that in those instances-“whenever someone's says like how do you identify? I always say Ethiopian and I never say Black, just because I think that it's a little more specific than that”. \textsuperscript{1423}

Selam then outlined the ways in which her upbringing influenced her aforementioned identifications. Growing up, it was reinforced in several ways that she was an “Ethiopian Girl”, and she understood this statement as a guiding principle for how she navigated the world. Born in the early 1990s, Selam described formative memories of growing-up immersed in the Ethiopian community of Toronto, primarily through her father’s side of the family.\textsuperscript{1424} She recalled how throughout her early childhood and youth

\textsuperscript{1421} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1422} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1423} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1424} Ibid.
frequent community gatherings were at the fore of her social family’s activities. Her father’s house was the site of regular gatherings of sixty or more people. This was a large component of her community experience. Over the course of the interview session, it was clear that Selam’s interpretations of history, culture and faith were influenced by both her mother and father. She proceeded to explain: “my mom identifies as being Gurage it’s not even a big thing in my family, but I know that her mother was Oromo”. She further explained: “I know that my mom like considers herself Gurage and my dad is, his whole family is Gurage but my dad is Muslim and my mom is Christian”.

Selam’s inter-faith and mixed-ethnic family lineage enabled her to chronicle the ethno-religious communities that she experienced growing-up in Canada. She began: “I went to church every Sunday till I was maybe 8 years old and then my mom started working full time”, and even though “she would have loved to continue to take me, she couldn’t”. Selam subsequently stopped attending the Ethiopian church at 8 years old, and one could sense that she saw this development as impactful on her mother’s liminal status and lack of integration into the broader Diasporic community in Toronto. Selam however continued to attend a local mosque with her father’s family. Her paternal cousins all wore the Hijab at the Mosque, spoke Arabic and Ahmaric and read Quran. Selam outlined the ways in which her hybrid existences influenced her perspectives on the history and diversity of her heritage. Selam professed that she was also extremely close to her step-mother, a devout Muslim whose experiences mirrored those of other Ethiopian Muslims in the Canadian diaspora. When asked if she sees “a large Ethiopian Muslim community in Toronto”, Selam asserted that “it’s not as profound

1425 Ibid.
1426 Ibid.
1427 Ibid.
1428 Ibid.
1429 Ibid.
1429 Selam outlined reasons why her mother was on the peripheries of her Diasporic community during her interview. Some of Selam’s assertions were echoed by the findings of this recent publication: Sarah Moore Oliphant, “This Is The Place I Need To Stay”: Church Communities In The Lives Of Ethiopian Immigrant Women In Washington, DC”, Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought, (2020) 39:3, 211-224, DOI: 10.1080/15426432.2020.1760182.
as the Christian one.”1430 When countered with an ask to elaborate on her observation, and to define by what she meant by the community not being so profound, Selam affirmed that she was referring to the fact that Ethiopian Muslims were largely integrated into existing sites of worship. She asserted:

“yeah, for just Ethiopians cause for Islamic whatever creed you are doesn’t matter, but for Christians it’s very like Orthodox church, I have a lot of friends who are Pente”. 1431

Pente is the Amharic reference to Pentecostalism. Selam Meles distinguished her experiences as different than those of the youth who go to Church. She asserted: “all their best friends are from church. I never really grew up in that environment”. 1432

Whilst all of the youth interviewed for this study spoke of the ways in which religion played a significant role in their identity formation, Selam Meles, George Lencho and Aida Abdella all spoke of the ways in which both Christianity and Islam impacted their ethnic identifications and affiliations. Each one of the three specifically articulated the ways in which religion was intimately intertwined with their cultural experiences, or in some cases lack thereof. In alignment with the assertion of the aforementioned youth, research on Ethiopian Muslims living in Canada affirms that most practicing Muslims from the Horn-of-Africa region simply integrate into neighborhood mosques which tend to be heterogenous in ethnic and national composition.1433 Consequently, in contrast to the elaborate Ethiopian Orthodox and Evangelical Christian churches which adorn the landscape of the cities of Toronto, London and Ottawa, all of the youth featured here spoke to the fact that they were not aware of any exclusively Ethiopian Muslim places of worship.1434 Instead, they each reaffirmed the fact that an Ethiopian Muslim “identity is

1430 Author interview with Selam Meles, February 14, 2014.
1431 Ibid.
1432 Ibid.
1434 This assertion is also based on several Google searches for Ethnic-based places of worship in various locales. E.g. Toronto. https://www.google.ca/search?q=Ethiopian+churches+in+Toronto&oq=Ethiopian+churches+in+
reinforced in Canada through the presence of mosques, charitable organizations, religious schools, and other Muslims”. As Selam expressed, Ethiopian Muslims in Toronto “are there, simply integrated into the larger fabric of a global Muslim community”.

Based on her upbringing and broader community interactions, strong ethnic identifications did not resonate with Selam. In spite of the fact that the discussion began focused on the unifying elements of Ethiopian/ Habesha identities, religion played a far more prominent role than ethnicity in shaping Selam Meles’s perceptions of Ethiopian and other interrelated identities in Canada. She subsequently discussed the fact that whilst her mother identified as Gurage, her parents never spoke about cultural distinctions or offered any negative or positive representations of one identity or the other. She asserted that neither one of her parents directly privileged their ethnic identities over their national one. However, whilst Selam maintained that ethnic identifications were not privileged in her own personal experiences, she spoke of the ways in which she had witnessed other cases where people asserted strong ethnic identities. She compared and contrasted her family experiences to those of her best-friend Kiya. Selam declared:

\[
\text{when I learned that Kiya is Oromo and that they almost don’t identify as being Ethiopian, like we are Oromo and that is all we are. For me like the tribal thing is not even talked about maybe because is my full family is of the same tribe, but I see “Ethiopians”}.\]

Ultimately, the narratives and experiences of youth featured in this chapter are exemplars of what Oromo-Canadian scholar Martha K. Kumsa defines as “the shifting territories of identity and cohesion”. Responses like the ones of Aida, Hannah and Selam all bring to the fore the compounded influence of geography, history and culture.

---

1436 Author interview with Sarah Meteke, February 14, 2014.
1437 Ibid.
upon the self-representation of youth. In spite of their reference to their cities of birth, it was clear that for these youth, self-identification was not solely predicated on their geographical locale of “origin”. Instead, these Habesha youth interpreted their identities contextually by leveraging their sense of belonging to multiple geographies, histories and spaces. Hannah illustrated this point best during her interview. At one point during her interview, Hannah ruminated on the fact that in her twenties, she often thought of questions related to her national identity in terms of her “mother-tongue” versus her “native-tongue”, a recent world purview predicated on her adult experiences in volunteering abroad.1439

Hannah explained that her Mother Tongue is Amharic, but that her native tongue is English. In her late teens, Hannah was a volunteer at her local church in training one to three times per week for “disaster relief”. Given her interest in humanitarian aid, Hannah applied for work in Asia. With hopes of going to Korea, she was instead connected to the team in Indonesia, where she was accepted as a “good fit”.1440 Due to her volunteerism abroad, Hannah also spoke Indonesian (baˈhasa indoneˈsia] in addition to English and Amharic. Hannah’s awareness of her “identity” and place in the world was consequently heightened by her experiences through her participation in a year-long “volunteer/work” project in Indonesia, through the Mennonite Central Committee in 2012-2013.

Youth of Ethiopian descent like Hannah also perpetuate the continuance of the concept of overlap in the histories of Canada with the histories of nations in “the global south”.1441 With East-African youth growing up immersed in Canadian institutions and activities, they are bound to experience the world through multilayered prisms. In Hannah’s case, as an “Ana Baptist Relief Development Intern”, her subjectivity was brought to the fore by her reflection upon her experiences in that particular role. As an English language teacher “helping young (Indonesian) children learn how to speak English”, Hannah became increasingly aware of her multiple subjectivities during her role. Ultimately, her position as a Canadian-born female of Ethiopian-heritage engaged in

1439 Interview with Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
1440 Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.
missionary work half-way across the globe, forced her to ponder on both her conceptions and articulations of an identity. When subsequently asked about what her definition of an Ethiopian-Canadian is, Hannah confidently asserted: “if you are Ethiopian, I think it’s in your blood; it’s not whether you practice or not, you just are.”

6.4 **Engaging With The Effects of the Ideological Parables of Famine and Perpetual Poverty**

The second-generation of the diaspora featured in this chapter were also born and raised within a Canadian social climate when the ideological parables of famine, perpetual poverty and general “Third World” ineptitude were the predominant representations and constructions of African identities within mainstream Canadian society. Children of the diaspora growing up in North America during the 1980s and the 1990’s were particularly impacted by the prevalent and pervasive representations and discourses on famine and war in Ethiopia, and the African continent as a whole. In their early childhood, representations of Ethiopia as the “dustbowl of Africa” and the ahistorical place of perpetual famine, starvation and war were also ascribed unto both representations and perceptions of the heritage of Ethiopians and Eritreans living within Canada (1986-1991). In many instances, the prevalent images of emaciated peoples and desertified topographies from the era of famine relief to the Ethiopia (1986-1988) still continue to frame mainstream representations and perceptions of the East-African region and its peoples. The latter images since ascribed to narratives on the African continent as a whole, were instrumental in shaping the vernacular on Ethiopia and Eritrea during the latter part of the twentieth-century, and have in-turn influenced the life experiences and perspectives of East-African youth born and raised in Canada.

Youth of African descent growing up in Canada, are all too aware of the prevalent (mis)representations of their ancestral homeland as a barren, desolate and ahistorical space. African Canadian scholars Wisdom J.Tettey and Korbla P. Puplampu also make

---

1442 Interview with Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
1443 For more on this topic see Sorensen’s “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, *Discourse and Society* 2(2) April, 1991): 223-242 and Susan Moeller’s Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death (New York, 1999).
the argument that abject poverty, disease, civil conflict and political corruption are prevalent signifiers of “African” representations in Canada. They too argue that the representation of the African continent in colonial and post-colonial contexts impacts African-Canadians’ ascribed identity. Frequent and ubiquitous depictions of “abject poverty (e.g., in World Vision ads), the devastation of HIV/AIDS, civil conflict, and political corruption” often create feelings of shame and indignation by members of the heterogenous communities and lead to “critiques about the slant and accuracy of coverage”. Whilst images of perpetual impoverishment are ascribed to narratives on the African continent as a whole, they were particularly instrumental in shaping the vernacular on Ethiopia and Eritrea during the latter part of the twentieth century. As a popular cultural metaphor, the evocation of Starvin’ Marvin was, and still is, one manifestation of this phenomenon.

Thus, in many instances, the prevalent discourses from the era of famine relief to Ethiopia (1984-1988) still continue to frame mainstream representations and perceptions of the region and its peoples, well into the present. By the late 1990s, images of famine and the cultural metaphors of “Starvin’ Marvin” became the nomenclature for representations of Ethiopian identity within mainstream North American/Canadian society. To this effect, Hannah Haile recalled a poignant and illustrative incident from her childhood. She declared: “I remember in Elementary school, (a middle School in Gatineau), this kid coming up to me, and he says: I know how to speak Ethiopian.” She subsequently described how her peer proceeded to speak in a “bunch of cliques”. Confused at that time, Hannah re-enacted her past mystification. She indignantly asserted: “I was like what?!” [laughter]. The ludicrousness of the situation that she described warranted a chuckle. Hannah continued: “I vividly remember him doing the interpretation and thinking that there is something wrong”. Instead, she discovered

---

1445 Ibid.
1446 Ibid.
1447 Author Interview with Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
1448 Ibid.
that her peer had recently watched an episode of the popular satirical cartoon *South Park.* Hannah then surmised that she believed that he was trying to be witty and impress her by sharing his newly acquired knowledge of Ethiopian culture -through reenacting the actions of the infamous and renowned cartoon character of “*Starvin’ Marvin.*

*Starvin’ Marvin* made his big debut in the eighth episode of the first season of South Park. After seeing a commercial about starvation in Africa, the four main white characters of the cartoon series sent money to a celebrity run Christian children’s fund. From the outset, it is clear that the characters do not really care about the cause of famine eradication. Instead, they were enticed to donate money to the charity working in Africa, by the free digital sports watch that they were promised in return. Thus, in the debut episode, the four white characters opened the front door expecting the delivery of their coveted watch. And instead of a sports watch, the characters receive a “live Ethiopian boy” as their “free” gift.\(^{1449}\) When faced with a cartoon rendition of an emaciated black/“Ethiopian” boy wearing a mere loin cloth, one of the white cartoon characters declared that he must be one of those “Etherthropians”.\(^{1450}\)

Ongoing representations of Ethiopians as impoverished caricatures is a form of both structural and symbolic violence. The social inoculation of *Starvin’ Marvin* in the west is the embodiment of the dark side of Western conceptualizations of altruism. In the inaugural episode, when the white South Park boys postulated that the charity must have accidentally sent the boy - instead of their coveted digital sports watch- the black caricature outside of their door spontaneously responded to this assessment with the iconic series of distinct and fast cliques that Hannah referenced during her interview session. In awe, the cartoon characters declared: “that was cool!” Their disappointment at not getting a digital sports watch was promptly replaced by intrigue with the boy at the door. They then proceeded to ask the “Etherthopian” his name. The Black cartoon boy spoke in a series of spontaneous cliques once more; and the white characters concluded

---


\(^{1450}\) Ibid.
that his name was Starvin’ Marvin. As a consequence, Hannah Haile’s childhood peer from elementary school improperly presumed that Starvin’ Marvin was an accurate representation of her Ethiopian heritage.

Over the course of two-decades, South Park received numerous accolades including five primetime Emmy Awards, a Peabody award and kudos on several lists and scholarly reviews of the “greatest television shows”.1451 Most Canadians knew, and still know of the show.1452 From the outset, the satirical animated show riddled with dark humor has been wildly popular, and rife for controversy.1453 Eliciting enjoyment laughter from spectacle, the cartoon has been hailed for breeding laughter through irreverence and emancipating viewers from social constraints in an “age of ‘political correctness’”.1454 Perhaps one of the most troubling things about Starvin Marvin’s integration into the cartoon is in the banality of his existence. None have questioned the satirical nature or value of this particular character. Instead, what Starvin’ Marvin purportedly represents is so ubiquitous and normalized that any episodes featuring him have not stirred enough controversy to warrant infamy.1455

In his homage to the parables to be extrapolated from the show, Richard Hanley asserts that Americans as a nation are “disgustingly fat”. Embodiying the spirit of the show, Hanely declares that “here in the fat-assed U.S. of A., a weight problem means being overweight”. Hanley makes this claim in juxtaposition to the situation of “Starvin’ Marvin, who lives in Ethiopia (“Starvin’ Marvin,” and “Starvin’ Marvin in space”)”. In contrast to Americans, Hanley argues that “Marvin has what philosopher James Rachels calls ‘the other weight problem,’ characterized by under nutrition.” In Ethiopia, Hanley argues that: “people are just plain starving to death. They would give a testicle to have our weight problem.”

In alignment with the definition of structural violence offered by Anthropologist Nancy Scheper, caricatures like Starvin’ Marvin are part of a Western social machination which obfuscates and erases the history and social origins of poverty and naturalizes the occurrence of famines, laying blame on the poor for their failures. In his inaugural episode, Starvin’ Marvin was taken to an all you can eat buffet and told that this was “a great way to experience America!” Forced to sit hungry and watch a glutinous character plough through plate after plate and throwing away any remainders, Starvin’ Marvin somberly marveled at the abundance of food, and excessive consumption which typifies North America’s relationship with food. Denied access to food at the buffet, his charitable state was reinforced by his desire to go through canned goods at a nearby food drive, only to be rejected again. Caricatures and perpetual representations of African poverty such as these are exemplars of symbolic violence, assailing “human dignity,


1457 Ibid.
1458 Ibid.
1459 Ibid.
1460 Ibid.
sense of worth, and one’s existential groundedness in the world"). Ultimately, Starvin’ Marvin’s character is a racist and reductive reminder that within a dichotomous paradigm of a world of have and have-nots caricatured in popular culture, Africans are always the marginalized and subjugated “other”. Youth are very cognizant of this form of otherness ascribed unto their identities.

On a macro-scale, Starvin’ Marvin is ultimately the embodiment of the failure of the Western mantra that “hunger is the enemy that we all must fight!” The rallying point for famine eradication in the 1997 introductory episode was a family of impoverished and helpless Africans represented as malnourished, infantile and helpless. The pervasive acceptance of Starvin’ Marvin as satire in popular culture both obfuscates and depoliticizes the occurrences of famine and the business of famine relief. Through the integration of familiar tropes and reenactment of a repeatable cycle of meanings, a cartoon accurately speaks to the ways in which African countries and bodies are perpetually represented as deficient in western culture.

The satire is inherent in the fact that the 1984-88 period of magnanimous famine relief efforts failed to materialize the hopes of so many across the world; making hunger eradication seem like an unattainable goal on the African continent due to the failure of Africans to be “fed”. Hence, Ethiopia, some argue is still “most often portrayed through the prism of its struggle”. Ethiopia, like many other African nations was and still is frequently type casted by the media as “lacking and needing”, and caricatured “by figures of pity such as Starvin’ Marvin”. For all of the aforementioned reasons, journalists like Cameron Conaway argue that it can still be difficult for many in the West to see

1463 Ibid.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg1Nvz7E-z4
1466 Ibid.
Ethiopia (and arguably the continent) beyond “the images and stories that have been embedded through repetition into our consciousness”.  

Prevalent representations of Ethiopia/Africa and Ethiopians/Africans through the idiom of *Starvin Marvin* have in-turn influenced the perspectives of Horn-of-Africa youth born and raised in Canada into varied states of embarrassment, indignation/frustration and ambivalence. When deconstructing the world that youth are immersed in, the lack of a coherent epistemological framework from which to start understanding their positionality was evident throughout the interview sessions. Conversations about famine and poverty meandered into bigger questions about identity and representation. How to grapple with issues of famine, poverty and structural inequity were recurring themes throughout several parts of our discussion.

As a prime example, Aida Abdella’s interview session traversed back and forth from chronicles of her family’s migration and settlement experiences to discussions of North–South global politics, and prevalent paradigms of knowing the world that she has been exposed whilst living primarily in the Global-North. At the time of the interview, Aida was a twenty-six-year-old graduate level nursing student about to embark on a research trip to a developing nation in the Caribbean. Aida was well-versed on issues pertaining to rampant global inequality, particularly in the areas of health and wealth inequity, globally. She had previously completed an internship in Europe focused on governance and politics, as well as a summer placement working in St. John’s Newfoundland. Given her breadth of experience, she shared the ways in which her world purview was dramatically altered by her first visit to her relatives “back home”. A narrative which spurred on a discussion on scholarly discourses on the concept of ‘privilege’.

---

1467 Ibid.
1468 Public discourse surrounding these issues was discussed. Articles such as this one encapsulate the tenets of this particular discussion: Ismat Sarah Mangla, “This is what 2016 taught us about global income inequality”, World Economic Forum, December 5, 2016. [https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/12/half-of-the-worlds-adults-own-less-than-this-and-its-probably-much-less-than-you-think/](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/12/half-of-the-worlds-adults-own-less-than-this-and-its-probably-much-less-than-you-think/).  
1469 Author interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
Aida’s subsequent reflections evoke Tettey and Puplampu’s analysis of the prevalence of transilience and hybridity in the lives of members of the African diaspora.\textsuperscript{1470} As Tettey and Puplampu argue, the ability of members of the Diaspora to traverse back and forth between two or more countries and cultures, has become a fact of life (transilience).\textsuperscript{1471} Findings from this research demonstrate the ways in which the mobility of the second generation impacts how the youth of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora navigate and understand the world. For some youth, prevalent mainstream representations of perpetual poverty, famine, and conflict are deconstructed and contextualized through both lived experiences and pedagogical explorations.

Upon reflection on her first trip “back-home”, Aida Abdella began to mull over what her own experiences were navigating life in Canada. She began to assess the ways in which her own family’s socio-economic circumstances were somewhat reflective of an upper working-class – middle-class existence in Canada. The relativity of her perspectives struck her, as she tried to understand where her life experiences might be situated within a strict class analysis paradigm. She explained that she had been inspired by Paulo Friere’s germinal work \textit{The Pedagogy of the Oppressed} (1972).\textsuperscript{1472} In this work she had found language and perspectives from which to begin to understand why the world was the way that it was. However, her ultimate conclusion was that her lived experiences and perspectives did not quite fit the modalities that she was exposed to throughout both her undergraduate and her graduate studies. Instead, she understood that she straddled several categories simultaneously.

Through hyper self-reflexivity, Aida recognized that her frameworks for understanding her experiences abroad were rooted in dialogical tensions between her education, her upbringing and her navigation of the world as an Ethiopian/ Black-

\textsuperscript{1470} Tettey and Puplampu, “Border Crossings & Home Diaspora Linkages Among African-Canadians”, 149.
\textsuperscript{1471} Ibid, 149-150.
Canadian youth. Her observations led into an in-depth discussion of what it meant to be “poor” and “rich”, and how those constructions were relative and contextual to the individual asking those questions. “Poor, is when you do not have enough to buy the necessities” she argued. Aida was aware that her parents had been sending remittances to support family members in Ethiopia. It was an implicit obligation and duty that she had grown into. Yet, primarily struck by how visibly impoverished her extended family was, Aida declared that she was initially saddened by the conditions in which they lived. She retold of her experiences during her first visit, and how she was painfully aware of the little amenities that her relatives had access to (e.g. no washing machine or dryer), in comparison to what her family had access to here in Canada.

However, as the conversation progressed, Aida proclaimed that her first experience in Ethiopia ultimately forced her to re-examine her own conceptualizations of wealth and privilege. Her narrative shifted from one focused on the deficits that she witnessed, to an assessment of the familiarity that she experienced whilst she was there. She then spoke of the ways in which she was embraced with open arms, and how food and other necessities were shared with her unequivocally. Even though she experienced the tenets of the hospitality within the Diaspora community, she was struck but how truly collectivist her kin “back home” were in outlook. She reflected: “they were happy with where they were at, for them it was reality. It was simply life in Ethiopia”. Aida’s attempts to work through the implications of her experiences, and her attempts at amelioration of concepts such as poverty, privilege and inequity through the prism of her lived experiences all demonstrate how African youth adopt anti-essentialist approaches which “transcend fixed notions of self, location, culture, ethnicity, and citizenship”.

1474 Interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
1475 Ibid.
1476 Ibid.
Through first-hand experience, Aida learned how to firmly counteract denigrating representations of her heritage.

Members of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora experienced the effects of the famines of the 1984-88 period and the aftermath of famine representations in different ways. It is erroneous to think that none were impacted by the effects or the aftermath, as each of the interviews clearly demonstrated both overt and residual impacts. When asked about how news of the prevailing famine in “Ethiopia” impacted her Eritrean family, Tsegereda argued that if they were directly impacted, she did not remember. Instead, she declared “I remember the World Vision Ads, I was eight years old”.\footnote{1477} Raised in a politically active household, Tsegereda learned early on that what she saw on TV was only part of the narrative of famine that prevailed in her ancestral homeland. She elaborated that to her family, “the reality was that people were dying of hunger, but the bigger cause was to get independence”.\footnote{1478} She argued that unlike the reductive representations on TV, to her community, the famines of 1984-88 fall into the narrative of Eritrean history as one of perpetual struggle that she alluded to earlier.\footnote{1479}

In this case, the political struggle that Tesegereda described was defined by the severity of the drought faced by Eritreans. It was clear to many Eritreans living in Canada, that because of the political malevolence of the Ethiopian state at that time, “food did not get to the people that needed it the most”.\footnote{1480} Thus, within her consciousness of its existence, the famine was part-and-parcel of the liberation struggles of the Eritrean peoples against the Ethiopian state. Her Diasporic community rallied to mobilize relief efforts for their country-kin in the 1984-91 period. Members of the Horn-of-Africa diaspora take great pride in their resilience, and ability to come together in-support of their extended kin. She described community mobilization to aid country-kin as fueled by a desire of the community to “not ask for handouts”.\footnote{1481} Hence, the

\footnote{1477}{Author Interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.}
\footnote{1478}{Ibid.}
\footnote{1479}{Ibid.}
\footnote{1480}{Ibid.}
\footnote{1481}{Ibid.}
The overarching sentiment that Tsegereda was familiar with was encapsulated in the statement that: “we persevered- at the individual level- God helped, but not at the national level”. Tsegereda therefore argued that this distinctive period of hardship was primarily remembered within her community as one of both “trial and perseverance”.  

The responses of youth to both representations and (mis) representations of their heritage were ultimately grounded in their immediate life experiences. George Lencho was born in 1987, and he subsequently asserted that memories of the epic Ethiopian famine of 1984-86 did not shape his perception of self or identity. Instead, he stated that dealing with the pervasive impact of the famine was “his father’s experience, and not so much his”. George asserted that discursive constructions of famine were un-relatable to his own lived experiences as a half-Ethiopian-Canadian (black youth) growing up in the multi-ethnic neighborhoods of Toronto. None presumed that he was from elsewhere but here. Instead, he outlined that the fact that he knew that from the time of his father’s migration to Canada in 1984, he regularly sent a portion of his earnings back-home to support his extended family, but “not in support of any political causes”. His father instead supported social justice initiatives in Ethiopia. From George’s recollections, demonstrating community support vis-à-vis charities was a big part of his upbringing, due to the emphasis placed upon these acts by both of his parents. Community support also included participation and engagement with fundraising activities such as the Terry Fox Run.

George’s narrative structure and outline of his family’s engagement with the topic of famine and famine relief is congruent with Tettey and Puplampu’s call to use a framework of trans locational positionality to analyze the multiple ways in which “African-Canadians connect with their communities/countries of origin in spite of the

1482 Ibid.
1483 Ibid.
1484 Author Interview with George Lencho August 26, 2014.
1485 Ibid.
spatial distancation that their location in Canada imposes”.1486 George steered and reframed our discussion about the impact of an international famine on his family, into a reflection about the ways in which his father encouraged both of his children to remain informed about international politics. George argued that his father characteristically remained engaged with world news, and that their relationship was primarily premised on in-depth discussions of international affairs. When examined through a translocal lens, George’s assessments of his father’s engagement provide an insightful framework of analysis. Whilst George was too young to recall his father’s impressions of the famines of 1984-88, he instead referred to his father’s continued engagement with political news and current affairs as a means of both keeping in-touch with his roots, and teaching his children how to navigate their Canadian upbringing through a more informed and international lens. His father taught him never to accept anything at face-value, and that representations of his heritage were bound to be one-dimensional. Coupled with consideration of both expressed and tacit knowledge about George’s father’s life trajectory, the narrative emphasis on “informed civic participation” was in direct response to reductionist representations of his ancestral heritage in Canada, vis-à-vis the famine of 1984-88.

Parents who were raising their children during this former period were particularly cognizant of the fact that they were “settling in and raising their children in a culturally incongruent locale”.1487 In spite of pervasive reductionist depictions of their cultural heritage as one of poverty and famine, parents instead deliberately reframed and continued to reframe steadfast narratives by teaching their children to think critically. Some also dedicated time to educate their children about the symbolism and significance of their past. During her interview, Mariam Abebe reminisced about the significance of Sunday lunches at her family home. Sunday lunch Mariam declared, was when “Ethiopian Pride comes out”.1488 It was during these long and elaborate midday affairs

1488 Author interview with Mariam Abebe, November 4, 2014.
that Mariam’s father would take the time to educate his children on the cultural significance of “their history”. In addition to providing oral narratives, he also encouraged a question-and-answer period repartee with his children.¹⁴⁸⁹

Hence, in contrast to prevalent mainstream representations, the parents of the youth featured in this chapter would often herald historicity of their roots and place an emphasis upon a cultural and historical legacy of their roots as parallel to none. The narratives of youth are illustrative of the ways in which they each navigate or contest mainstream representations of their cultural and historical heritage, at the same time as they navigate and negotiate the histories that their families hold near and dear as truths of an emblematic past.

6.5 Topographies of Settlement and Expressions of Identity (Food and Culture)

The themes and concepts which emerged in the narratives of youth should also be contextualized by examining the topography of settlement by Ethiopian and other interrelated East-African identities in Canada. Over 21,000 Ethiopian immigrants arrived in Canada between 1974 –1996, with a large majority of them settling in the Greater Toronto Area.¹⁴⁹⁰ In light of its in-depth examination collection of data on ethnicities in Canada, the 2011 National Household survey provides the most insights into the settlement of Ethiopians and interrelated identifications in Canada. This particular data set is also utilized as a referential point for this study, as it also speaks poignantly to the time frame in which these interviews were conducted (before the availability of the 2016 Census data). All of the youth interviewed for this study spoke to the uniqueness of the city of Toronto as a foray into Ethiopian history and its inter-related diaspora and culture in Canada, even if they did not reside in it.

Discussions pertaining to the visibility and activity of the Diasporic community within the different socio-scapes are better understood when the prevalence of the people

¹⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.
who self-identify is numerically represented. In 2011, the city of Toronto had the largest number of both first and second-generation respondents of Ethiopian heritage listed in Canada, with 12,460 respondents definitively identifying as “Ethiopian”. 1491 Another 1,895 people identified as an ethnic identity originating from within the current Ethiopian nation state: Amhara, Tigrian, Oromo and Harari, raising the total number of Ethnic identifications from the region to 14,355. 1492 Within the conceptual framework of the data set collected in 2011, Ethiopians comprised close to one quarter of all of all of the Southern and Eastern African ethnic identities recorded in Toronto. 1493

The statistical data available underscores the merits to studying Toronto as a site of negotiation and mediation of contemporary representations and expressions of Ethiopian identities. Three of the five participants featured in the case-study analysis of the youth of the diaspora were born and raised in the city of Toronto. Whilst each of the participants addressed their membership within the broader Habesha group, one identified as Ethiopian (Selam), another as Eritrean (Tsegereda), and a third as a Canadian of mixed Ethiopian-German heritage (George). Each of these three participants addressed the diversity inherent in their habitual locale, and the visibility and accessibility of their ancestral heritage within this particular metropole. The aforementioned statistical data gleaned from the 2011 National Household survey provides the numeric purview from which themes and concepts discussed by the youth can be contextualized.

In comparison to other metropoles across Canada, youth growing up in Toronto have ample opportunity to be immersed in their ancestral heritage, in the present. All the interviews with the youth conducted for this study alluded to the dynamism of the Horn-

1492 Ibid.
of-Africa Diaspora in this this particular Canadian metropole. The multi-ethnic Diasporic community in Toronto is vibrant across many spectrums ranging from youth camps/church groups to music festivals and soccer games. With one of the largest cultural associations in the country and several visible ethnic socio-commerscapes, the Ethiopian diaspora in Toronto has become embedded into the multicultural framework of the city. So much so, that in 2010 the month of September was proclaimed by then Mayor David Miller, as “Ethiopian Canadian Heritage Month” for the city. 1494

Ethiopian-Canadian Day Celebrations were inaugurated in Toronto in 1999. 1495 Thereafter, each September (on a date between the 7th -11th ), the Ethiopian Association of the Greater Toronto area organized day-long celebrations to mark the Ethiopian New Year. 1496 Everyone was welcome, and events included a taste of Ethiopian cuisine, cultural music, dance and performances, fashion shows, exhibits and sports. Toronto is also the home of Berhan TV, a half an hour show broadcast in Amharic on Rogers Channels which focuses on news, current affairs and entertainment for the Ethiopian community. 1497

Therefore, mapping out the presence of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora in Canadian socioscapes is a task most easily accomplished for the city of Toronto. With higher concentrations of Ethiopians per capita than any other city in Canada, youth born and raised in Toronto are bound to engage with elements of their cultural heritage on a more frequent basis. As a native Torontonian, during our interview session in 2014, Selam took great pride in integrating the cityscape into her articulations of both a history and an

1495 Ibid.
identity. Her upbringing, family dynamic and schooling had all enabled her to chart out the terrain of her native city as integral to her conception of an identity. As a youth attending a more prestigious elementary school outside the vicinity of her neighborhood school district, Selam had become intimately familiar with the bus and metro lines at a young age. Also the daughter of divorced parents, Selam inhabited different parts of the city when staying with one parent or the other, making her a self-proclaimed expert on her locale.

Profoundly influenced by her nativity, Selam made several references to streets and districts where she saw an increased visibility of Ethiopians and other inter-related members of the Horn-of-African diaspora. When asked if there was a predominantly Ethiopian area in Toronto, she enthusiastically nodded and declared: “100%”. Selam looked up to the ceiling of the coffee shop during her interview session and concentrated really hard on providing an accurate representation of the presence of Ethiopians in Toronto. She explained: “I am trying to map this out… using the subway line”. She proceeded to recite: “downtown core, Front street and Jarvis is number 1”. “There isn’t a huge one in West Toronto; West Toronto is predominantly East European or like straight up Anglo Saxon…”, she paused. She was so engaged in this mental mapping exercise that she was discernably scouring her memory for any other relevant details to share. Living in London, Ontario during the academic year had made her more profoundly aware of the diversity of her hometown. She rhetorically stated: “…ah where else?” And without skipping a beat she resumed her narration with: “oh yes, like the East, like Scarborough region and east end also has like a huge Ethiopian concentration … that’s where like the churches are even”. She then had an epiphany. She excitedly declared: “Ossington… that’s like the little Ethiopia of Toronto …it’s even called that”.

1498 Author interview with Selam Meles, February 14, 2014.
1499 Ibid.
1500 Ibid.
1501 Ibid.
1502 Ibid.
1503 Ibid.
1504 Ibid.
Selam’s points made throughout the interview session were reaffirmed by research findings from 2006 shared by the city’s Social Research & Analysis Unit (Figure 1: Census data from 2006). With a vested interest in charting out the city’s ethnic diversity, the enclosed municipal map of the city of Toronto illustrates the varying visibility and concentration of Ethiopian and Eritrean’s inhabitation of certain districts. The statistics enclosed from the 2006 census indicate that there is merit to studying Toronto as a site of negotiation and mediation of contemporary representations and expressions of Ethiopian and other inter-related identities.1505

When subsequently questioned about the visibility of representations of Ethiopian identity in Toronto, Selam articulated this phenomenon as evidenced in the increasing visibility and popularity of Ethiopian Food in the Toronto metropole. Given the research project objectives to explore socio-scapes as sites for expressions of identity, Selam Meles suggested that I should explore Danforth Street in Toronto and outlined the distinctive features of that street. Ethiopian restaurants in Toronto are plenty. However, there is a significant concentration of Ethiopian restaurants along Danforth Street. She chuckled, “it’s got like 10 Ethiopian restaurants on the same street”.1506 Selam asserted that she saw this phenomenon as filling a demand, especially within the “last couple of years”. To Selam, this phenomenon was dialogical. She asserted: “I see it as people wanting to be exposed to the Ethiopian food scene or the Ethiopian community wanting to basically spread what it is”.1507 It was a form of “cultural branching out”.1508

---

1505 Figure 1: Image enclosed of the “Toronto CMA Ethnic Origin 2006”, Statistics Canada, Census 2006.
1506 Author Interview with Selam Meles, February 14, 2014.
1507 Ibid.
1508 Ibid.
Figure 1: Toronto CMA Ethnic Origin 2006, Statistics Canada, Census, 2006.

Figure 28: Toronto CMA Ethiopian Ethnic Origin 2006
In light of the growth and diversity of the Diasporic community across this particular metropole, patrons have ample opportunity to experience the “urban coolness” of Ethiopian cuisine. On a stretch of a mere 400 meters on Danforth between Greenwood Ave and Coxwell Avenue alone, there are still 11 different Ethiopian dining establishments listed (as of January 2021).\(^\text{1509}\) Many of these establishments have become name stays. Ultra-modern exteriors are often juxtaposed with traditional Ethiopian settings and china. When asked about what she thought of the interior décor of most of the restaurants that she has visited, Selam paused to reflect. She argued that she had not really given much thought to the significance of the décor. Selam described seeing hung images of the rock churches in Lalibela, the obelisks of Axum, the Lion of Judah and the Blue Nile. She took it for granted that the images were cultural signifiers but confessed that she really did not understand the history behind most of them. No one had paused to teach her. Unless “history” is discussed in the home, youth do not always know the meaning behind the signifiers that they have come to take for granted. Any preceding mainstream general awareness of the hallmarks of Ethiopian identity discussed in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, such as Ethiopia as an influential historical and cultural signifier of an early Christian African civilization, or as an exemplar of African sovereignty (“uncolonized peoples”) has dissipated, if not completely vanished.

In contrast, a pride in history and culture, and the politics of self-representation all prevail in the selective naming of establishments by Ethiopian proprietors across the country. As identified in chapter 4, within the city of Toronto and elsewhere in Canada, Ethiopian dining establishments with classic Ethiopian names and signifiers such as: Lalibela, Blue Nile, Maskarem, Fasiledes, Wazema and Meda, promise prospective

\(^{1509}\) Hirut Café Restaurant, Lucy Ethiopian Restaurant, Merhaba Bar & Café, Meda Lounge and Restaurant, Sora Restaurant, Mocha Café and Pastry, Wazema Ethiopian Restaurant, Rendez-Vous and Eritrean Ethiopian and Eritrean Restaurant, Blue Nile Restaurant, Abugida Ethiopian/Eritrean Restaurant and Lounge, “Ethiopian Restaurants in Toronto”, Google Maps, https://www.google.com/search?tbm=lec&sxsrf=ALeKk01S7Wuns6fSLN10rTiB0alzWWE4zO%3A1609903813685&ei=xS71X6GmKcKq5NoPqZqKmA&g=ethiopian+restaurants+in+toronto+AND+danforth&gs_l=psy-ab.3..0i457i22i30k1.4376.7996.0.8278.13.13.0.0.0.0.158.1586.0j12.12.0....0...1c.1.64.psy-ab..1.12.1581.0i22i30k1j33i22i29i30k1.0.ooqRrAH_5A#rlfi=hd;&si:;mv:|[43.68588258535476-79.3130165992888],[43.67418174384833,-79.34520310746683],null,[43.680032449837405,-79.32910985337747],16], Accessed January 4, 2021.
patrons “traditional dining experiences”, inclusive of shared platters, photography of the Ethiopian landscape, classic artwork and other cultural artefacts.\textsuperscript{1510}

The most prevalent Ethiopian establishment names world-wide, are found replicated in Toronto. Sheba Restaurant, Lalibela, Lucy Ethiopian Restaurant, Ethiopian House and Éthiopiques Restaurant are testament to the ubiquity of pride in a long-rooted history.\textsuperscript{1511} Lucy, albeit not a common name, is in acknowledgement of the famous “3.2 million year old skeleton of an early human ancestor, Australopithecus Afarensis” discovered in the Rift Valley in 1974 by paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson.\textsuperscript{1512} Lucy is also known as Dinkeensh in Amharic, meaning “you are amazing”, a name reflective of the national pride ascribed to the discovery of a skeleton which signifies Ethiopia as the “cradle of human civilization”.\textsuperscript{1513} The discovery of Lucy in Ethiopia had led to the proliferation of the scientifically reinforced assertion that “Africa is the origin of all humankind and that everyone has roots in Ethiopia”.\textsuperscript{1514} Éthiopiques, pays homage to the influential legacy of Ethiopian and Eritrean music on Western popular culture.\textsuperscript{1515} Other establishments along the same stretch of road, and within close proximity to the former list, such as the Maple Café and Rendez-Vous Ethiopian & Eritrean Restaurant are

\begin{itemize}
\item The full names of the restaurants along Danforth are as follows: Lalibela Ethiopian Restaurant, Blue Nile Restaurant, Maskarem Bar & Restaurant, Fasiledes Ethiopian Restaurant, Wazema Ethiopian restaurant, Meda Bar Restaurant, Maple Café and Rendez-Vous Ethiopian and Eritrean Restaurant. “Ethiopian Restaurants”, Google Maps, September 2015, \url{https://www.google.ca/maps/search/Ethiopian+restaurants/@43.6826104,-79.3382682,15z/data=!3m1!4b1}, accessed again January 10, 2021.
\item The name Sheba pays homage to the Biblical figure of Queen Sheba. Renowned as the Queen of Ethiopia (14\textsuperscript{th} century A.D), her visit to King Solomon of Israel, bore the Solomonic dynasty line from which successors would rule Ethiopia for close to 3000 years; successors including Emperor Haile Selassie. Lalibela, a historic town in northern Ethiopia and most famous for its in-ground Orthodox churches, is often still referred to as the second holiest city to Axum.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\end{itemize}
illustrative of the “mixed-embeddedness” inherent in a multicultural landscape such as Toronto. \(^{1516}\) “African Palace” is another prominently advertised Ethiopian & Eritrean Restaurant located on 977 Bloor Street West. Highlighting the persistence of a cultural celebration of the long-rooted affinity between Ethiopians and Eritreans. Other restaurants such as Nunu Ethiopian Fusion located on 1178 Queen Street West, are more reflective of the urban trendiness and acquired cultural cachet of Ethiopian cuisine that Selam spoke of during her interview.

Antithetical to the previous prevalence of *Starvin’ Marvin*, in the new millennium Ethiopian food has become an acquired foodie staple for urbanites. \(^{1517}\) Youth referenced this phenomenon when narrating their life experiences. Three decades after the ubiquitous representations of Ethiopia as the dustbowl of Africa permeated the consciousness of a generation of Canadians, foodies now delight in the exotic tastes of the East-African nation through the multitudes of establishments owned and operated by members of the diaspora. Injera, the flat “pancake” like sponge bread used to serve a medley of stews and veggie curries has been deemed as “Gluten free” in its authentic form, and subsequently Ethiopian food has become ubiquitous within Toronto’s growing multicultural foodie scene. Ethiopian food is often found listed under vegetarian or vegan options online, catering to a growing demographic of ethically conscious customers

---

\(^{1516}\) Mixed embeddedness is a concept discussed by Mary Price and Elizabeth Chacko in “The Mixed Embeddedness of Ethnic Entrepreneurs in a New Immigrant Gateway”. The concept refers to both the concrete embeddedness of immigrants through their social networks and the abstract embeddedness of immigrant entrepreneurs in local socioeconomic and political institutions, in *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, Sep (2009): 329.

looking for new flavours to wet their palettes and appetites across Canada. So much so, that food critics are now actively try breaking people’s perceptions of African cooking as synonymous to Ethiopian cooking. In 2014 the Toronto Star ran a feature article on Somalian-Canadian Chef Bashir Munye. In this feature, Eden Hagos founder of a Toronto-based Black Foodie Blog asserted:

*I think when a lot of people think of African food, they think of Ethiopian food. As an Ethiopian person, I love that (these restaurants are) serving different audiences but there’s amazing West African food, and people from other parts of East Africa like Bashir playing with flavours and changing peoples’ perceptions.*

Eden expressed hopes that Chef Bashir Munye’s cooking would change people’s perceptions of African cooking in Toronto. Eden wanted to underscore the fact that “within each African country there are regional variations and that there’s a world beyond the Ethiopian restaurants in downtown Toronto”.

It is then perhaps one of the great ironies of history that the most prevalent contemporary representation of Ethiopian identity, culture and history within a Canadian paradigm is Ethiopian food. Youth referenced this relatively new phenomenon when narrating their life experiences. However, as some narratives indicate, Canadian fascination with Ethiopian food preceded its wide-spread availability. With lots of different cultures represented in her elementary school, Hannah expressed particularly fond memories of the “multi-Cultural Days” back in the late 1990s. Even though Hannah did not recall other students of Ethiopian heritage from her elementary school years, she recalled there being “a lot of Somalians”. She reminisced: “from grade 1, everyone knew that I would bring Injera, and it got popular to the point that one teacher would call my mom and ask her to make food for her and pay her.” Therein lies the paradox of

---

1518 For example Ethiopian food is listed as a vegan option on the Happy Cow directory in Calgary: [https://www.happycow.net/north_america/canada/alberta/calgary/](https://www.happycow.net/north_america/canada/alberta/calgary/), first accessed in June 2016.
1519 Karon Lui, “Foodie Tour: Chef Without Borders: Bashir Munye’s New Dinner Series at My Little Dumplings Shows Off Globally Inspired African Cooking”, The Star, August 24, 2016. [http://startouch.thestar.com/screens/c7e1851e-cce8-41e5-86fe-6e34fc585219%7C_0.html](http://startouch.thestar.com/screens/c7e1851e-cce8-41e5-86fe-6e34fc585219%7C_0.html)
1520 Ibid.
1521 Interview with Hannah Haile, June 2015.
Ethiopian identity within Canada, (or North America as a whole) throughout the 1990s. At the same time that Starvin’ Marvin was the strongest cultural trope and signifier for Ethiopian identity, Ethiopian cuisine was proliferating as an ethnic cuisine within metropoles such as Ottawa, Toronto and Calgary.

Albeit on a much smaller scale, intersections in Ethiopian and Canadian history are also evident within other sites of East-African settlements existent in mid-size urban centers such as London, Ontario, where the second-generation participants of this study were exposed to some elements of their ancestral cultural and political heritage. When questioned about the visibility of the Ethiopian community in London Ontario, Aida Abdella paused to reflect on the question being asked. After some contemplation, she contended that the Ethiopian community in London is “almost invisible”, and that “If you are not in it, then you don’t know”. She argued that this was “unlike Toronto, where you find signs on the Danforth”. However, she elaborated that in spite of the smaller size of the Ethiopia and inter-related diaspora, the difference was that in London, “you almost don’t need any markers because we can pick each other out.”

The city of London, Ontario had a mere 465 respondents of Ethnic heritage listed in the 2011 National Household Survey, with no related Ethnic identifications like Oromo, Tigray, or Harari explicitly evidenced.

While London is a much smaller microcosm in which to study the prevalence of self-representation of Ethiopian identities and identifiers, it is an equally pertinent one. Culture, Elizabeth Chacko argues, is transmitted “by maintaining and upholding cultural mores of behavior, belief, dress, and other traits from generation to generation”.

Practices of the community in London, Ontario described by Mariam Abebe and Aida Abdella attest to Elizabeth Chako’s research findings in Washington D.C. Born in St.

1522 Other mid-size urban centers like Cambridge –Waterloo had 950 respondents identifying as Ethiopian and 80 others of related ethnic denominations (Amhara, Tigrian, Oromo and Harari).
1523 Interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
1524 Ibid.
1525 Ibid.
Joseph’s hospital in London, Ontario, Mariam Abebe is the oldest sibling of seven children.\textsuperscript{1528} With a household comprised of five girls and two boys, she wryly commented that her life was filled with scenes that she “will appreciate when she gets older.”\textsuperscript{1529} To Mariam, her family structure and broader community was reflective of her roots, not typically Canadian.\textsuperscript{1530} To this effect, Mariam described the importance of cultural mores in governing the activities of her immediate family, and the broader Ethiopian community in London. Throughout her childhood, it was Mariam’s experience that members of the community would provide settlement support to newcomers, as well employment opportunities to those seeking work.\textsuperscript{1531} After years of working odd jobs to support himself and his family, her father had finally acquired a coveted managing technician position with a national company at the time of our interview. And Mariam’s mother had also secured stable employment with a meat processing plant located on the outskirts of the city. She credited her parents secure employment to their community networks, or what she referred to as “Habesha’s helping Habesha’s”.\textsuperscript{1532} Mariam asserted that she was deeply grateful for how “privileged and blessed her family was”, in light of the opportunities that were afforded to them through hard work and community support. In her assessment, her family’s “faith in God, and the support of the extended Ethiopian community in London” helped Mariam and her family establish and set deep roots in London, Ontario.\textsuperscript{1533}

Yet, in spite of opening her narrative with an analysis of her place of birth (St. Joseph’s hospital in London) and an overview of her family structure, when asked about her identity, Mariam Abebe replied that she identified solely as “Ethiopian”. When asked why, she bluntly responded: “because I am not white”.\textsuperscript{1534} “It’s much simpler”, she stated. She elaborated “people ask: “where are you from?” all the time anyway. She

\textsuperscript{1528} Interview with Mariam Abebe, November 4, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1529} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1530} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1531} Due to community networks, Mariam specifically outlined the prevalence of Cuddy Farms and Cargill Canada being good starting points of employment for members of the community in London.
\textsuperscript{1532} Author interview with Mariam Abebe, November 4, 2014.
\textsuperscript{1533} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1534} Ibid.
argued that in her experiences living and growing up in London, Ontario people automatically assume that “you are not from here”.\textsuperscript{1535} She likened this phenomenon as akin to: “being in Japan; they are going to assume that you are not from there”.\textsuperscript{1536} To Mariam, her conceptualization of her identity was literally black and white.

Other poignant examples of the importance of studying Ethiopian representation in mid-size urban centres like London is evidenced through Aida Abdalla’s narrative. Aida Abdella prefaced her response to the identity question with an illustrative story. Aida, a petite young lady with dark- striking features is often adorned in stylish colorful clothing and a hijab. Consequently, she asserted that most people in Canada mistake her heritage as Somalian. Oblivious to the historicity of religious and ethnic diversity inherent in East-African nations, most Canadians immediately interpret the hijab as synonymous to a Somalian or Sudanese heritage.\textsuperscript{1537} Thus, when posed with the question, “how do you identify” and “where are you from?” Aida declared that her first instinct is often to answer “Canada.”\textsuperscript{1538} However, similar to Hannah’s experiences Aida’s preliminary answer is puzzling, if not simply unacceptable or unfathomable to most other “Canadians” who are posing this question. Therefore, it is with a degree of certainty that her preliminary answer as Canada, will inevitably be followed through by the question: “where are you really from?” Aida proclaimed that then, she accordingly responded with “my parents are Ethiopian”.\textsuperscript{1539} Admittedly, Aida affirmed that at that particular stage in her life, her answer as “Canadian” was calculated and contextual, and deliberately designed to either inform and or unsettle her questioners. Consequently, when most Caucasian people ask her the “identity” question, she follows her prescribed approach outlined above, because as she wryly declares: “they are assuming that I am not a Canadian”.\textsuperscript{1540} However, when confronted by the same question from “other minorities”,

\textsuperscript{1535} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1536} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1537} Selam Meles also spoke of how her cousins would get asked similar questions on their identity based on the fact that they too wore the hijab at times.
\textsuperscript{1538} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1539} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1540} Ibid.
Aida proclaimed “then I tell them that I am Ethiopian, because you know where they are coming from”.  

Aida’s family first moved to London, Ontario in 1988. Her older sister was born in Egypt, after which time her family directly migrated to London and opted to remain; in light of the size of the city and the community that they became a part of. Aida grew up in a co-op in East London, in an area that she described as “rich in cultural diversity”. Even though there was no indication that the two participants knew of each other, much like Mariam’s, Aida’s narrative also placed an emphasis on the support and strength of the Ethiopian community in London, Ontario. Aida had particularly fond memories of those early days when her family would get together with several of the Ethiopian families in the city “at somebody’s house” for a Sunday afternoon. 

Maintaining cultural continuity can be challenging for newer immigrant communities, like the Ethiopian one particularly because Ethiopians and Eritreans living in London are “residentially scattered”. As a consequence, youth are exposed to non-ethnic cultural practices, and may have to deal with widening chasms in belief systems and practices between themselves and their parents. Yet, at 26 years old, connections to the Ethiopian community were foundational to Aida’s conceptualization of an Ethiopian-Canadian identity. Aida and her family are practicing Muslims and well-integrated into the fabric of a community premised on shared kinship across both ethnic and faith-based denominational lines. Even though her and her sister were often the oldest children present, she recalled the feelings elicited from partaking in community events where “people spoke the same language, ate similar foods and laughed at similar jokes”, fondly. 

Aida’s parents were also integral members of the local Ethiopian Community

1541 Ibid.  
1542 Interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.  
1543 Ibid.  
1545 Ibid., 500.  
1546 Author interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
Association, and she grew up immersed in community activities.\footnote{Ethiopian Community Association, “Ethiopian Community Association, London, ON”, \url{https://eccalondonontario.com/about-us/welcome/}, accessed January 10, 2021.} The Ethiopian community Association of London was established on January 6, 1988 and prides itself on promoting “community relations and empowerment” through cultural activities and social mobilization efforts for local and international causes.\footnote{Ibid.} Based on the activities showcased on its blog, and Facebook page, charity and community development are two integral tenets of the association.\footnote{Ibid.} At the time of our interview in 2015, Aida frequently volunteered her time as a youth mentor to the younger members of the Ethiopian community.\footnote{Author interview with Aida Abdella, July 2015.}

For Aida and her family, shared cultural elements and concepts were “reinforced consciously and subliminally at ethnic gatherings and through the celebration of festivals” throughout their childhood and adulthood.\footnote{Chacko, “Assimilation and identity: Among Young Ethiopian Immigrants in Metropolitan Washington”, 500.} Notably, the association hosts annual events for Adowa day, Ethiopian New Year and Eid Al Arafat celebrations.\footnote{Ethio-Canadian Community Association of London, Ontario, FaceBook, \url{https://www.facebook.com/437134149770972/photos/a.497398500411203/800683073416076/?type=3&theater} “Ethiopian New Year and Eid Al Arafa Celebrations”, Ethiopian Community Association, London, Ontario, August 22, 2017. \url{https://eccalondonontario.com/2017/08/22/ethiopian-new-year-and-eid-al-arafa-celebrations/}. Accessed February 6, 2021.* The Ethiopian Association of London has also invited me to speak at a handful of their community events for Adowa Day.\footnote{“Thanksgiving Dinner” and “Summer Camp”, Ethiopian Community Association, London, Ontario, October 8 2016 and July 4, 2016. \url{https://eccalondonontario.com/2017/08/22/ethiopian-new-year-and-eid-al-arafa-celebrations/}} The association also hosts Canadian Thanksgiving dinners and annual long-weekend summer camping trips in Port-Burwell, Ontario.\footnote{Chacko, “Assimilation and identity: Among Young Ethiopian Immigrants in Metropolitan Washington”, 500.} Communal festivities like the aforementioned two take place within churches and centers which welcome members of the broad community from all faiths and ethnic delineations. Gatherings, large or small, afford members of the second generation like Aida, the necessary “opportunities to internalize Ethiopian culture and pride to varying extents”.\footnote{And even though it is not...}
numerically large, the London community is also sought out from time to time, to speak about events pertaining to the broader Ethiopian community in Canada.  

With elements of history, culture and topography shaping her world purview, Aida’s narrative represents the perspectives of youth within the Diaspora who mobilize to fulfill the dreams of and effect change that their parents could not. She spoke of the common tropes of the Taxi driver and the bus driver as the predominant images of Ethiopian fathers in the West. Representations which do not tell the complete story. She reflected upon the fact that “the first wave of Ethiopians was so focused on their children, that they could not have explored their own potential”. She argued that “they are working so hard so that we don’t have to struggle”. This theme of parental sacrifice which Aida touches upon is echoed in the findings of research on other African immigrant men and women. With their children’s future and the opportunities available to them being of imminent importance, “migration is a family strategy, rather than an individual strategy”. Thus Aida also challenged steadfast misconceptions of members of her community. She concluded that: “the one that is being told, is different than the reality that is being lived”.

6.6 Conclusions

The voices of the children of the East-African Diaspora are illustrative of the ways in which representations and perceptions of ‘Ethiopian’ or Habesha identity and history are perpetually navigated, negotiated, celebrated, or contested within contemporary Canadian society. The narratives of children of the Horn-of-Africa

---

1556 Interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
1557 Ibid.
1558 Ibid.
1560 Interview with Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
Diaspora featured in this chapter are reminders of Kadiatu Kanneh’s call for the need to read “African Diasporic and Black identities as historically textured and politically determined constructs, constructs which rely on particular understandings of time, memory, and race.”

Thematic and exploratory by design, this chapter began by contextualizing the application of the term Habesha as an identifier. An overview of what it means to be Habesha in Canada, and how the historic term applies to youth specifically was of the utmost importance to understanding why participants took part in this study. An understanding of what it is to be Habesha framed the researcher-participant nexus which yielded the findings chronicled throughout this chapter. Tacit and empirical knowledge of the breadth and diversity of the East-African Diaspora was of the utmost significance to eliciting, engaging with and exploring the emerging themes within the narratives. Tsegereda Yohannes reaffirmed the epistemological importance of this work, in her assertion that in order to study her community, or others, “you need to be sensitive, you need to be interested and want to be trained in it”.

The contemporary implications of ethnic and cultural pluralism within the Diaspora force youth to consider how they elect to self-identify. Thus, the chapter also located and rooted the second-generation within both a Canadian and East-African historical framework. The Horn of Africa Diaspora in Canada developed in size during the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, marking the experiences of the second-generation born doing this period as embodiments of a particular historical trajectory. Historical knowledge of the push factors of migration (macro factors) from the Horn-of-Africa region contextualized the micro-histories which were discussed throughout. The histories that the youth told throughout this chapter embodied the experiences of their parents. However, the perspectives of the youth in telling the histories of their families, reinforced their uniqueness as both descendants of a particular-historical heritage, and as natives of a completely different geographical and cultural milieu than that of their parents.

---

1562 Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.
Identifying intersections in histories, politics and culture provided the necessary socio-historical context from which the narratives and experiences of the second-generation can be contextualized. An awareness of the post-migration phenomenon of heightened ethnic identification and fragmentation in the settlement processes was also of importance to understanding what participants were referring to (explicitly/outright) or working through individually (implicitly). The second-generation of the Diaspora featured in this chapter were also born and raised within a Canadian social climate when the ideological parables of famine, perpetual poverty and general “Third World” ineptitude were the predominant representations and constructions of African identities within mainstream Canadian society. This chapter contextualized the manifestation of this phenomenon as a direct outcome of the famine relief period of 1984-88. The lingering effects of the aestheticization of famine are evidenced in mainstream media representations and popular culture incarnations like Starvin’ Marvin. In addition to the archetypal representations of famine, the popular culture metaphor of “Starvin Marvin” was the nomenclature for representations of Ethiopian identity within mainstream Canadian (North American) society, reinforcing the longstanding and inevitable impact of representations from the pinnacle period of famine relief (1984-1988).

Youth interviewed for this chapter addressed the ways in which they experienced and subsequently engaged with the effects of the ideological parables of famine and representations of perpetual poverty. Their past and ongoing engagements with concepts of wealth, inequality and privilege are demonstrative of the nuanced ways in which these pervasive representations of their ancestral heritage manifest in their sometimes transnational lives. The self-identifications of youth featured throughout this chapter are ultimately predicated on understandings of both micro-and macro-histories.

Youth featured in this chapter utilized their sense of belonging to multiple geographies, cultures and histories to navigate, negotiate and articulate who they are. When confronted with the frequently posed question: “where are you from?” Canadian

\[1563\] Muller makes the assertion that the Ethiopian Famine was a Watershed event for humanitarian action in “The Ethiopian Famine Revisited: Band Aid and The Antipolitics of Celebrity Humanitarian Action”, 61.
born youth of East-African descent who participated in this project elucidated the intricate and political nature of answering a seemingly straightforward question. The Habesha female youth who participated in this study attested to deliberately negotiating their identities contextually. Tsegereda, Aida, Selam, Hannah, and Mariam all asserted that their national identification was situational and negotiable depending on who was asking the question. Hannah Haile embodied the sentiments of her peers when she advised that her response to the oft asked question “where are you from?” was admittedly contingent upon “who you are”.1564 Hannah proclaimed that she deliberately framed her responses based on who was asking the question. Often times, when it was a younger white person in Canada posing the question, Hannah too declared that her response was simply her place of birth and current loci (“Ottawa”); even though she knew that it was not the answer that the inquisitors were seeking.1565 In contrast, if it was an elderly person posing the question, she asserted that she might elaborate further and explain that she was born in Ottawa, but that her heritage was Ethiopian, likely out of a sense of cultural respect for her elders.1566 Much like the other Habesha youth, Hannah’s identity too was indeed political and contextual.

Tsegereda Yohannes also spoke of how people ask her where her where she is from all the time.1567 She argued that people even try to get at the question in a round-about way by asking: “where’s my residence?”1568 She had reiterated several times the primacy of her identification as Eritrean, and an Eritrean-Canadian. However, other tensions are evidenced, as youth contemplated their relationships to their heritage. Tsegereda Yohannes captured this tension in her assessment of connections forged by her generation. She argued that the current generation does not have the same level of “connection to home or the community.”1569 Whilst it was clear that the world purviews in which she and the others operated was influenced by history, culture, geography and

1564 Author Interview with Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
1565 Ibid.
1566 Ibid.
1567 Author interview with Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.
1568 Ibid.
1569 Ibid.
community, she also understood there to be distinctions between the practices of her peers and their predecessors. She proclaimed: “we are more Canadianized, we have a different definition of family – parents, obligations.” 1570

In contrast, due to his mannerisms, mixed-race heritage, and engagement in “Canadian” recreational activities – George Lencho asserted that he was simply presumed to be black. 1571 Instead, he grappled with elements of his identity intrinsically. When in conversation about his connection to his heritage through food, George expressed that in spite of living in the Toronto region, Ethiopian restaurants were not that accessible to him; particularly because his White Anglo-Canadian wife was “just not that into it”. 1572 When talking about the types of foods that he did eat, George spoke of wraps as the most ethnically diverse food that he frequently consumed. Given his mixed heritage, his grandmother’s saurkrout and snitzel were also preeminent within his consciousness. He spoke of the last time that he had Ethiopian food, which was at his wedding. This recollection triggered a reminiscence of how much he actually loved the food. He stated that Ethiopian food was his biggest connection to his identity and heritage, but that his “wife is a typical Canadian woman, who loves her bacon”. 1573

Reconnection to his roots through the communal activity of eating Ethiopian food was on top of George’s mind when we concluded our discussion. He left the conversation underscoring the importance of exploring the “blood which ran through his veins”. 1574

Similarly, a discussion on the availability of fresh Injera in London, Ontario with Selam Meles veered into a discussion about cooking Ethiopian food and instilling a sense of history and culture to the next generation. Selam declared: “I want to instill a sense of culture...cultural identity in my children...even in myself....I am in my 20’s”, she confessed. The maintenance of tangible ties to an Ethiopian heritage was significant to Selam, and it was expressed through her desire to learn how to cook Ethiopian food:

1570 Ibid.
1571 Author Interview with George Lencho, August 26, 2014.
1572 Ibid.
1573 Ibid.
1574 Ibid.
“...I am really proud of my Ethiopian heritage, like I love that I am Ethiopian, and I feel like it's a great thing - when I have kids. I don't want them to be completely out of touch with it and I fear that that could happen, because like I have nothing to offer them. I feel like I have the language, unless my husband is Ethiopian and he somehow knows the language it's not going to be communicated throughout the house in terms of culture it will only dissipate...”

Subsequently, the chapter also overviewed the topographies of settlement and expressions of identity that the youth engaged with. It was demonstrated throughout this chapter that there are similarities in what it means to be Habesha throughout the Canadian diaspora. Yet, it was also evidenced that there are noteworthy distinctions to be made about the access that youth have to elements of their ancestral heritage based on both their individual life trajectories (micro-histories) and the metropole or locale in which they resided. Discussions with all of the youth featured in this chapter, reinforced why Toronto has been proclaimed by members of the community as a site where Ethiopians from the broader Diaspora can “congregate once more in happiness”. A truly multicultural mosaic, some Ethiopian-Canadians argue that “what makes Toronto unique and amazing is that there is a corner for everybody”. Consequently, some youth of the Diaspora have embraced Toronto as their own “Little Ethiopia”.

The ubiquity of Ethiopian food as the most prevalent contemporary identifier was uncontested. During her interview in 2014, Selam noted that “in recent times”, depending on the neighborhood, most of the people that she saw in the Ethiopian restaurants in Toronto were non-Ethiopian patrons. “If it's probably in a given neighborhood that is probably Ethiopian people, then it tends to be Ethiopians intermingling with other Ethiopians”, Selam proclaimed. And, yet “if it's in another neighborhood”, she argued that most of the patrons would be non-Ethiopians. The Ethiopian food trend has piqued;

1575 Author Interview with Selam Meles, February 14, 2014.
1578 Ibid.
1579 Ibid.
so-much-so that she declared: “you have my friends being like four of us are going to an Ethiopian restaurant do want to come?” A question to which she expressed her answer is almost always no. She noted “number one I have it at home, and so why would I pay for it? And, number two I genuinely like it better at home”.\textsuperscript{1580}

\textsuperscript{1580}Ibid.
CONCLUSION

“Dear Friend, of course I remember. Wasn’t it just yesterday? Yesterday, but a century ago. In this city, but on a planet that is now far away. How all these things get confused: times, places, the world broken in pieces, not to be glued back together again. Only the memory – that’s the only remnant of life.”

T.K.B

More than three decades after their dispersing into a global Diaspora, Ethiopians actively employ historical continuities in their self-representations. Often pitted against hegemonic perceptions of Africans proliferating within mainstream consciousness, Ethiopians and other interrelated East Africans perpetually reference, invoke, revere, contest, and engage with representative elements of their cultural, political and historical identity. In stark contrast to contemporaneous prevalent mainstream perceptions of Ethiopia and other Africans as impoverished refugees and displaced persons, self-representations within the Diaspora are instead hinged upon the evocation of over 3000 years’ worth of historic symbols and markers of identity, ranging from the classic Kingdom of Aksum (100-700 A.D) to the once renowned reign of the Emperor Haile Selassie (1932-1974). This phenomenon is reflective of Edward Said’s contention that narrative is the means by which people “assert their own identity” and in turn legitimize the “existence of their own history”.

Yet, from a mainstream Canadian perspective, Ethiopian and other African identities are presently unknown, misunderstood or dehistoricized exemplars of the “unremembered colonial heritage” that Kadiatu Kanneh refers to in her works. This dissertation instead provides a disremembered foundational knowledge for a balanced interpretation of a historical legacy which is invoked by the Ethiopian and interrelated Horn-of-Africa Diaspora today. The symbols and representations of Ethiopian history

---

1582 Said, Culture and Imperialism, xii.
cited by members of the Diaspora in the present, were once prevalent identifiers of the Horn-of-Africa nation worldwide. An earlier awareness of Ethiopia’s historical visibility precipitated an examination of Canadian archives and other forms of social repositories to historically locate the roots and prevalence of steadfast forms of contemporary self-representations in Canadian history.

Utilizing a mixed methods approach, this dissertation examined both oral histories and Canadian archival records to discern the roots of a persistent Ethiopian identity premised on pride in a longstanding legacy of historical visibility. An examination of the Canadian archives demonstrated that prominent contemporary signifiers of Ethiopian history and identity were also once prevalent within the Canadian vernacular due to their global historic and geopolitical value which subsequently augmented their cultural cachet. The ensuing disappearance of this historical awareness from mainstream consciousness of Canadians is also identified and historicized.

Through the use of oral histories as illustrative case studies, and an accompanying examination of ethno-cultural publications, commemorative events, and the names of public establishments as signifiers, this dissertation underscored the ways in which interplays in history, politics and culture continue to shape self-representations and perceptions of Ethiopian and other interrelated Horn-of-Africa identities in Canada. Collectively, both the oral histories and archival records examined for this project are illustrative of the existence of forgotten “histories” which prevailed throughout the twentieth century. These histories are presently invoked in narratives, and when examining the edifices of ethnic businesses and publications as forms of self-representation. Knowledge of the marginalized/diminished histories is integral to understanding the engagements of peoples of the Ethiopian and East African diaspora who remember, revere, or contest elements of this historical record and mainstream consciousness of it.

At its core, this project sought to find the answers to the following interrelated questions: What narrative do self-representations by Ethiopians tell? How is this narrative different than the one that is perceived by mainstream Canadian society? Who are the Ethiopians in Canada? What does the existing scholarship say about them and why? Why
and how do Ethiopians and other interrelated members of the diaspora continue to perpetually invoke their historical legacy after migration and settlement abroad? Is there a correlation between Ethiopian migration and prevalent mainstream representations of Ethiopians and other Africans in Canada? Is there evidence of the claim to Ethiopian historical visibility and pertinence hidden within Canadian archives and other repositories of social memory?

Reflections on lived experiences as an Ethiopian-Canadian scholar provided the impetus for pursuing a discovery focused research project on the history of Ethiopians and the inter-related Diaspora in Canada. The sentiments of a generation of Ethiopians who lived through the rupture of a 3000 year historical legacy in 1974 are encapsulated in the opening quote from T.K.B, an anonymous informant from the deposed and dismantled Emperor Haile Selassie’s ruling cabinet. As a scholar who was born and raised in Ethiopia after the rupture, elements of T.K.B’s assertions were evidenced in the oral histories and epistemological frameworks that I was exposed to throughout my childhood. At the micro level, Ethiopians that I knew, lived, and breathed history. The importance of knowing one’s history was signified by several acts. The first of which was demonstrated by the ability to recite the names of kin several generations back. This was no small feat given the fact that children took on the given (first) name of their fathers as their surname. The cultural significance given to one’s history was demonstrated by the importance of knowing one’s lineage and paying close attention to the orators who shared narratives about the past, typically the elders/grandparents. By the time I was seven years old, I could proudly recite the names of elders seven

\[1584\] The concept of “discovery focused research” was inspired by Roni Berger’s Immigrant Women Tell Their Stories, New York: The Haworth Press, 2004.


generations back. More than two decades after my family left Ethiopia, I re-experienced the significance of this phenomenon when I started conducting oral history interviews with members of the Diaspora to whom I did not have any previous connections. Commonalities and particularities to how history was/is enacted, communicated and transmitted, were evidenced and affirmed by the discovery of key pieces of scholarship.\textsuperscript{1588}

This research project elicits de facto questions about the knower/knowledge relationship. The relationship of what is known to the author and the intellectual practices, ideologies and languages which shaped the type of historical narrative produced are evidenced throughout the thesis.\textsuperscript{1589} Like many hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians, my family left Ethiopia shortly after the coup d'état attempt against Mengistu Haile Mariam’s Derg which took place on 16 May 1989. At the macro level, I was raised and schooled in the period of the Derg (1974-1991). Growing up in Ethiopia, history was also imbibed in the ubiquitous use of the Anbessa (The Conquering Lion of Judah), Lalibela, Axum, the Blue Nile and Dinkenesh (Lucy) as primary signifiers. As children, we were very cognizant of what topics we could and could not talk about openly. We distinguished very early on what sorts of topics our elders spoke of in coded language, and what sorts of topics they debated openly and heatedly.


History was and is still manifest in the evocations of a glorious past (Adowa), in the frequent rebukes of colonialism and the assertion that “we were never colonized as a nation”. Relations that were established across ethnic and religious lines were also premised on conceptualizations of a shared history. History was also inherent in the hushed utterances of injustices, fear of reprisals and in any ideals espoused about a path forward for a nation that was in turmoil during the civil wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Most importantly, history was, and still is, both revered and contested all in one breath. All of these early experiences amounted to forms of tacit knowledge. The past experiences of the researcher/author allowed for more in-depth engagement in the research process by the participants and enhanced the role the historian in providing insights and analysis of the findings.

Influenced by scholarship on migration and Diasporas in Canada, the origins of this research project were inspired by works such as: Not Born A Refugee Woman: Contesting Identities, Rethinking Practices (2008), The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging (2005) and Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in the African Diaspora (2001). Given the author/subject relationship, the pursuit of an oral history project was rooted in the principle that “it is axiomatic that historians should use all available sources”. The discovery focused nature of the project, the research recruitment process and the findings dictated the nature of the final output.

The research process was how the ideation of exploring the history of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identities through historical intersects was

---


developed. In her valuable chapter “Politics and The Writing of History” (1998) Himani Bannerji addresses the epistemological challenges and the pedagogical responsibilities to the writing of history. Bannerji argues that “claiming to re-present someone, some moment in time, some situation” through recording, reporting, or narration is an act of “representation” which “implies both epistemological and (re)constructive responsibilities”. In alignment with Bannerji’s assertions, the process of researching and writing this thesis was long, reflexive, and imbied with epistemological, ideological and aesthetic concerns which underscored the significance of this project as one of “re-presentation” in a political matter. The data analysis and interpretation process was influenced by the tenet held by oral historians that “lives are lived at the intersection of individual and social dynamics.” This thesis project began to take its final form after several previously unidentified/unpublished contemporary and long-rooted connections to Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canadian history were established.

Studies of migrations and identity often necessitate the use of frameworks that are intersectional. Applying a macro, meso and micro structural analysis offers a framework whereby a more comprehensive history could be written. It was determined early in the research process that Ethiopians and other interrelated East-Africans employ appeals to the past in order to make representative statements about their present historical, political and socio-cultural circumstances. This was evidenced in individual historical narratives, ethno-religious publications, cultural festivities and the prevalence of politically selective business names. Ethiopians evoke the famous Battle of Adowa (1896) and underscore the political implications and cultural significance of an Ethiopian

1593 Bannerji, 287-301.
1594 Ibid., 287.* Bannerji’s insights have shaped my pedagogical outlook since I was first introduced to her work in a Women’s History Course during the completion of my Master of History with a Collaborative Specialization in Migration and Ethnic Relations in 2008-9.
1595 Ibid., 288.
army emerging victorious over a predominantly white Italian army, from over a century ago. Invocation of Ethiopia’s status as an un-colonized African nation ruled by globally revered monarchs was also frequent. This observation led to a search for modalities to interpret the meanings of how and why this was the case. In response to this phenomenon, this research sought to ascertain the nexus between personal, cultural and national histories when reading contemporary expressions of Ethiopian identities.

Examinations of present-day representations and perceptions of Ethiopian and inter-related identities led to an exploration of historical instances of the same. Said’s exploration of overlapping territories and intertwined histories in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) was the most useful ideological framework for initiating and navigating this discursive historical study of the representations and perceptions of an African identity. During this long period of history examined in this study, interplays in history, politics and culture facilitated the prevalence and the permeation of stalwart portrayals of Ethiopia and Ethiopians within the Western, and by extension of Canadian consciousness. It was in light of the East African nation’s geopolitical and historical significance for more than half of the twentieth century, that the preceding and since diminished levels of political and cultural cachet are often referenced, revered or contested by Ethiopians and other inter-related East-Africans living within the context of a diaspora in Canada today. Consequently, this dissertation proved that Ethiopians were present in the Canadian imagination, long before the first Ethiopian migrant was recorded in the immigration statistics of the nation.

Through an intersecting framework of Canadian and Ethiopian history, this dissertation has located when and how Ethiopians first penetrated the Canadian imagination. In conjunction with existing scholarship and paradigms of Ethiopian studies globally (classical, literary, political and religious), this dissertation historicized the Canadian manifestations of various prevalent signifiers and perceptions of Ethiopian identities throughout the twentieth-century.1598 W.B. Carnochan wrote that the 1981

---

baptism of reggae legend Bob Marley in an Ethiopian Orthodox church was the pinnacle moment of “a thousand years of Western enchantment with the idea of Ethiopia”.1599 By the late nineteenth century, for cultural and political reasons Ethiopia had acquired an unparalleled level of je ne sais quoi within the collective western imagination.1600 The cultural fascination with Ethiopia endured well into the late twentieth-century, globally. The enigmatic appeal and subsequent cultural cachet of “Ethiopia” in Golden Legends: Images of Abyssinia from Samuel Johnson to Bob Marley (2008) is salient and evidenced within Canadian repositories of social memory. What Carnochan chronicled were literary elements of the “Romance of Ethiopia”, that Woubshet et al also articulate as steadfast throughout the western world pre-1974.1601 Situating and deconstructing this romance within an intersecting Ethiopian-Canadian historical framework was of importance to understanding the concept of a diminishing trajectory in representations which underpinned this dissertation project.

Collectively the scholarly literature available on Ethiopian and other interrelated immigrants to Canada is a small but informative body of work. To date the most comprehensive scholarship available on the nature of the various Horn-of-African identities in Canada has been done by Sociologist John Sorensen.1602 Sorensen’s body of work


1600 This ephemeral obsession with Abyssinia is encapsulated on the cover of W.B. Carnochan’s monograph where it is written: “the principal subject of this book is the allure of the exotic, as represented by Abyssinia, to the British imagination”. Book Jacket of “Golden Legends: Images of Abyssinia from Samuel Johnson to Bob Marley, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). Based on readings of various primary sources, this dissertation illustrates that the allure extended beyond the British imagination.


work on the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora is integral to interpreting contemporary iterations and contestations of Ethiopian history. More recent scholarship by Mary Goitom has offered a more nuanced and generational perspective of Ethiopian/ Habesha presence in Canada. In dialogue with both Goitom and Sorensen’s individual and collaborative works, this research project contributes significantly to understandings of Ethiopian and other interrelated African presence in Canadian history and society.

As an exclusively Canadian case study, this dissertation demonstrated the ways in which Ethiopia and representative symbols of Ethiopian history and identity were highly visible within an interpretive framework of both world and Canadian history. Along with the assertion that cultural memory is embodied within the “rhetoric of politicians, editorials, opinion makers and those attempting to mobilize public opinion in one direction or another”, this research project explored Canadian repositories to pinpoint the visibility of Ethiopians in the historical memory and record. Through an examination

---


of Canadian and Ethiopian government documents, correspondences, newspaper articles, editorials, travel books, pamphlets, photographs, videos, documentaries, memoirs, and subject matter expert testimonials on Ethiopia and Ethiopians, this dissertation corroborated and historicized contemporary references made by Ethiopians to the existence of a once venerated Ethiopian identity. This dissertation contributes to the existing scholarship on Ethiopians in Canada by situating the Diaspora within an intersecting Canadian and Ethiopian historical framework.

Through four hallmark intersections, this dissertation highlighted the ways in which different levels and actors of Canadian society coalesced to perpetuate distinct historical representations about Ethiopians in Canada. During each period of historical intersection examined throughout this dissertation, Ethiopia and Ethiopians were the focus of Canadian attention through a variety of socially pervasive mediums. Rooted in a preceding history, there are distinguishing elements to what it meant to be an Ethiopian in the first two intersections of history examined (1934-36 and 1967). There was a rupture in this long rooted and steadfast representation in 1974, but the effects gained widespread traction after the onset of the epic period of Ethiopian/African famine in the 1984-88 period. This third intersection in Ethiopian and Canadian history forever changed the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity. The increased migration and settlement of Ethiopians in Canada after 1984 facilitated the prevalence of self-representation by Ethiopians and other inter-related identities in Canada. The fourth historical intersection examined overlapped with the third. Divided into two thematic and exploratory chapters, this final intersection broadly examined the interactive effects of history, migration, geography, and identity formation.

In order to understand the trajectory and relevancy of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada during each intersection, it was imperative to underscore the essential role of “history” and religion in Canadian political and popular culture for the first half of the twentieth century. During this long durée, both history and religion were prevalent utilitarian paradigms for knowing and interpreting the world. The prominence of history as an allegory for interpreting “the world” is evidenced in the number of times that politicians and members of the Canadian press, as well as the
general Canadian public, referenced historical events as anchoring points when rendering their own personal interpretations of the significance of those events. Ethiopia’s symbolism to each period is intertwined into individual reminiscences of the gravitas of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, nostalgia for Expo 67, and expressions of pride in the splendor of Canadian humane internationalism during the Ethiopian/African famine of 1984-88. The prevalence of master narratives as utilitarian frameworks for knowing and interpreting the world, privileged the plight of the nation during the 1934-36 period, Expo 67 and again in the 1984-88 period. Ethiopia’s symbolic relationship to the West, gave the African nation historic and contemporaneous political cachet. This was true in 1934-36, but also again in 1967, and to some degree in the 1984-88 period.

Canadian memories of Ethiopia and Ethiopians were of the utmost importance to this study of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity. Throughout each of the sustained periods of representation examined throughout this dissertation, it was in congruence with Canadian interests that symbols of Ethiopian history and identity became ubiquitous. The mystique of Ethiopia transcended beyond the literary imagination and became imbibed in the cultural and political vernacular of observers from the West. Evidence of the political, historical and cultural resonance of Ethiopia and Ethiopians during each period of intersection examined within the purview of this dissertation is found imbedded within the editorial reflections and memoirs of Canadian politicians, journalists, authors and other celebrities, ordinary citizens, or buried within the footnotes of historians’ works decades after each intersection examined has passed. The sustained fascination with the East-African empire fueled it’s often complex and unique position within the Western imagination for a long period of time.

An integration and examination of the recollections of Canadians from each of the intersections examined in this thesis. The memories of Canadians also illustrate the

---

underlying concept of a declining trajectory in representations and perceptions of Ethiopians throughout the twentieth century. The representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians examined in Chapter 3 (the 1984-88) period signifies a rupture from steadfast representations of the East African nation which endured in the period between 1867-1974. The shift in representation of Ethiopia and Ethiopians between 1967 and 1984 signifies a declining trajectory in mainstream Canadian representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians within the Canadian milieu. Consequently, this research reveals the ways in which Ethiopian history and culture was revered en masse, until Ethiopians migrated to and settled in Canada. Historical, political, and cultural associations between the two nations were definitively changed by Ethiopia’s political transition from an ancient, Christian, hegemonic monarchy to a Marxist Communist regime from 1974-1991.

As demonstrated in Chapter one, Canadian engagement with the Italo-Ethiopian affair facilitated a space in the Canadian cultural and political milieu for the permeation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian culture and history. Ethiopia was of Canadian concern in the first intersection of histories examined in the early twentieth century, because the Abyssinian Crisis and subsequent Italo-Ethiopian War (1934-36) had the potential to pull Canada into a “foreign war”. For seven consecutive months (December 1934 to January 1936), the Italo-Ethiopian affair and Ethiopia were the topic du jour in Canada. From the press to the pulpit, the information disseminated about Ethiopia and Ethiopians was prolific and entrenched into the vernacular. Ethiopia was integrated into the political discourses and engagements of the ordinary Canadian citizens in the 1934-36 period, because the geo-political affair had real implications to them. This chapter made significant contributions to the existing historiography by showcasing the extent to which Canadians were engaged with the international geo-political affair, outside of the infamous Riddell proposal.

Contrary to earlier historiographical assertions, the chapter on Canadian engagement with the Italo-Ethiopian crisis of 1934-36 demonstrated that it was not just The Winnipeg Free Press, The Canadian Forum, and the French-speaking press in
Quebec that were engaged in debates about the international conflict. Instead, Canadian conversations and engagement related to the Italo-Ethiopian affair were far more copious. Publishers and producers met the demand for “the latest news” on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict by trying to provide the most insightful, intriguing, or sensational coverage related to the topic, whether it was freshly written or reprinted from another source. Subsequently, in the 1934-36 period, the name Ethiopia became integrated into the vernacular of ordinary Canadians interested in learning more about a foreign war that had imminent implications to their own livelihoods. This was how Ethiopia became of Canadian concern and perceptions and representations of Ethiopians flourished in Canada during the early twentieth century.

The immorality of the Italo-Ethiopian situation elicited widespread reflection and raised questions about Canadian values and principles, particularly on matters of foreign policy and race. The prolific nature of the affair shaped representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians to many Canadians for decades to come. During the 1934-36 period, the Italo-Ethiopian conflict provoked widespread debates on the meaning of collective security, the efficacy of the League of Nations as an instrument of maintaining peace, and the true costs to Canada and Canadians taking sides in “foreign” conflicts. As the so-called “test-case”, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis crushed any hope in the period that peace and security could be achieved through collective action by the League of Nations. To Lester B. Pearson and many others of his generation, the Italo-Ethiopian affair was the most important international crisis between the wars. Ethiopian history acquired significant political and cultural cachet in 1935. Second to Ethiopian victory in the battle of Adowa, the fact that the Italo-Ethiopian war was a precursor to the Second World War catapulted both the status of the Emperor and his East African nation into the status of signposts of world history in the twentieth century.

1607 Bothwell et al., argue that during the 1930s it was primarily the Winnipeg Free Press and Canadian Forum that were engaging with international news, in Canada, 1900-1945, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987): 297.
As overviewed in the chapter, Ethiopia’s pertinent location at the precipice of cultural and political paradigms *du jour* preceded the 1934-6 period. Interchangeable and symbolic references to the East African nation were sustained for well-over two centuries preceding the Italo-Ethiopian affair of the early twentieth-century. When Ethiopia was admitted into the League of Nations in October of 1923, the significance of the admittance reverberated throughout the Black world. The post-Adowa representation of a strong and independent Ethiopia added to the steadfast allure of the kingdom worldwide. By 1935, Ethiopians had successfully disseminated and interpolated their self-representations as a biblical nation, and “the chosen people of God descended from the world’s most powerful ancient ruler and the world’s most famous ancient queen” across the globe.  

Canadians narrated Ethiopia as an “origins story”, premised on shared kinship as “Christian nations”. Ethiopia’s geo-political relevance in the 1934-36 period allowed the East African nation’s historical and political symbolism to penetrate deep into the collective cultural imagination of the West. Ethiopian victory at Adowa (1896) and the country’s status as the sole uncolonized nation within the African continent, coupled with the East African nation’s membership to the League of Nations enhanced the country’s political, cultural and historical symbolism during the period in question.

In the 1935-36 period, rhetorical solidarity with Ethiopia influenced Black political culture across the globe. During this period, Black peoples were intently watching what was happening in Ethiopia and conversing about it. Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was perceived and narrated as a crisis for the Black World.  

The politics of power within a geo-political paradigm played out within localized contexts. As demonstrated in the chapter analysis, social mobilization and advocacy for the Ethiopian cause in Canada also occurred across color lines. And while the fervor of the period and the growing momentum of race-based support from the Canadian public is muted within most official government records, it is displayed in several newspaper articles from the

---

period. News reports overviewed in the chapter hint at the prevalence of support for Ethiopia by the Black community in Canada. The race-based solidarity movement uncovered in Canada during this period warrants further examination. Taking cue from recent publications, further archival research is required to properly understand and contextualize the prevalence and significance of Black support for the Ethiopian cause in Canada during this period.

Canadians living or working in Ethiopia during the 1930s were important sources of information during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and played a critical role in forging any form of Ethio-Canadian relations which existed during the 1930s. Subject matter experts on the East African country were sought out for public speaking engagements to educate the Canadian public about the history of the land and its peoples and render their opinion and perspectives of the ongoing geopolitical crisis. Most Canadians living in Ethiopia during this period were Evangelical missionaries. The longstanding relationship of Canadian missionaries (particularly those from the Sudan Interior Mission) to the Ethiopian royal family and the East- African region played a significant role in the types of representations and discourses generated and perpetuated during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict of the 1930s. Yet Canadian presence in Ethiopia during this period is an unexplored phenomenon in Canadian history. This dissertation provides a foundation for further research.

During the peak of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, missionaries in the field served as subject matter experts who prolifically provided their respective religious organizations, the Canadian government, and the general Canadian public with first-hand insight into the situation on the ground. Between the months of July 1935-December 1936, missionaries were frequently quoted in the press and advertised as public speakers by various congregations. The close relationships of many of these subject matter experts to Ethiopia, and the ruling classes, particularly the Emperor, shed light on the variant forms of bi-lateral relations which existed between Ethiopia and Canada during this period. Missionaries also served as medical practitioners, educators and proponents of peace and
support for the Emperor Haile Selassie.\textsuperscript{1610} Further research into the role of Canadian missionaries in Ethiopia will elucidate more about the longstanding meso and micro structural ties between the two nations.

Ultimately, both the Canadian government’s refusal and widespread public reluctance to be engaged in a foreign war did not detract from Canadian interest in remaining informed about the Ethiopian situation and consuming information about the country and its peoples. The proliferation of Canadian interest in Ethiopia hinged upon intersections in political events (domestic & international), the leisure and intellectual activities of the middle-class and the engagement of the media. The political cachet of the conflict between Italy and Ethiopia translated into cultural confluence during this particular period. The result was that citizens across the Canadian socio-scape engaged in several forms of discourses pertaining to Ethiopia and Ethiopians in the press, on the podiums of Sunday services, private clubs and conventions (the Trades Congress) or the local university and high-school debate teams.

Collectively, the wide array of human interest, political, economic and visual archival materials available with regards to the Abyssinian Conflict or Wal-Wal incident of 1934-35 and the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-36 illustrate the ways in which macro, meso and micro societal forces and agents coalesced in a fluid manner to generate and perpetuate particular types of narratives and counter narratives about Ethiopia and Ethiopians within Canadian society. The dialogues generated during the peak of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in 1935, informed and shaped the trajectory of the representations and perceptions of Ethiopia for more than half of the twentieth century. Reminisces and gestures made by key political actors of the period such as Pearson and Riddell, long after the prevalence of the geo-political affair speak to the romantic stronghold that Ethiopia

\textsuperscript{1610} “Emperor Asks Help From Toronto Man, Also Asks That Dr. Lambie Seek Red Cross Aid Here”, The Toronto Star, August 30, 1935. “Asks Canada Help Ethiopia With $10,000 For Hospitals: Emperor Haile Selassie Cables SOS to Toronto Mission Head, Need is Grievous”, Toronto Daily Star, September 26, 1935. “To Help Ethiopians: Woman Missionary Plans Own Medical Unit”, The Gazette, Montreal, October 29, 1935, 8; and Medical Missionary To go To Abyssinia”, The Globe, December 4, 1931: 12. Announcement of Rev. E. Ralph Hooper B.A M.D - - surgeon and graduate of University of Toronto leaving for Ethiopia.
and Ethiopians had on Canadians for much of the twentieth century. Consequently, the Abyssinian Crisis and the ensuing Italo-Ethiopian war served as catalysts for the mass permeation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian identity throughout Canada during this early period of the twentieth century.

To Canadians of this era, Ethiopia and Ethiopians were positioned at the crossroads of antiquity and modernity; barbarity and civility. The liminal position of the East-African kingdom within several paradigms of knowing and interpreting the world, fostered a long-term connection to the nation and its peoples. The prevalent tropes from this period of an ancient Biblical Christian civilization, and the venerated representations of fierce loyal warriors and Emperors who had a successful track record in challenging white colonial conquest and authority in their region prevailed, until 1974.\textsuperscript{1611} Subsequently, these characterizations of the land and its peoples framed a definitive and distinguished narrative on Ethiopia from Adowa to the Emperor Haile Selassie. These representations proliferated in Canada and the rest of the world, shaping both self-representations and perceptions of the land and its peoples for more than half of the twentieth century.

The second major intersection in Canadian-Ethiopian history examined in this thesis clearly demonstrates the stronghold of representations of Ethiopia and Ethiopians which flourished during the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935-36. Ethiopian presence at Expo 67 marks the zenith of mass awareness of hallmark Ethiopian identifiers such as: the Emperor, Axum and Adowa. The pavilion paid homage to the Emperor’s title as the Lion of Judah and the country’s 3000-year dynastic legacy. By outlining the tenets of the exhibition and the politics of Ethiopian participation, this chapter demonstrated the confluence of political and cultural objectives (both Canadian and Ethiopian) in facilitating the proliferation of steadfast narratives of Ethiopian identity. How Ethiopian

participation was solicited and secured for Expo 67, coupled with the rhetoric surrounding the official nine-day state visit of the Emperor illustrated the international political and cultural relevancy of the East African nation during this period. There was continuity in the ways in which both the Emperor and his nation were narrated during this period.

At this time, the Ethiopian monarchy was still presented and perceived as the most ubiquitous and influential marker of Ethiopian identity and nationhood. The legacy of the Ethiopian monarchy from the late nineteenth-century continued to permeate discourses on both the Emperor and his country throughout the 1960s. The Emperor was also widely recognized as “the 255th descendant of King Solomon and Queen Sheba”. The Canadian press and public reinforced the lineage from which he came, due to required convention by the Ethiopians. Representations of Ethiopian modernism at the world-class exhibition were illustrative of the ways in which the nation and its people had been imagined and narrated, both visually and textually, since the late nineteenth-century: ancient, Christian, unconquered, and politically and culturally pertinent.

The tenacity of the international political and cultural cachet of the East-African nation in this particular historical period was thus evidenced at the nexus of Canadian political and cultural objectives for the exhibition, and Ethiopian interests in participating. This world class exhibition was the subject of mass international and national fanfare, making it an ideal medium for the study of Ethiopian representations and perceptions during this period. Canada’s marquis celebration of Confederation was also an opportunity for Canada’s demonstration of the country’s international ambitions. Ethiopian political, historical and cultural affluence during this period is evidenced at the intersection of Canadian political and cultural interests in hosting the exhibition, and Ethiopian political interests in participating. In addition to his historic symbolism, the


narrative surrounding the Emperor’s visit is also indicative of his fit within Canada’s ambitions in a geo-political paradigm. Hence, in 1967, neither Emperor nor nation were narrated purely as vestiges of the past. Instead, the Emperor and his nation were represented as living testimonials to the continued existence of the past, within the present. At Expo, Ethiopians projected to the world the narrative of their nation that wished to convey. Interplays are evidenced in the ways that Ethiopians represented themselves, and the ways that Canadians embraced these representations in 1967. There were continuities from a long-rooted past, inherent in both self-representations by the Ethiopians, and perceptions of Ethiopians by Canadians. In 1967, Ethiopia was still culturally positioned at the cross-roads of modernity and antiquity.

A living embodiment of the historical legacy that Governor Michener spoke of, Emperor Haile Selassie was integral to both the construction and permeation of an Ethiopian identity during the period of Expo 67. To the world, the Emperor represented the familiar legacy of an empire at the crossroads of history and civilization; a narrative which flourished in the 1930s. In the aftermath of the Italo-Ethiopian war and occupation, Haile Selassie was still the personification of his nation, and the embodiment of the character and dignity of his peoples. The Emperor had so closely branded himself with Ethiopia, that the man and the state were indistinguishable. 1614 Ethiopia had acquired a level of unprecedented world prestige from her foils in the 1930s. And by 1967, Haile Selassie had brokered that political clout and cachet to both envision and create for himself a higher place at the table of world leaders. During a previous trip in 1963, then also Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson had welcomed the Emperor, “not only as Emperor of Ethiopia, but also as the embodiment of the movement of African co-operation through independent states which is sweeping across that continent.” 1615 Adding to his accolades, in 1963 Haile Selassie had also spearheaded the founding of Organization for African

1614 Alexander Farrell, “Leaders Value Selassie Role”.
1615 "The Following is the Text of a Message of Welcome to his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, from the Prime Minister,” Press Release from the Office of the Prime Minister, October 7, 1963. L.B Pearson Papers: Speeches, Box No. MG 26 N, Vol.26, LAC.
Unity (OAU), earning him the title of the “African stabilizer”. Consequently, he was emblematically referenced as a “unique African leader”.

The 1960s was the pinnacle of both the decolonization and the Black Power movements, globally. Haile Selassie was an influencer in these spaces, and as a result, Ethiopian presence at Expo 67 had a lot of international political and cultural cachet. The integral role of Ethiopia on the African continent, and the Emperor in African and other global affairs afforded both Ethiopia and the Emperor special honors. It was underscored that most other African leaders of the period valued the Emperor. On a continent oriented to worship “cults of personalities” the Emperor was declared to be the champion in all categories. His historical, political and cultural accolades are evidenced in his Canadian trip of 1967. A strong proponent of personal diplomacy, in 1967 the Emperor was esteemed for his long experience in dealing with governments all over the world. He was widely regarded as “a badly needed symbol of stability” on the African continent. His symbolism as a proponent of “stability”, and the respect that he garnered from Western nations was narrated as the ideal situation that “his lesser colleagues” strove to attain. In the mid-1960s, the prevailing sentiment in North America was that few African leaders could touch Haile Selassie when it came to running a nation.

Emperor Haile Selassie’s state visit in 1967 was his third, and most prominent visit to Canada. By 1967, the political and historical gravitas of the Abyssinian Crisis (1934-35), the second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-36), the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-41), along with his infamous appeal to the League of Nations in June of 1936, had all carved him a place as one of the most distinguished political and historical figures of

1617 Ibid.
1619 Shannon, “Haile Selassie Winning New Ethiopian Battles”.
1620 Farrell, “Leaders Value Selassie Role”.
1621 Ibid.
1622 Shannon, “Haile Selassie Winning New Ethiopian Battles”.
1623 Ibid.
the twentieth-century. The Ethiopian Emperor came to Canada to preside over events scheduled for Ethiopia’s National Day (May 2) at Expo 67 in Montreal. He was one of the most memorable heads of state at Expo. A revered statesman during this period, the symbolism of the Ethiopian Emperor to the world is echoed by the sentiments of the Canadian politicians and members of the public who welcomed him. The main themes of the state visits 1967 were aligned with Canada’s geo-political ambitions during the period. Canadians fostered relations with Ethiopia and other African nations in this period, seeking alignment in upholding world security through the United Nations and other agencies, and bolstering trade and economic co-operation with both the La Francophonie and Commonwealth nations. Even though Ethiopia did not fit tidily into either the La Francophonie or Commonwealth, Canadians were eager to continue good relations because the country played an integral role in both continental and international politics.

From recruitment to implementation, African participation in Expo 67 reflected Canadian internationalism objectives as well as domestic political considerations. The Canadian objective to include as many countries as possible of the world, particularly the recently decolonized African countries was reflective of the political and cultural ethos of the time; and attested to the historical and political relevance of Ethiopia to Canada and Canadians in 1967. The anti-colonial fervor of Expo was embodied through the rhetoric of the politicians who welcomed the Emperor and the Emperor’s decision to take the podium afforded to him during his stay to address contemporaneous matters of racialism on his continent.

1624 Attesting to his unprecedented level of fame and popularity arising from the 1930s, Haile Selassie was featured on the coveted cover of Time Magazine twice within the same decade. Once during his coronation in 1930, and the other as “Man of the Year” in January of 1936.
Canada’s diplomatic relations with Ethiopia during this period were notably predicated on pre-existing friendships between individual Canadians and the Ethiopian government, including the Emperor. Missionaries, businessmen and educators had established connections to the East-African state un-aided and un-hampered by the Federal government from the late 1920s onward. Canadian educators were integral to the development of the Ethiopian educational system, including the formation of Addis Ababa University.1627 This longstanding “friendship” also promoted favorable reviews of the Empire and its peoples in 1967. The Emperor’s state visit in 1967 facilitated talks of how Canada might assist the East African nation to develop its natural resources, an area almost exclusively financed by Americans and the World Bank at that time.1628 Pre-existing friendship paved the path for Ethiopia to seek more funds from Canada for further development in the key areas of education and other forms of technical assistance.1629

Yet, discourses on the symbolism of Ethiopia and the Emperor during Expo 67 are also illustrative of the waning stronghold of the “master narrative”, and the political implications of master narratives on a post World War II world order entrenched in ideological wars like the one in Vietnam. The Emperor’s cultural relevancy was premised on both his political and historical cachet. , Shifts in the domestic political culture of the two nations (Canada and Ethiopia) after Expo 67, coupled with shifts in relations between the two nations, marred the existence of previously pervasive venerable representations of the Ethiopian Emperor. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, observers of Ethiopian politics championed the precepts of change that were promised by the tenets of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. Thereafter, stalwart representations and perceptions of the monarch as “the African stabilizer” and Ethiopia as a model of African stability took a damning linguistic turn. Soon after Expo 67, the once world beloved “benevolent ruler” would be labelled a dictator. The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 ushered in a new era of

1627 “IV. Canadian-Ethiopian Relations”, Visit of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia April 26th – May 4th, 1967. L.B.Pearson Papers, LAC.
1628 Ibid.
governance, decimating the 3000 year old legacy of monarchical rule. The Marxist-
Socialist military Junta known as the Derg, ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991. In 1974,
Ethiopia entered the Cold War dividing the geo-political map of the world, firmly fixed
in the Soviet Union camp. Subsequently, Western discourses surrounding Ethiopia
diminished. Any previously established historical relevancy of the East-African nation
was relegated to the margins of international diplomatic relations.

Within the trajectory of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and
Ethiopians in Canadian history, the 1984-1988 period demarcates a significant departure
from previously pervasive representations and perceptions of the East African state and
its peoples examined in this thesis. During the peak of the ongoing global Cold War,
horrifying images of emaciated children and adults afflicted by an apocalyptic scale
famine, mobilized Canadians to perform collective acts of humanitarian internationalism
in support of a region plagued by drought, famine, and brutal civil wars.¹⁶³⁰ News of the
famine in Ethiopia moved Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his Secretary of State Joe
Clark to galvanize non-partisan support for a broad-based humanitarian mission. The
newly elected Canadian prime minister committed to provide leadership and assistance in
the grave crisis, despite pressing domestic issues such as the national deficit, a tough
budget, and his party’s campaign promises to create more jobs.¹⁶³¹ Instead, Canada’s
duty to respond to the humanitarian crisis was framed as moral imperative, and Ethiopia
was treated as an all-party matter. From the outset, the crisis in Africa was framed as a
concern, not only for the government, but also “for the people of Canada”: widespread
engagement was the primary objective.¹⁶³² The bipartisan approach to rallying the
Canadian public made the effort during this period magnanimous. Hence, interplays in
politics, culture and history are also evidenced throughout this period.

¹⁶³⁰ Drought and Famines were a recurring issue on the African continent during the late 1960s
and 1970s (i.e. Biafra). In Ethiopia, the famine of 1977 was within living memory for many of its
Maclean’s, 4 August 1980: 8.
¹⁶³¹ Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984:
39.
¹⁶³² Joe Clark, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 7 November 1984: 28.
Consequently, Canada’s response to the African/Ethiopian famine of the 1984-86 period was the final intersection examined in section I. Extensive analysis of the discursive visual and textual construction of famine during this period is imperative to understanding the irreversible transformation of Ethiopian history and identity. During this period, “Starving children became “the famine icon”, signifying “a moral clarity to the complex story of famine.” The aestheticization of famine was instrumental in rallying both Canadian, and international support for the cause. Televised reports and newspaper columns devoted to covering the crises typically featured close-up photographs depicting starving children. A disaster was transformed into a spectacle, and “the packaging of events into easily consumable form” determined the endurance of the narrative from this period as “a repeatable cycle of meanings.” As a result, more than one hundred years of discourse privileging the distinctive historical roots of Ethiopia, addressed in chapters one and two of this dissertation, was forever dislodged. One single unrelenting episode of famine coupled with unprecedented exemplars of Western altruism erased Ethiopia’s preceding historical and political symbolism from mass consciousness. Thereafter, Ethiopians were perpetually typecast as ahistorical, malnourished, and destitute stateless victims of famine, drought, war and a communist military regime.

In the end, global political and social mobilization for famine relief in Ethiopia (1984-88) also fostered the endurance of the aesthetic and narrative of the starving Ethiopian. Simultaneously, the African famine and conflict also created a pathway for increased migration of people fleeing the region to Canada. The settlement and growth of the Horn-of-African Diaspora in Canada coincided with the diminishment of any awareness of the East-African region’s cultural, political and historical relevancy. It is in response to the near complete invisibility of Ethiopian history within contemporary mainstream Canadian history and politics that the growth and development of diasporic

1633 Moeller, Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death, 98.
1634 Ibid.
1635 Sorensen, “Mass Media and Discourse on Famine in the Horn of Africa”, 223.
communit(ies) across the country has facilitated a space for the precipitation of longer-rooted historically, culturally, and politically prescient representations of Ethiopian identities. Thus, the migration and settlement of Ethiopian and other interrelated East-Africans in Canada from 1974 onwards, signified the fourth and final historical intersection or overlap examined within the purview of this dissertation.

In contrast to pervasive mainstream representations of Africans as displaced victims of famine, war and general Third World deprivation, a generation of Ethiopians in the Diaspora take a political stance when referencing and revering elements of the “historic past” through their self-expressions, cultural publications and coordination of annual Adowa Day celebrations. In twenty-first century Canada, self-representation is the most prolific manner in which variations of historically rooted Ethiopian, and other interrelated Horn-of-Africa identities are visible in the Canadian socioscape. Significant increases in migration to Canada from the Horn-of-Africa region has resulted in Ethiopians and other interrelated peoples from the East-African region carving out spaces to self-represent within facets of Canadian society. Ethiopians are the second most numerically significant group originating from the East and Southern parts of the African continent, however, their longstanding presence and visibility within Canadian history has yet to be fully examined and documented.1636 The continued influences of interplays in history, politics and culture were identified in two exploratory oral history chapters.

Chapter 4 examined the perspectives and experiences of five first-generation members of the Ethiopian Diaspora between the ages of 35 and 65, whose life histories and trajectories were exemplars of embodiments of Ethiopian history present within contemporary Canadian society.1637 Deeply immersed in the idiosyncrasies of the

1636 Ethiopians are second to Somalians as the largest group listed from Eastern and Southern Africa in the Canadian census. Source: Census Profile, 2016 Census, Statistics Canada www.statcan.gc.ca.

1637 In alignment with the research data gleaned from Statistics Canada, the term first-generation utilized throughout this thesis refers to people who were born outside of Canada. Moreover, the first generation participants in this study were all born in Ethiopia and had lived there for more than two decades. The Definition of First-Generation as defined by Statistics Canada. Accessed here: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011003_2-eng.cfm, first accessed on March 30, 2012.
cultures, the languages and the history of their region of origin, the life-stories and perspectives of a generation of Ethiopian immigrants are reflective of the multiplicity of distinctly Ethiopian transnational experiences imbedded within the broad Canadian milieu. Irrespective of their length of time living within Canada, first-generation Ethiopians in Canada interviewed for this study asserted that knowledge of Ethiopian history and culture was integral to who they are. Indelibly influenced by their memories of Ethiopia under the reign of the Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1975), and impacted by the political and social transformation of Ethiopia under the Marxist-Leninist Derg Military regime (1974-1991), the generation of migrants featured in this chapter lived in Ethiopia through facets of these historic times and experiences. Subsequently, the lives and life stories of these Ethiopian immigrants embody these particular histories. Future studies could focus on collecting the oral histories of this generation to create a repository of knowledge about the past and present experiences of this group.

Sarup’s assertions that an integral component to the construction and negotiation of identities “is the past-present relation and its reconciliation”\textsuperscript{1638}, is evidenced in the personal narratives and reflections of Tye Esther Tsegaye, Ato Mohammed Al-Adeimi, Ato Omar Osman, Ato Mengesha Beyene and Elias Omer. Each of their narratives are testament to the fact that for many Ethiopians, concepts of memory and identity are interrelated, and shaped by continuous interplays of history, politics and culture. Members of this cohort interviewed argued that migration did not change the essence of their historical and cultural identity. In the summative words of Tye Esther “I don’t believe that who you are, change by where you are”\textsuperscript{1639}

The narratives and perspectives of the first-generation Ethiopians who participated in this study are reflective of the assertions of Woubshet et al that “modern Ethiopians have seen the world through a multi-colored stained glass”\textsuperscript{1640}. The

\textsuperscript{1639} Author interview II with Tye Esther Tsegaye, July 1, 2013.
participants featured in this first chapter referenced the prevalence of the 3000 year old legacy perpetually, without knowing any specifics about Canadian manifestations of this steadfast historical representation. Ethiopians in this study too instinctively looked back to a time when their history “was one of the richest and most powerful in the world”.1641 They also eloquently and passionately spoke to the ways in which this history has now become “one of the poorest and least understood”. In this vein, the narratives featured in this study spoke to the “pride and struggle, conquest and famine, nationalism and intense division, loss and longing” which characterizes the Ethiopian and interrelated Diaspora globally.1642

In another exploratory and thematic chapter, discovery focused interviews with of 1.5 and second-generation youth from the cities of Toronto, Ottawa and London, Ontario were integrated into this historical study of representations and perceptions of Ethiopian and other inter-related identities. The narratives of Canadian born children of Ethiopian / Horn-of-Africa Diaspora signified the final intersection and overlap of Ethiopian-Canadian history examined within the purview of this thesis. Three decades after its formation, children of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora elucidate the complexities of representations and perceptions of an “Ethiopian”/ Habesha identity within Canadian society. Reinforced by findings from other available scholarship on Habesha in North America, the perspectives and experiences of six Habesha youth aged between 20- 32, were examined as case studies illustrative of the continued influences of the roots of the East/ Horn- of-Africa Diaspora. Voices of the children of the Diaspora are illustrative of the ways in which representations and perceptions of ‘Ethiopian’ or Habesha identities and history are perpetually navigated, negotiated, celebrated, or outright contested within contemporary Canadian society.

Children of the African Diaspora continually engage with elements of their ascribed identities. Second-generation Habeshas, being of continental African heritage in Canada, “cannot escape connections to their home continent, even if they chose to”.

1641 Ibid.
1642 Ibid.
because who they are perceived to be and represented as within mainstream Canadian society, is inherently “related to where they come from.”1643 Youth featured in this chapter engaged with representations and perceptions of Ethiopian culture, history and identity through their daily lived experiences. The histories of the second-generation inexorably embodied the life-trajectories and experiences of their parents. Mary Goitom affirms the fact that “first-generation Ethiopian and Eritreans are active, if not, deliberate actors in their children’s identity formation and development.”1644 Process of diffusion and syncretism such as mixed languages, hybrid practices, and hyphenated collective identities permeate the lived experiences of youth, fostering feelings of “in-betweenness”. 1645

Yet, entrenched in Canadian society from birth into adulthood, children of the Diaspora traverse through life in Canada influenced by the cultural, historical and political purviews of their families, and further informed by their own experiences of navigating and negotiating “a place” within Canadian society.1646 Thus the life experiences and perspectives of Tsegereda Yohannes, Selam Meles, Aida Abdella, Hannah Haile, Miriam Abebe and George Lencho are also prisms through which representations of historically rooted Horn-of-Africa identities can be located and contextualized within contemporary Canadian societies.

As demonstrated throughout Chapter 5, youth are equally influenced by their micro-histories insomuch as they are influenced by the Canadian social/ geographical milieu in which they were raised. The Horn of Africa Diaspora in Canada developed in size during the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, marking the experiences of the second-

generation born during this period as embodiments of a particular historical trajectory. The micro histories of the families of the youth featured in this chapter mirrored the trajectory of the Horn-of-Africa migration and settlement in Canada. Born during the 1980s or the early 1990s, it was in light of the ongoing Eritrean War of Independence (1961-1991) and the political struggles of the Oromo Liberation Front (1973–present), that many of the children of the Horn-of-Africa Diaspora were raised in a social climate of heightened, politicized and often polarized ethnic “East African” identities within Canada.\footnote{For more in this regards to the climate of heightened ‘politics of identity’ within the Diaspora, see the works of sociologist John Sorensen, particularly: “Essence and Contingency in the Construction of Nationhood: Transformations of Identity in Ethiopian Diasporas”, Diaspora 2:2 (1993):201-228; “Politics of Social Identity: “Ethiopians” In Canada”, The Journal of Ethnic Studies 19 (1), 1991: pp 67 – 86, and Atsuko Matsuko and John Sorensen’s Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in the African Diaspora, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).} After a three decade long civil war, Eritrea achieved independence from Ethiopia in 1991. Soon thereafter, the Canadian government started recognizing and counting members of the Canadian population who identified as Eritrean separately. Since 1991, other ethnic groups within the umbrella of the current Ethiopian state have increasingly started to identify as “other”. Consequently, contemporary iterations of East-African identities in Canada, such as Habesha, Ethiopian, Amhara, Harari, Tigrian, Oromo, Gurage, as well as identification as “Eritrean” prior to 1991, are all imbued with the effects of transnational political and socio-cultural developments. The interviews conducted for this study attested to this phenomenon.

The predominant themes addressed in both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 collectively underscore the ways in which concepts of memory, history and identity buttress one another. The select narratives, perspectives and life trajectories of the participants in this study reinforce the assertion that history is of the utmost importance to this particular diasporic community, and that it continues to inform the ways in which members of the Diaspora express themselves, forge communities in Canada, coordinate commemorative events, and solicit solidarity on social causes (both domestic and international). Yet, it is important to note that the emerging themes addressed throughout section II of this
dissertation are anything but final conclusions. If anything, the emergent themes underscore the need for further exploratory studies of how Ethiopians and other inter-related members of the African Diaspora have migrated and settled in Canada. Whilst the role of the Canadian government (macro level) in facilitating the increased migration of Ethiopians and other peoples from the Horn-of-Africa is addressed here, the role of intermediary (meso) actors such as churches and NGOs in facilitating the migration and settlement of peoples across the country is yet to be fully examined. Moreover, as evidenced in chapter 5, further explorations are required of what it means to be Habesha or an Ethiopian-Canadian in the contemporary context, particularly as an increasingly mobile young generation is straddling these identifiers as Canadian citizens engaged in forms of global citizenship abroad.

This dissertation has demonstrated that within Canada, international and domestic political objectives, alongside accompanying paradigm shifts and cultural interests strongly shaped and defined the nature of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians throughout the twentieth century. Culture was the consistent arena wherein “various political and ideological causes engage one another”. The proliferation of representations and perceptions of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in Canada was facilitated by an alignment of Canadian domestic and foreign political interests, with the cultural preoccupations of the populace. Each of the intersections identified and examined in this dissertation illustrated the ways in which Ethiopia was of political relevance to Canadians, and explained why this was the case during each particular historical juncture. Representations of Ethiopians have historically only been prolific within mainstream Canadian society when Ethiopia was of political significance to Canada and Canadians. Therefore, interplays in politics, history and culture were evidenced within each historical intersection examined within the purview of this dissertation. This even holds true of contemporary showcasing of Ethiopian heritage (particularly food) as a facet of the diversity existing within Canadian metropoles such as Toronto.

1648 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xiii.
6.7 Contemporary Resonance

“Canada is a natural partner for Ethiopia and other African countries. Through our shared priorities of creating economic growth, promoting peaceful democracy and gender equality, and fighting climate change, we can find innovative ways to grow businesses and create opportunity for Canadians and Africans. I look forward to continuing to work together as we tackle global challenges and create a path forward for everyone.” 1649

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

An integrative examination of four intersections in Canadian and Ethiopian history has demonstrated that knowledge of both Ethiopian and Canadian history is of utmost relevance to understanding contemporary representations of Ethiopian and other interrelated identities in Canada. Interplays in history, politics and culture continue to shape Canada-Africa/Canada-Ethiopia relations.

At the macro-level, on February 10, 2020, the PMO’s office released a summary statement about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s successful visit to Ethiopia. 1650 The prime minister’s trip was described as part of Canada’s strategic pursuit of partnerships across the African continent. In light of Africa’s young and fast-growing population, rapid economic growth, and focus on climate action, Canada was seeking “natural partners” across the region. 1651 To this end, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Sahle-Work Zewde to discuss how the two countries could work closely to “advance democracy and gender equality, find innovative solutions to climate change, and increase trade and investment”. 1652 Canadian commitment to these shared priorities was articulated as mutually beneficial to the growth of both nations. While it was obvious that the timing of this particular visit

1650 Ibid.
1651 Ibid.
1652 Ibid.
coincided with Canadian interests in winning a coveted seat on the UN Security Council, the gestures made were symbolic and signaled the possible resumption of an interrupted legacy of past diplomatic relations between the two nations. Thus, this Canadian visit was both of contemporary political pertinence and historical significance.

Ethiopia and other African nations continue to be of interest to Canada and Canadians whenever there is an alignment in foreign policy objectives. Prime Minister Trudeau’s visit corresponded with the 33rd African Union (AU) Summit held in Addis Ababa. Whilst Canada is an accredited permanent member of the multilateral organization, this was the first time that a Canadian prime minister attended an AU meeting. Invested in tackling issues of socio-economic development and governance facing the continent, the AU has served as a gateway to establishing relations with the member states since its inception in 2002. Mr. Trudeau capitalized on the opportunity to meet and interact with several other prominent leaders from across the African continent through his single visit to a key nation on the African continent. The nature and objective of this Canadian trip invokes Pierre Dupuy’s visit to Addis Ababa in 1966.

Comprised of 55 member states from the continent, the AU is the legal manifestation of the preceding Organization of African Unity (OAU, May 25, 1963- May 26, 2001). The diplomatic overtures of the current Canadian prime minister to both Ethiopia and the other members of the AU, echo those of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in the 1963-67 period. As demonstrated in chapter 2, Canada’s expressed interest in the African continent premised on shared interests and mutually beneficial goals was first articulated when the OAU headquarters was instituted in Addis Ababa by the Emperor Haile Selassie. As this dissertation has demonstrated, Canada’s reignited interests in Africa are of contemporary relevance, but they also have much historical

resonance.
7 Bibliography

Primary Resources

Oral History Interviews
Aida Abdella, July 10, 2015.
Ato Osman Omer, March 9, 2014.
Elias Omer, August 22, 2014.
Etye Esther Tsegaye, May 13, 2013, and July 1, 2013.
George Lencho, August 26, 2014.
Hannah Haile, June 12, 2015.
Mariam Abebe, November 4, 2014.
Paul and Lila Balisky, July 16, 2015
Tsegereda Yohannes, September 7, 2014.

Archival Collections and Resources

Library and Archives Canada:
David MacDonald Collection
Expo 67 Collection
YMCA Files
L.B. Pearson Papers
League of Nations and The Italy Dispute

Other:
House of Commons, Debates, Canadian Historical Parliamentary Debates.
https://parl.canadiana.ca/
Université Laval (Quebec)
Canadian Red Cross archives (Ottawa)
S.I.M International archives, Fort Mill, South Carolina, U.S.A (formerly known as the Sudan Interior Mission).

Periodicals/ Newspapers

Canadian:
    Calgary Herald
    CBC News
Chatelaine
CTV News
Globe and Mail
Le Devoir
Le Soleil
Maclean’s
Saturday Night
The Dawn of Tomorrow
The Daily Colonist
The Evening Telegram (St. John’s New Foundland)
The Financial Post
The Gazette (Montreal)
The Leader Post (Regina)
The London Free Press
The Montreal Star
The Ottawa Citizen
The Sun (Vancouver)
The Telegram (Toronto)
Toronto Daily Star
Winnipeg Free Press

Other:
Al Jazeera (English)
BBC
CNN
Huffington Post
London Times
The Africa Report.com
The Chicago Defender
The Economist
The Ethiopian Herald
The Guardian
The Los Angeles Times
The New York Times
The Observer
The Reggae & African Beat
The Telegraph (UK)
The Washington Post
Time Magazine
News Week

**Census Data and Statistics**

Statistics Canada www.statcan.gc.ca

- Census Profile, 2006, 2016
- 2011 National Household Survey
Library and Archives Canada:

**Primary Source Books and Reports:**


https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/selassie.htm#:~:text=%22I%2C%20Haile%20Selassie%20in%20violation%20of%20international%20treaties


*Expo 67: The memorial album of the first category universal and international exhibition held in Montreal from the twenty-seventh of April to the twenty-ninth of October nineteen hundred and sixty-seven.* Toronto: Nelson, 1968.


Major Cornwallis, W. The Highlands of Ethiopia Described, During Eighteen Months' Residence of a British Embassy at the Christian Court of Shoa 1844.


Waldmeir, Theophilus. The autobiography of Theophilus Waldmeier, Missionary: Being An Account of Ten Years' Life in Abyssinia; and Sixteen Years in Syria published in 1886.


Digital Sources

Documentaries and Film:


British Pathé. “Solemn Pledge Redeemed At Addis Ababa”
British Pathé Archives, Issue Date: 11/05/1942, Film ID: 1326.16

CBC. Monday October 7, 1963. Emperor Haile Selassie’s State Visit to Canada, in

CBC Digital Archives. Northern Lights Record ‘Tears Are Not Enough’. Last
http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/northern-lights-recording-tears-are-not-enough

CBC. This Hour Has Seven days: Politics, religion, sex and football. A popular and
controversial show that lasted two seasons between 1964-1966, features an Interview
with Robert Thompson Social Credit Leader who was back “fresh from a sensitive
mission to Africa during the Congo Crisis.” Last Accessed December 2015.
http://www.cbc.ca/archives/discover/programs/t/this-hour-has-seven-days/this-hour-
has-seven-days-nov-22-1964.html

CBC Documentary Channel. “The Day My Sister Disappeared”, CBC Docs, NDA,
last accessed May 01, 2021. https://www.cbc.ca/documentarychannel/features/the-
day-my-sister-disappeared.

CBC Documentary Channel. “1960’s Canada Gave Newly Immigrated Ethiopian
Sisters The Freedom to Be Vocal About Global Issues”, CBC Docs, (NDA), Last
accessed May 01, 2021. https://www.cbc.ca/documentarychannel/features/1960s-

Published on Jul 18, 2014. Last Accessed May 24, 2021. Though he died almost four
decades ago, Haile Selassie's legacy remains strong and valid. "Faces of Africa"
sought to unearth the events and memories of the man who dared to confront The
League of Nations, now UN, pleading for their support in conquering the Italians
who were preparing to attack Ethiopia.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVki9t3anJU

Evans, Margaret. “Ethiopia on the edge” for CBC’s program, The National, Posted
http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/670401603927

Moloo, Zahra. “Ethiopia’s unforgettable famines: Here’s why they really happen”.
NDA. Last accessed May 24, 2021.


**Ethno Cultural Associations and Ethnic Media:**


**Blogs, Websites and Online Magazines:**

Asgedome, Ruby. “How I Embraced Toronto As My Own Little Ethiopia”,


YouTube:


The Weeknd, The Knowing (Official Video), You Tube, February 24, 2012. 
*7,649,688 views.

Conference Presentations and Symposia:


Dr. Haile Fenta, “Determinants of Depression Among Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in Toronto”, Keynote address at the “Beyond The Shelf-The Horn of Africa Diaspora Community Research Day”, May 2, 2014, Toronto, Canada.

International Symposium: Legacies of The Italian Occupation in Ethiopia: Literature and Storytelling This symposium, organized by NYU faculty Ruth Ben-Ghiat (History, Italian Studies) and Maaza Mengiste (Creative Writing) examines the legacies of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia as experienced by Ethiopians. History can only go so far to tell us about what took place during Italian rule - and its consequences. In Ethiopia, visual and storytelling cultures have been main vehicles of postcolonial expression. Panel on Literature and Storytelling with: Shiferaw Bekele (Addis Ababa University), in dialogue with Dagmawi Woubshet (Cornell University), Heran Sereke-Brhan (Independent Researcher) and Maaza Mengiste (NYU). Published on Nov 14, 2014. 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SQhLpzlp20

Thesis:


Secondary Resources


Goitom, Mary. “Unconventional Canadians: Second-Generation Habesha Youth and Belonging in Toronto, Canada”, Global Social Welfare: Research, Policy,


Lousley, Cheryl. “‘With Love From Band-Aid’: Sentimental Exchange, Affective Economies, and Popular Globalism”. *Emotion, Space and Society*. Volume 10,
February 2014: pp 7-17.


Curriculum Vitae

Education

2021: PhD Collaborative Graduate Program in History and Migration and Ethnic Relations The University of Western University, London ON

2009: Master of Arts, History with a Specialization in Migration and Ethnic Relations The University of Western University, London ON

2004: Honors Bachelor of Arts, History Major, Kings University College, London ON,

Honors and Awards

2015: Robert Hathaway Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2014: Social Science Graduate Research Award, Western University,
2011-15: Western Graduate Student Research Scholarship, Western University,
2009: Migration and Ethnic Relations Collaborative Graduate Program Scholarship,
2008: Western Graduate Student Research Scholarship,

Publications


Solomon, Nassisse. “Ethiopia is significant, not only to who we are, but who we are not”: An Examination of Self-Representations of the Canadian Horn-of-Africa Diaspora Rooted in History”. The Global Ethiopian Diaspora, edited collection. University of Rochester Press, under review.


Invited Speaking Engagements


Panel Presentation: The Trouble With Canadian Aid: Reflections on IDW, Foreign Policy Institute, February 18, 2021.


Historical Perspectives on Canadian Foreign Aid Conference, Global affairs Canada, December 13, 2016. “Tears are Not Enough” Canada’s Concerted Efforts for Famine Relief in Ethiopia, 1984-88”
Adwa Day Celebration, Ethio-Canadian Association of London, Keynote speech,