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Harold Marcus, ed. *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress: Haile Sellassie I, King of Ethiopia.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994. xviii + 190 pp. $31.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87013-308-4.

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While in exile in England during the Italo-Ethiopian War (1936-41), Emperor Haile Sellassie I began dictation of his autobiography. How long the process took and to what degree his various Ethiopian scribes may have edited the original manuscript are not clear. The first volume of this manuscript, covering the years from 1892 to 1937, was published in Ethiopia in 1972/3. Just a year before the emperor's deposition in a military coup in 1974, his granddaughter approached Prof. Edward Ullendorff about an English version, which appeared in 1976 (London: Oxford University Press).

Ullendorff, though, proved reluctant to continue, feeling that volume two (1936-42) lacked the insight and merit of the earlier material. Differing with Ullendorff's assessment, Prof. Harold Marcus then took up the project, himself just beginning a multi-volume biography of the emperor. The two projects converged nicely. Volume one of the biography appeared in 1987 (University of California Press), while translation of the second volume of the autobiography was proceeding.

Marcus' approach to the translation diverged substantially from that taken by Ullendorff in the first volume. Ideally any such translation would strive to render Amharic ideas and phraseology into English as truly and accurately as possible while bringing forth an English text that was smooth and flowing. Both Marcus and Ullendorff committed to these ideals, but Ullendorff gave preference to the former, while Marcus was more concerned about readability. Ullendorff admits to a certain "ungainliness" in his English translation, while Marcus freely acknowledges the "liberality" of his version from the Amharic. The challenges dealt both translators were similar. Consequently, a reading of the introduction to Ullendorff's first volume provides good preparation for beginning Marcus' second.

The emperor's autobiography derives largely from literary forms traditional to Ethiopian society and thus is unlike those produced in the west. It is a volume reflecting a certain modesty, devoid of emotion, and evidencing an aloofness that readers will find a bit disconcerting, but which nonetheless reflects accurately the emperor's public persona. Although underneath he was a man of deep feelings who grieved profoundly for the loss of his country and the deaths of close friends and family and who despaired at the international community's failure to live up to its treaty obligations, there is little emotion in his recollections. The emperor was a deeply religious man who accepted these trials as God's test and who bore his burden largely in private.

The emperor was not given to chastise or condemn his contemporaries. His autobiography is a kind of morality play; the moral is clear without having to state it. History and the book's readers are left to make their own judgment. This places the emperor above the political fray, reflecting again the realities of his own leadership style. His whole commentary is permeated with strength, confidence, and certitude. There is no doubt in his own mind that in the end God would see to the Italian defeat and secure his return to the throne. At least that is the impression he wishes to leave. Any sense of personal vulnerability is well hidden.

The emperor demonstrates excellent recall. He mentions hundreds of individuals in the autobiography and describes many events and negotiations in great detail. Not all are accurate, but enough to evidence his remarkable mind, one that served him well politically. His minions were both astounded by and terrified of his sharp remembrance of names, episodes, and details from years before that they hoped he had forgotten and which he could conveniently draw forth to embarrass and destroy them, or bring them into line. One of the great accomplishments of those who edited this second volume of the autobiography was identifying the hundreds of individuals mentioned, a Herculean effort Marcus has accomplished admirably. The detective work involved was nearly as challenging as the translation itself.

In the end, one must see the emperor as a historical actor, recording his autobiography for practical political

reasons. His dictation began during one of the most traumatic periods of his life. Despite his public optimism, he must have been torn by at least some self-doubt. Would he spend the remainder of his life in exile? How would his countrymen remember him and how would history record his actions? Haile Sellassie was a man much concerned with image and was a master of propaganda. We must assess his autobiography to some degree in this context. He was aware that many of his countrymen abhorred his decision to leave the country rather than die in battle, and he knew that he would have to face their opposition if and when he returned.

His autobiography, particularly this second volume, thus serves to argue and justify his point of view that he was a man who never stopped "fighting" for Ethiopia even in exile. He chronicles all the meetings he had, the exchanges of notes with governments, the public speeches he made during those years, and includes within the work the full or partial texts of many of these documents, almost as if this book was a legal brief. He also had in mind his public image internationally. He seeks to demonstrate that even after the fall of Addis Ababa, his voice and authority continued to be felt within the country; he fills the work with his correspondence to and from the Patriots, thus proving, so he hoped, their loyalty, and his direction and support of them. Haile Sellassie may not have been much of a general on the battlefield, but at least he was out to prove his credentials as a diplomatic warrior.

Unless one is able to read between the lines, it is difficult to get any concrete sense of the emperor from the autobiography. Marcus's biography is much more insightful in this regard and can be read as a useful companion volume. We can look forward eagerly to his forthcoming tomes. Although history defined for Haile Sellassie a transitional role, he had his own vision of where he wanted to take Ethiopia, and that seems to have been in the direction of the modernized monarchies that he saw in Europe during his 1924 tour. He made good progress in economic and military reform and this success may in part have encouraged the Italian attack in 1935. He was unable to break free of his feudal background and his perceived divine mission; he mistrusted his people's ability to make their own rational choices, and thus failed to move democratization along at an acceptable pace. Consequently, the political crises with which he would have to deal in later years slowed overall progress and ultimately undermined his regime.

Scholars will be thankful that Marcus and his team cared enough to translate this second volume of the emperor's autobiography. It cannot have been an easy task. As a combination of recollection and political propaganda, it fits appropriately into Michigan State University Press's African Historical Sources Series. Not only does it provide perspective on one of the twentieth century's most important leaders, but it also lends insight into the politics and culture of the era. And Marcus' annotations prove as useful as the autobiographical text itself. It is not necessarily for light reading, but it is nonetheless engaging and instructive, and it is rendered in a style that makes it quite accessible to ordinary readers.

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