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Bahru Zewde. *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002. xii + 228 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8214-1446-0; $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8214-1445-3.

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Modernizing Ethiopia

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Students of history will be aware of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reformist groups such as the Young Turks or Young Italy, youthful intellectuals in their respective societies, of strong nationalist inclination who recognized the need for change if their nations were to survive and thrive in the modern world. While they normally agreed on general goals, they often were at odds on the methods and means to achieve them. Less well known is the group of intellectuals known as the Young Ethiopians. *Pioneeers of Change in Ethiopia* seeks to enlighten us on this important group of young men.

Until now, information on this group has been scattered and rather sketchy; it includes some occasional articles and an array of undergraduate theses by graduates of Addis Ababa University that, while useful, are not particularly defining. Bahru contributes organization, definition, and clarity to this data, and by doing so, brings new perspective to bear on the politics and policies of emperors Menilek II and Haile Sellassie I. Bahru is intrepid, to say the least, in his quest for documentation. He commences with the considerable accumulation of diaries and manuscripts collected over the years by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. He ferrets out materials from various national archives, made easier by his years of previous research for other publications. He travels to the sources of these young men's educations in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, rummaging through college newspapers, journals, and archives. And of course he carefully ponders the written words of these intellectuals, published particularly in the columns of the state- supported *Berhanena Selaam* newspaper, paying attention to nuances and always defining context. Bahru produces a masterful analysis.

Bahru begins with biographical sketches of the group of intellectuals involved. First-generation intellectuals include those associated with Menilek in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while those in the second generation are linked more closely to Haile Sellassie, and in some cases, are the sons of first-generation intellectuals. He also sorts them out on the basis of where they received their educations: church versus secular education, and training within Ethiopia versus that in a foreign country. Those in the first generation were less likely to have studied abroad, their differences mostly defined by their access to secular education. Those in the second generation reflected greater numbers as well as greater diversity in their worldviews, just as one might expect.

As a group, these individuals, no matter their training or background, tended to be consistently patriotic. They identified strongly with the state, but not necessarily with its government. First-generation intellectuals placed great hope in Menilek as a reformer of Ethiopian society, but some were clearly disappointed by him. He appeared to be more interested in "tinkering" with modernity than in effectuating it. Despite the reverence that many Ethiopians had for Menilek as the victor at Adwa, others blamed him for not being more decisive and for not displacing the Italians from Eritrea. Menilek, in their minds, had let the nation down. Second-generation intellectuals were sustained by their faith and confidence in the young Ras Teferi (Haile Sellassie I) whom they saw as sharing their progressive views. They desired a broad transformation of Ethiopia that would culminate in the emergence of a constitution, land reform, independence for the Ethiopian Orthodox church, modernization of the economy, and improvements in social justice (including an end to slavery and religious persecution, although interestingly they professed little interest in women's equality). Bahru encapsulates these broad interests in the chapter entitled "Independence, Efficiency, and Equity." Some would become just as disenchanted with Haile Sellassie as an earlier generation had with Menilek, some criticizing him openly, others defecting to the Italians, few fully appreciating the political con-

straints within which the young emperor found himself. Some felt that their skills were not effectively used or recognized and few rose to the highest ranks in government. That disenchantment for some would further deepen both during and after the Italian war. For some it was a matter of not preparing and defending the nation sufficiently, for others not moving expediently enough in transforming the state. Whatever the extent of their defiance of the emperor, they viewed themselves as loyal patriots of the state.

Disappointed as some may have been, Bahru argues that their contributions to significant change in Ethiopia should not be underestimated. Their models were, in particular, the countries in which they had lived and studied, but Japan came to be of particular interest in the minds of some–a country that had successfully made the transition from feudal to modern state while retaining many features of traditional society. A number were also impressed by what they saw happening under the Italians in Eritrea, even suggesting that Ethiopia might benefit from a period of similar colonial rule (although none had any doubts that that colonialism would be short-lived). Bahru suggests that these Young Ethiopians played a significant role in separating the Ethiopian Orthodox church from its counterpart in Alexandria and in framing the 1931 constitution (although it was not exactly what many might have envisioned). They served their country as translators and diplomats (promoting understanding across cultures), and were important as arbiters on the Special Court that sorted out extraterritorial issues. Haile Sellassie placed them in sub-administrative roles where they were disappointed not to garner the top positions, but where the emperor allowed them to experiment and where they often possessed more real power than they would have in the "honorary" positions of their superiors.

The Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-36 left the Ethiopian intellectuals of the second generation largely decimated or in exile. Many of their forebears would also be in exile and some would die there. Once the war was over, Haile Sellassie had little further use for them; he had allied with them to neutralize his conservative opposition and then after the war largely ignored them. The loss of so many intellectuals during the war left a generational void in the 1940s and 1950s. The intellectuals of that era were more likely in the arts or literature, and those in public service were loyalists rather than dissidents, a stance an emperor in solid control could now demand.

That intellectual ferment represented by the elite in the 1920s and 1930s would re-emerge in the 1960s. While the student movement of the later era borrowed ideology from Marxist-Leninism and followed patterns of student and protest movements elsewhere in the world, it seems clear from Bahru's analysis that the movement must also be understood in the context of Ethiopian ideas inherited from an earlier era. Like the intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s, the students of the 1960s were not always in agreement in terms of their courses of action, but the issues with which they struggled were substantially similar. In *Berhanena Selaam* we can see the beginnings of the struggle for a free press in Ethiopia, just as we can see that in the student publications of the 1960s, a struggle that goes on in Ethiopia yet today. Although the Young Ethiopians were never organized officially as a political party, they did represent a set of ideas, an ideology, in terms of their vision of the future state. The political factions that came to exist in the last half of the twentieth century were not true political parties (either because the emperor forbade their formation or because later governments came to sanction these parties for no other reason than to guarantee their own continuing control of power). Bahru does not draw all the comparisons between the two periods that I do here, but he has promised to produce a follow-up volume that will describe the intellectuals of the later period. I for one cannot wait for his analysis. If it is as well researched, well written, and well explicated as the volume under review here, it will indeed be a treat for the mind.

If *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia* has any faults, they are minor. Some might wish for a somewhat fuller discussion of modernization which Bahru lays out at the beginning, but then scurries through at the end. He certainly makes clear how Ethiopia fits into the debate, but draws no firm conclusions. Those who desire a somewhat more comparative approach will also be a bit disappointed. Bahru does not go into any great detail in comparing Ethiopia to other states that preserved their independence in the Age of New Imperialism. But the Ethiopian example standing alone is quite instructive and Bahru has teased out as much insight from his sources as he might safely do. He is to be congratulated on a work well done, and one deserving wide readership.

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