



**HAL**  
open science

# The Archives of Historical Research as Sources for the History of Ethiopian Historiography in the Twentieth Century

Emmie Le Galès

## ► To cite this version:

Emmie Le Galès. The Archives of Historical Research as Sources for the History of Ethiopian Historiography in the Twentieth Century. *Aethiopica*, International Journal for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies, 2025, Supplement to *Aethiopica*. *International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*, 13, <10.13173/9783447124645>. <hal-05348957>

**HAL Id: hal-05348957**

**<https://hal.science/hal-05348957v1>**

Submitted on 5 Nov 2025

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 - Attribution - ShareAlike - International License

## Ethiopic Historiographical Texts

Supplement to *Aethiopica*.  
International Journal of Ethiopian  
and Eritrean Studies  
13

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut  
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik  
Hiob-Ludolf-Zentrum für Äthiopistik  
der Universität Hamburg

Series Editor: Aaron Michael Butts  
in cooperation with Bairu Tafla, Ludwig Gerhardt,  
Hewan Semon Marye, Susanne Hummel  
and Alexander Meckelburg

2025

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

# Ethiopic Historiographical Texts

Textual Transmission, Edition, Translation,  
and Interpretation

Edited by  
Solomon Gebreyes Beyene

2025

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen  
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet  
über <https://dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek  
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche  
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet  
at <https://dnb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our  
website <https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2025

Kreuzberger Ring 7c-d, 65205 Wiesbaden, [produktsicherheit.verlag@harrassowitz.de](mailto:produktsicherheit.verlag@harrassowitz.de)

This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.

Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission  
of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies  
particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage  
and processing in electronic systems.

Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Typesetting and layout: Francesca Panini

Printing and binding: docupoint GmbH

Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-447-12XXX-X

ISSN 2196-7180

eISBN 978-3-447-39XXX-X

eISSN 2748-3738

## Table of Contents

SOLOMON GEBREYES BEYENE, Preface .....	vii
ALESSANDRO BAUSI, <i>Editing Historiography: A Few Introductory Words</i> .....	1
MANFRED KROPP, <i>Die Kompilation in der äthiopischen Historiographie – bevorzugte Gattung oder Zufall der handschriftlichen Überlieferung</i> .....	13
DARIA ELAGINA, <i>Editing and Translating a Historical Source: The Case of the Chronicle of John of Nikiu</i> .....	49
CARSTEN HOFFMANN, <i>The Translation of the Tārika Walda 'Amid and the Timeline of Ethiopian Historiography</i> .....	75
SOLOMON GEBREYES BEYENE, <i>Edition of the Chronicle of King Śarḍa Dəngəl (r. 1563–1597): Textual Tradition and Stemma Codicum</i> .....	89
EMMIE LE GALÈS, <i>The Archives of Historical Research as Sources for the History of Ethiopian Historiography in the Twentieth Century</i> .....	119
JONAS KARLSSON, <i>Echoes of History Shrouded in Liturgy: The Dəgg<sup>w</sup>ā-Type Antiphons for King Dāwit of Ethiopia (r. 1382–1413)</i> .....	145
DERESSE AYENACHEW WOLDETSADIK, <i>Towards Writing the National History of Ethiopia: A Royal Historiography of the Nineteenth Century</i> .....	171
ÉLOI FICQUET, <i>Glimpses into the Life of Rās Goššu Wadāḡe, According to the Fragments of Oral Narration Recorded by Arnauld d'Abbadie in 1842</i> .....	195
HEWAN SEMON MARYE, <i>Chronicling the Battle of 'Āmbābo, 1882</i> .....	235
Indexes .....	275
Index of Personal Names .....	275
Index of Place Names .....	280
Index of Ethnic Names and Languages .....	284

# The Archives of Historical Research as Sources for the History of Ethiopian Historiography in the Twentieth Century

EMMIE LE GALÈS

## Summary

What materials are used in Ethiopia to make the history of historiography? This question raises the problem of the marginal writings of research, those that inform us about the very process of elaborating historical knowledge: drafts, correspondence, meeting minutes, and colophons. This paper will present, for the contemporary period, the hitherto little explored corpus of Ethiopian historians' personal archives, in particular, Marsə'e Hāzan Walda Qirqos and Mangəstu Täyya collections. Traces of intense historical activity are to be found in their archives, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s. This shows a real dynamism in Ethiopian historiography. These archives thus allow us to question key notions of historical science in a new way: authorship, sources, and the question of practices. They also allow us to broaden our definition of the historiographical genre: the notion of *māstāwašā*, a form widely used by historians of the contemporary period and yet not categorized as a historical genre, will thus be the subject of development in the contribution. As many of these contemporary historians wrote historical texts about the Šawā region, I will use the example of unpublished texts on the *History of Šawā*, which is the topic of my thesis. It will be shown how a royal chronicle from the late nineteenth century was rewritten several times during the twentieth century and how these rewritings can illustrate important historiographical innovations of the contemporary period.

## Introduction

Although historical texts have been documented in Ethiopia since the Aksumite period,<sup>1</sup> this timeframe does not always coincide with the accepted beginning of Ethiopian historiography. This beginning is usually associated with the emergence of the royal chronicle genre in the medieval period.<sup>2</sup> The Gə'əz term for

- 1 Some of the monumental inscriptions found at 'Aksum, dated from the early fourth to the late sixth century, contained annalistic texts about the Aksumite rulers, including King 'Ezā-nā (r. 330–365/370) ('Sabaic inscriptions in Ethiopia and Eritrea', *EAE*, III (2007), 156a–158a (W. W. Müller)).
- 2 Sevir Chernetsov considers 'Amda Šəyon's chronicle, dated to the fourteenth century, to be the earliest known historiographical text (Chernetsov 1994). Bertrand Hirsch, for his part, sees the genesis of Christian historiography in the fifteenth-century chronicle of the reigns of the kings Zar'a Yā'əqob and Ba'əda Māryām (Hirsch 2013; Hirsch 2020). This debate is still ongoing among scholars of Ethiopian royal chronicles. See, for example, the discussion of Bertrand Hirsch's arguments by Solomon Gebreyes (Solomon Gebreyes Beyene 2022, n. 11). Solomon Gebreyes himself studied the chronicles of Galāwdewos (r. 1540–1559) and Šarḍa Dəngəl (r. 1563–1597), to show the major developments in roy-

‘chronicle’, *tārik*, is interchangeably used to signify both the historiographical genre and the past of human societies. This ambiguity is also present in Amharic, the modern Ethiopian language, and has given rise to additional meanings: *tārik* signifies the past, the study of the past (i.e. historiography), and the various literary genres used to present this historical narrative. The term *tārik aṣaṣāf* or *tarik aṣaṣāf zāde*, meaning ‘method of writing history’, adds a layer of meaning in Amharic to the discussion of historiography. It specifically refers to how the historical narrative is constructed. The term is therefore used by Ethiopian historians not to produce historiography, in the sense of the history of historical studies, but rather to explore how history is written, in other words to produce a discourse on themselves and their practices.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the aim of this article is precisely to reflect on the history of Ethiopian historiographical practices, from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1960s, and on the role that the archives of historical research can play in understanding these practices. These archives can be defined as all the documentary traces left behind by intellectuals in the course of their research: drafts, correspondence, minutes of meetings, notebooks, textual comments in the margins of handwritten texts, draft bibliographies, genealogical lists, etc. If the term ‘archives de la recherche’ is widely used in French to distinguish this specific corpus,<sup>4</sup> the terminology is not so clear in English. Rather than using the term ‘scientific archives’, which implies a Western conception of both science and documentary preservation, I have chosen ‘historical research archives’ to distinguish the archival traces left by historians in the production of historical discourse, from the more general personal papers of Ethiopian intellectuals. These documents may be produced during personal or collective research, may be held by an institution or in a personal library and may take a variety of material forms, from paper notebooks and loose sheets to manuscripts. In any case, they are different from published works or completed manuscripts: they are the preliminary documents of research, which I believe are essential material for understanding the history of intellectual activity in Ethiopia and, more generally, on the African continent.

African intellectual history, in line with the global intellectual history movement,<sup>5</sup> has indeed taken an increasing interest in private archives in recent

al historiography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his view, the methodological dynamism characteristic of this genre at the time came to an end with the weakening of royalty from the eighteenth century onwards (Solomon Gebreyes Beyene 2019).

3 An example can be found in the preface written by Marsa’e Hāzan about the work of Hāyla Giyorgis Ballaṭa, where he analyses the author’s writing style as similar to that of the ancient clergy (Voff 2013, 55).

4 Müller 2006.

5 For a synthesis of current approaches and perspectives in global intellectual history, see Moyn and Sartori 2013.

years.<sup>6</sup> Karin Barber describes them as ‘tin-truck archives’, a variety of documents (family correspondence, personal notes, diaries, etc.) which, because of the way they are organized, stored and preserved, can sometimes shed light on an entire social, political and intellectual context.<sup>7</sup> The history of historiography is a part of this trend<sup>8</sup> and the personal papers of historians, the archives of journals, and the archives of institutions that oversee historical production have become important sources for studying the production of historical knowledge.

In the field of African historiography, however, although much work has recently been devoted to editing historiographical sources<sup>9</sup> and making an inventory of the private collections of intellectuals,<sup>10</sup> few studies have yet analysed the process of developing historical knowledge in the light of these archives, exploring not only their content but also their materiality and the way in which they were preserved.<sup>11</sup> In Ethiopia, while there are numerous works on Ethiopian historiography, detailing the biographies of historians and analysing their works and ideas on history, it is only recently that a practical approach to historiography has emerged.<sup>12</sup> The archives of historical research, some accessible in major archival institutions, are however still underutilized. The relative lack of interest can be attributed to several factors, which will be explored initially, before presenting some available collections in the country. This article will then demonstrate the heuristic potential of these collections by examining the archives of a historian who is largely unknown today, Mangəstu Tāyya, who belonged to the circle of historians who worked in the service of royal power.

6 Earle 2017; Earle 2018; Ficquet and Mbodj-Pouye 2009; John and Sebald 2005.

7 Barber 2006, 18.

8 Harneit-Sievers 2002; Iggers et al. 2008; Woolf 2013.

9 Fayola 2006; in the Brill collection *African Sources for African History*, see Berto and Rodet 2020.

10 A project led by IFRA-Nigeria is currently concentrating on the archives of notable researchers and intellectuals such as J. F. Ade Ajayi and Felicia Adetowun Ogunshye (Hiri-barren 2020). Additionally, the Manuscripts francophones team at ITEM (Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes) in Paris, in collaboration with the Niane family library, was digitizing historian Djibril Tamsir Niane’s collection at the Archives nationales de Guinée in 2022 (Riffard 2023). The Langarchiv ERC project, directed by Camille Lefebvre, aims to raise awareness about Ajami and Hausa language texts in the Sahel region. This project identifies private family libraries, bringing previously unknown linguistic and cultural information to the historiography.

11 Jonathon Earle’s work on the private archives of Ugandan politicians in the 1950s is an illuminating example of this approach. Through marginal notes, drafts and the wear and tear of the books in their libraries, he has been able to reconstruct the political ideas of these intellectuals and show how original they were to themselves and not to Western ideas (Earle 2017).

12 De Lorenzi 2015; Marzagora 2023.

## **1 In the Academic History of Historiography, a Limited Engagement with Archives**

### **1.1 The Academic Discipline at the Heart of the University Historiographical Approach: Scarce Interest in Ethiopian Historians' Archives**

In an article entitled 'Turning Point in Ethiopian Historiography', Bairu Tafla imagined the disappointment that Ḥərüy Walda Šəllāse, a renowned historian of the first decades of the twenty century, would have felt if he had known that his work would eventually be considered by academic historians not as historiographical texts but as sources.<sup>13</sup> Bairu Tafla expressed regret that the role of Ethiopian historians in shaping the field of Ethiopian studies had been marginalized, invisibilized even. The same critique was voiced by Messay Kebede, who viewed the tracing of the genealogy of Ethiopian studies back to Hiob Ludolf, a seventeenth-century German scholar, as an Eurocentric approach to the history of the country's historiography.<sup>14</sup> He quoted as an example the historian Sergew Hable Sellassie, in his work 'Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270', stating, 'Ethiopian history as a discipline was founded in Europe in the seventeenth century. The man who started this great task was Hiob Ludolf.'<sup>15</sup>

The term 'discipline' is crucial in this context. Numerous articles exploring the history of Ethiopian historiography in the twentieth century specifically focus on the evolution of the historical discipline in its academic and Western understanding.<sup>16</sup> The establishment of the university in 1950, and the creation of its history department in 1963, were seen as a significant 'turning point' for Ethiopian historiography in the modern era, Donald Crummey describing the department as 'the institutional home of Ethiopian historiography'.<sup>17</sup> These works associate historiography with the institutional memory of the Addis Ababa University. Except for the contributions of renowned Ethiopian historians like Ḥərüy or Tāyya Gabra Māryām, the period preceding its establishment is depicted as not particularly dynamic in historiographical terms. Sven Rubenson recalled how, on arriving in Ethiopia, he first immersed himself in European and American works on the country's history because, he said, there were still no textbooks suitable for teaching and no books to learn about the country's history.<sup>18</sup> Collaborating with Richard Pankhurst, Karl Berentzen, Sergew Hable Sellassie, Tadesse Tamrat, and Donald Crummey, he established a history department that produced significant works on Ethiopian history, becoming the cor-

13 Bairu Tafla 2003, 159.

14 Messay Kebede 2003.

15 Sergew Hable Sellassie 1970, 7, quoted by Messay Kebede 2003, 2.

16 Bahru Zewde 2000; Crummey 1990; Crummey 2001; Rubenson 2003.

17 Crummey 1990, 105.

18 Rubenson 2003.

nerstone of teaching the country's history at the university.<sup>19</sup> In these works, historians sometimes distinguished themselves from their Ethiopian predecessors by highlighting their methodological shortcomings or political biases towards the government. For example, Tadesse Tamrat compared the work of a chronicler to that of a journalist rather than that of a historian:

This is the main difference between historical science and journalism. In the old times, kings-maintained writers within their palaces, feeding and honouring them. They were responsible for recording daily all their deeds and actions. Their work was not very different from that of a journalist.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1970s, scholars thus engaged in a form of prescriptive historiography. Their works were meant to demonstrate both the outcomes of teaching good historical practices within the academic institution and serve as models for students within the same institution. Subsequently, in the 1990s and 2000s, the historians who had initiated and led the department wrote articles on the contemporary Ethiopian historiography, making no distinction between academic and non-academic practices. This history of the discipline appeared to be a response to criticisms directed at the same department for its alignment with the centralizing ideology of the Ethiopian state and its bias towards 'Amhārā history, neglecting other regional histories.<sup>21</sup> To justify the developments in the discipline from the 1960s onwards and its various scientific orientations, historians relied on student works and various publications produced within the university. It is evident here that this 'history of Ethiopian historiography' conceived itself as a history of the academic discipline, relatively closed off from other scholarly circles or alternative historiographical practices. It is clear, however, that the historians whom James De Lorenzi calls 'vernacular historians' continued to write the history of their country during the same period.<sup>22</sup> They wrote in Amharic, 'in a style that would have been largely recognizable to their forebears', in various genres, ranging from biography to urban history, travel narratives, and world history.<sup>23</sup> With the exception of Takla Šādəq Mak<sup>w</sup>əriyā, who straddles

19 Bahru Zewde 2000.

20 'በታሪክ ጥናትና በጋዜጠኝነት ሥራ መካከል ያለው አንድ ዐቢይ ልዩነት ይኸው ነው ። በቀድሞም ጊዜ ፤ ነገሥታቱ በቤተ መንግሥታቸው አስቀምጠው እየቀለቡና እየሸላሉ በየቀኑ የሚፈፀሙ ውን ሁሉ የሚያስመዘግቧቸው ጸሐፊዎች ነበሯቸው ። የነሱ ሥራ እምብዛም ከጋዜጠኝነት አይለዩም ።' ('batārik ṭənātnā bagāzeṭaḥānāt sərā makākal yālaw 'andu 'abiy ləyunat yəḵaw naw. Baqadamom gize nagaštu babeta mangəstāččaw 'asqamṭaw 'əyaqalabunā 'əyašalālamu bayanu yamifaḍamawən hulu yamiyāmazagb<sup>w</sup>āččaw šahāfiwoč. Yanasu šərā 'əmbəzām kaḡāzeṭaḥānā 'aylayəm') (Tāddasa Ta'ammərāt 1992, 73).

21 Crummey 2001.

22 De Lorenzi 2015, 119–121.

23 Ibid.

the line between the academic and non-academic worlds, the works of these historians have largely been relegated to the status of sources by academic history, if not forgotten altogether, and for the most part have been excluded from the history of the country's historiography. It is not surprising, therefore, that their personal archives have been largely overlooked by academic history, with the rare exceptions that will follow.

## 1.2 Historical Research Archives convened in a Historiographical Debate: The Works of 'Alaqā Tāyya and H̄əruy

The disciplinary perspective of Ethiopian historiography represents just one stream among various currents in the history of historiography. Since the 1980s, efforts have been made to present Ethiopian historians and their works throughout the twentieth century through the lenses of intellectual biography, bibliography, or analysis by historical genre. Bahru Zewde's work *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century*, is a notable example. As a collective biography of influential intellectuals in the country from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s, the historian depicts a range of individual behaviours regarding social and political reformism. He devotes a chapter to the question of historiography, where, contrary to the claims of Rubenson or Crummey, he asserts that the roots of scientific historiography can be found in 'the critical detachment and rationalism of Gabra-Heywat and Tamrat as in the industry of Atsmé, Heruy, and Tayya.'<sup>24</sup> The terminology used is interesting: distance, rationalism and industry form the basis of a modern practice of history that, according to Bahru Zewde, is already present in the works of historians from the early twentieth century. However, this definition of history as a process of rational distancing follows a Western and academic approach to historiography. This chapter is essentially a compilation of the ideas that these scholars had about history, showing how they more or less vehemently opposed the historiography of the past, and in particular the form of the chronicle that had hitherto been used by scholars in the service of the king. To write this chapter, Bahru Zewde relies on the works of these historians, whether published or in manuscript form. As a new development, he also includes historical research archives from the collection of 'Alaqā Tāyya Gabra Māryām (1860–1924). It is important to emphasize that I am not referring to unpublished historical texts, which can also be found in these archives. Rather, I am referring to preliminary documents that bear traces of research methods, note-taking, and non-narrative organization of information (tables, diagrams, lists). The 'Alaqā Tāyya's archives, deposited at the National Archive and Library Agency in 'Addis 'Ababā in 1993, contain such documents. For example, there are working

24 Bahru Zewde 2002, 145.

versions of his *Kəbra nagašt*,<sup>25</sup> a comprehensive history of Ethiopia that never saw the light of day due to Tāyya's death during the writing process in 1924. These preparatory documents for an unfinished work provide a glimpse of the author's intended structure, including a developed table of content and his working bibliography. Bahru Zewde deals with these archives because they are central to a debate about the authenticity of later works by *Blättangetā* Həruy. According to the nephew of 'Alaqa Tāyya, Həruy allegedly copied the work of the latter to produce his own *Tārika nagašt*,<sup>26</sup> which also remained in manuscript form until its partial edition in 1980.<sup>27</sup>

Here, the specific characteristics of research archives, emphasized by Bertrand Müller, come to the fore: as traces of research activity, they are a source for the history of historiography, for example to understand the genealogy of an idea or an information. Secondly, they also bear the imprint of the practice of history, serving as the 'material expression of scientific activity itself'.<sup>28</sup> This archive has a third feature: all the raw data collected during the research process, whether published or not, can be reactivated by future researchers. This feature is central to the sociological approach to fieldwork, through the notion of 'revisit': scientific or research archives can be revisited in order to challenge previous hypotheses and to create new intellectual paradigms.<sup>29</sup> This third dimension is evident in the context of Tāyya's archives: they were requisitioned by Hāyla Šəllāse and brought to the imperial palace in 1924.<sup>30</sup> Həruy, who worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1927 to 1936, first as director general and later as foreign minister, had access to them and probably studied Tāyya's works, as he was himself a historian in charge of writing the history of Ethiopia for the

25 The archive file was titled 'New Kəbra nagašt' by the archivists at the National Archive and Library Agency (NALA). Bahru Zewde commented on the choice of this title in Bahru Zewde 2002, 146–147.

26 For a discussion about this debate, see Asfa Wossen Asserate 1980; Bahru Zewde 2002, 151. Həruy began his *Tārika nagašt*, conceived as a general history of Ethiopia, in the 1920s and sent it to the Goḥa Səba printing press in 1936. Unfortunately, the Italians seized Həruy's belongings the same year, including the original manuscript. The pages that had already been printed were dispersed. Part of the manuscript was reconstructed after the World War II and Asfa Wossen proposed a partial edition, editing and translating into German only the part relating to the history of the Šawā region (Asfa Wossen Asserate 1980).

27 Asfa Wossen Asserate 1980.

28 Müller 2006, 5. Bertrand Müller's discussion of social science archives is based on the archives of intellectuals working in academic disciplines. It seems to me, however, that his reflections on the specific characteristics of these archives can be applied outside the academic field and shed light on historiographical practices that are not necessarily part of a Western genealogy of historiography.

29 Laferté et al. 2018.

30 Bahru Zewde 2002, 151.

government. It doesn't mean that he directly copied them, but it is likely that he was inspired by the methodology and the content gathered by his contemporary. The study of these archives thus plays an essential role in understanding how historical knowledge is developed in Ethiopia, how historians work, the sources they rely on, the methodologies they follow. Archives can also rehabilitate works that, despite not being published or completed, still constitute contributions to historiographical field. Sven Rubenson's comments on Tāyya's work are quite revealing in this regard:

Tayye had many other interests, above all theological, and he did not necessarily see recording in script as essential but quoted the Amharic proverb 'A teacher's mouth is better than a book'. His contribution to Ethiopian historiography was limited to *Ye-Ityopya Hezb Tarik*, essentially an ethnographical survey of Ethiopia.<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to Rubenson's assertion, the scholar's archives clearly show the extent of his research and interests, which went far beyond his *History of the Ethiopian People*. The confusion probably stems from the fact that the latter work is the only one published.

Interest in research archives, and more specifically in the personal archives of Ethiopian intellectuals who operated outside academic circles, has been very limited until now. The study of Ethiopian historiography began to be written, from the 1950s and the creation of the university, within the framework of a Western and academic definition of history. In particular, it was defined in opposition to past forms of writing history, associated both with genres—chronicle and hagiography—and with sociological profiles, with historians writing in the service of the government. This dissociation between two worlds of knowledge has contributed to the invisibility, or minimization, of the work of the latter. The archives of these historians have therefore been little used, with the exception of the archives of 'Alaqā Tāyya, despite the fact that they sometimes offer a more comprehensive view of their work, that goes beyond the corpus of published works alone. Finally, these archives are essential for a form of reflexivity in social sciences: by historicizing historical practice, it is possible to assess the social and political determinisms that impact knowledge production.<sup>32</sup> The political role of historians writing in Amharic and their proximity to power have been sometimes used to discredit their work. Bahru Zewde's stance on the generation of intellectuals after the liberation in 1941 is a case in point: he compares their activities to the 'assiduous cultivation of the emperor's personality cult', suggesting that their loyalty to the king outweighed social and political criticism,

31 Rubenson 2003, 148–149.

32 Müller 2006, 4–6.

which he argues only became prominent from the 1960s onwards.<sup>33</sup> Beletu Kebede, a historian who ran a programme on Ethiopian historiography in Amharic for the *Maison des études éthiopiennes* in the 1990s, spoke of post-war historiography in even less flattering terms:

Often of modest quality, they are the work of amateurs who write their memories or try their hand at the historical genre out of personal interest. War memories (the Italo–Ethiopian war) and biographies are the predominant genres. However, a few individuals manage to escape this ‘mediocrity’.<sup>34</sup>

The generation of Ethiopian historians after the war has indeed been largely overlooked in the history of historiography until the recent works of James De Lorenzi, who briefly introduces the most notable personalities of the period and their works, and Sara Marzagora, who evaluates the relationship of these intellectuals with the press, attempting to better define their relationship with power and censorship.<sup>35</sup> However, it seems that to understand the history of the relationship between power and historiography, it is possible to go beyond the printed corpus and/or the works of Ethiopian historians, whether printed or manuscript. Preliminary files and note-taking documents allow a more critical analysis of the historical narrative and of the author’s thought process. By comparing them with published works, it is sometimes possible to observe any form of manipulation that might affect historians’ texts, and sometimes to identify their margins of manoeuvre. In the following sections, I present some archival sources that can be used to draw a more comprehensive vision of Ethiopian historiography.

## **2 Identification of Historical Research Archives in Ethiopia: Presentation of Available Collections**

### **2.1 Taking Notes: A Practice Reshaped at the End of the Nineteenth Century**

Note-taking is not a phenomenon exclusive to modern historiography in Ethiopia; a large number of manuscripts from precedent periods contain marginal notes, some of which constitute genuine historical texts, such as the notes of *’Abbā Pāwlos* in the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> However, it is challenging to pinpoint when these notes began to be used to later produce historiographical writings—that is, to articulate a phase of research and information gathering and the devel-

33 Bahru Zewde 2002, 202.

34 Beletu Kebede 1992, 54.

35 De Lorenzi 2015; Marzagora 2023.

36 The notes were qualified as ‘autobiography’ by Conti Rossini (1918), but Anaïs Wion recently challenged this classification (Wion 2024).

opment of an ordered narrative. A comprehensive review of historiographical note-taking forms far exceeds the scope of this article. Nevertheless, from the early twentieth century onwards, there are several instances of Ethiopian historians taking notes in the course of their research, without of course indicating an absence of the practice before. We know that 'Alaḳā Tāyya undertook a scientific journey to Germany in 1905 at the request of King Mənilək II to consult European collections of Ethiopian manuscripts. During his journey, he kept a journal, the original of which has been preserved by *Qes* Badimā.<sup>37</sup> Aleme Eshete, who consulted it, describes it as 'a small notebook with dates for 1905', in which the scholar notes the different stages of his journey and keeps track of the manuscripts he was able to see.<sup>38</sup> The habit of note-taking did not originate during this journey since Tāyya had also brought back a notebook to Europe, in which he had recorded a text in Amharic about the Prophet Muhammad and the spread of Islam in Ethiopia, as well as a collection of Quranic texts in Amharic and Arabic.<sup>39</sup> This collection resulted from notes taken during interviews he led with Muslim scholars from Yəfāg, in Bəgemdər. They translated texts and Quranic verses from Arabic to Amharic, which the 'alaḳā likely used as a basis for writing his text on the history of Islam in Ethiopia.<sup>40</sup> Alessandro Gori also suggests that these notes served him much later in writing Chapter 17 of his work *Ya'ityopyā ḥəzb tārik (History of the People of Ethiopia)*, in which he briefly outlines the history of Islam. Similarly, he probably used his notebooks to reproduce, in his correspondence with Mənilək, the list of manuscripts he had observed in Germany.<sup>41</sup> It is evident that note-taking is an integral part of the historian's daily research life, used to preserve information collected in the field, reactivate it during the writing of historical texts, and circulate it. Tāyya, for example, showed his notes to Eugen Mittwoch of the University of Berlin, who edited and translated them into German in 1915.<sup>42</sup>

Other examples of these notebooks can be found in the history of Ethiopian historiography. In his work *Guardians of Tradition*, James De Lorenzi continues the work of Bahru Zewde by incorporating new profiles into his overview of the intellectual history of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>43</sup> This includes historians who oper-

37 *Qes* Badimā Yalew (1883–1973) was associated with the Swedish Evangelical Mission. He served at 'Ēntotto Makāna 'Iyāsus during the Italian occupation and is said to have started working as a chronicler for the government after 1941. He had in his possession not only the personal notebook of 'Alaḳā Tāyya but also a portion of Ḥəruy's *History of Ethiopia*, which the Italians had attempted to disperse (Asfa Wossen Asserate 1980).

38 Aleme Eshete 1971, 16.

39 Gori 1999.

40 *Ibid.*, 67.

41 Aleme Eshete 1971, 26.

42 Gori 1999, 67.

43 De Lorenzi 2015.

ated outside the circles of the 'Addis 'Ababā court, such as Gabra Mikā'el Gərmu. This Eritrean historian, relatively unknown before De Lorenzi's research, produced texts like his *Tārik itālyānnā ityopiā*, which is thoroughly analysed in *Guardians of Tradition*. Additionally, he left behind two notebooks deposited at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, dated from 1911 to 1930 for Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 324 and from 1917 to 1933/1934 for Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 325. These notebooks contain copies of manuscript texts, excerpts from printed histories and oral traditions, original compositions, and the scholar's notes regarding the entire documentary corpus.<sup>44</sup> These documents thus bear witness to two historiographical movements or stages: the collection of material and its commentary. De Lorenzi's perspective aims to portray Gərmu's intellectual profile and present his work *Tārik itālyānnā ityopiā* through the lens of a comprehensive historiography of colonialism. However, a separate study of the historian's notebooks is still pending.

The use of notebooks as a medium for note-taking appears to be a novelty in the modern period, especially in the twentieth century, very much linked to the introduction of paper into writing practices among Christian Ethiopians:<sup>45</sup> 'The usage of paper is limited to specific contexts, namely in manuscripts produced in Ethiopian communities abroad, especially in Egypt and Rome, or in manuscripts copied by and for European scholars especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.'<sup>46</sup>

It is indeed known that note-taking notebooks were used by Orientalists who brought them to Ethiopia to take notes themselves, as exemplified by Antoine d'Abbadie,<sup>47</sup> Eduard Rüppell,<sup>48</sup> or Casimir Mondon-Vidailhet.<sup>49</sup> While it is possible to interpret this development in Ethiopian historiographical methodology as a form of circulation of Western scientific practices, only a dedicated study of these materials could provide a better understanding of the phenomenon

44 Ibid., 73.

45 Paper has been used in the Islamic manuscript tradition in Ethiopia since the seventeenth century.

46 Bausi et al. 2015, 155–156.

47 The notebooks of Antoine d'Abbadie, preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, have very recently become part of a digital edition project led by Vanessa Desclaux and Anaïs Wion within the framework of the 'MSS d'Abbadie 2020–2023' project.

48 This German Orientalist studied in Ethiopia from 1832 to 1833 and carried out research in many fields. In particular, he collaborated with a famous intellectual from Gondar, the *Liq 'Aṣqu*, who passed on to him numerous texts and oral traditions on Ethiopian royalty. Eduard Rüppell's personal papers are deposited at the Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft.

49 The manuscript collection of Casimir Mondon-Vidailhet includes, in part, paper notebooks on which Ethiopian historical texts in Gə'əz and Amharic have been copied. See in this volume the article of Deresse Ayenachew.

and validate this hypothesis. However, it can already be said that the use of the notebook seems to coincide with the increasing mobility of intellectuals who travelled to Europe and visited the Šawā's neighbouring regions, but also with a growing interest in collecting new sources to write the history of a country bound together by the recent conquests of Mənilək II.

While the notebook serves as a specific form, note-taking can occur on any type of medium throughout the twentieth century, whether on bound manuscripts or loose sheets. Furthermore, notes are not the sole content of research archives; correspondences, draft versions, meeting reports, bibliographic lists, tables, and diagrams are also integral components. These archives, mostly unpublished, are found in the collections of scholarly figures deposited in national institutions like the Institute of Ethiopian Studies or the National Archive and Library Agency. They may also be digitized as part of campaigns, such as the one conducted by the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) project from 1973 to 1991.

## **2.2 At the National Archive and Library Agency: The Collections of Tāyya Gabra Māryām, Kabbada Tasammā, Marsə'e Hāzan Walda Qirqos, and Kasāte Tasammā Hābta Mikā'el**

First and foremost, it is important to highlight that the private archives of intellectuals pose different challenges to contemporary historians regarding accessibility and preservation. It is highly likely that the private libraries of local historians, especially in regions that have not yet undergone extensive research and digitization campaigns for manuscripts, may still be in the possession of their families.<sup>50</sup> These archives are also vulnerable because of their political nature; Hāyla Šəllāse's desire to return 'Alaqā Tāyya's archives to the imperial palace after his death is a case in point. The private archives of Gabra Šəllāse, a chronicler of Mənilək II's reign and head of the royal scriptorium, reputedly containing all his correspondences and notes, were lost during the Italian occupation.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Həruy Walda Šəllāse probably had many archives in his private library, which was visited by the Hungarian journalist Ladislav Farago in 1935,<sup>52</sup> but all his personal belongings were confiscated by the Italians in 1936, who also dispersed the printed proofs of his *Tārika nagašt* (*History of the Kings*), it is not hard to imagine that they may have confiscated or destroyed the archives of the foreign minister, who was well known to them.<sup>53</sup> It was only after the end of

50 Garretson 1978.

51 Bairu Tafla 1967, 137.

52 Farago 1935, 125.

53 The archives of the Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, which were later transferred to the archives of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri, contain numerous references to documents recovered and used by the Italians to set up their administration, in particular the cadastral

the occupation and the restoration of royal power that a National Library was established in 1943, followed by the creation of the National Archives in 1976.<sup>54</sup> The initial archives deposited were from the government of the imperial era, followed by the archives of the *gəbbi* and members of the royal family, including those of the Crown prince, Asfā Wasan.

The archives began to collect private collections from intellectuals in the 1990s. These include the archives of 'Alaqā Tāyya Gabra Māryām, deposited in 1993 after the death of his nephew Mangəstu Tāyya, the archives of Marsə'e Hāzan Walda Qirqos, deposited in 1996 by his son 'Amhā Hāzan, and on the same year the archives of Kabbada Tasammā, a historian and high dignitary of the imperial regime. Finally, the archives of Kasāte Tasammā Hābta Mikā'el, a lexicographer and author of a famous Amharic dictionary, were deposited in 2013/2014. These individuals, in addition to being members of Hāyla Śəllāse's government, all produced historical texts and preserved not only their published works but also their working documents.<sup>55</sup> These include loose sheets with handwritten notes, correspondences between scholars and between scholars and institutions, meeting minutes to develop a research program or distribute tasks for a collective translation, traces of the activities of the Ministry of the Pen and of the various newspapers in the country, etc.<sup>56</sup> To sum up, this is a heterogeneous collection of documents that gives us a glimpse of the many developments in the way history was written in the twentieth century, while at the same time enriching the bibliographies of both well-known and lesser-known historians. In the following sections of this work, I present an unpublished archive file from the Tāyya collection, produced not by the 'alaqā but by his nephew Mangəstu and which demonstrates the heuristic potential of these documents for the study of historiography.

archives of the city of 'Addis 'Ababā. Some of these documents were collected by the Ufficio Studi and then deposited in the ministry's archives. They formed an integral part of the requests for restitution made by Ethiopia to Italy from 1950 onwards. Həruy's personal archives, however, were never found in these collections.

54 Wion 2006.

55 Although I have not worked on these documents, the personal notebooks of 'Alaqā Kənfā, which are now at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, should be added to this list.

56 The Ministry of the Pen was established during the reign of Mənilək II, in 1907, deriving from the previous royal office of the royal secretary, the *ṣahāfe tə'əzāz*. The Minister of the Pen was initially tasked with overseeing the monarch's correspondence, composing government documents and decrees, and consolidating the archives of all ministries. From 1941 to 1955, it became the government's most powerful institution.

### 3 Towards a Practical History of Ethiopian Historiography: The Archives of *Bālambarās* Mangəstu Tāyya

#### 3.1 Mangəstu Tāyya, A Government-Linked Historian of the 1940s–1960s: The Legacy of an Active Scholarship

The *'Alaqā* Tāyya collection comprises sixty-four files, spanning from 1892/1893 to 1974, forming a rather eclectic archival ensemble. As mentioned earlier, it includes his working documents for *Ya 'Ityōpya həzb tārīk*, preliminary documents for his *Kəbra nagašt*, and a Gə'əz history of King Ləbna Dəngəl. However, it also contains certain archives, unmentioned in the catalogue, of Tāyya's nephew, *Bālambarās* Mangəstu Tāyya, who presented himself as his adoptive son. Mangəstu Tāyya is a relatively obscure figure in historiography, primarily recognized for his role in promoting his uncle's work.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, he appears to have been quite active in Ethiopian historiography during the 1940s and 1950s. He first collaborated with an office dedicated to history writing within the Ministry of the Pen, of which Marsə'e Hāzan was the director. This office was set up by Hāyla Šəllāse in 1944 to centralize the country's historical production, write biographies of members of the royal family and collect and translate texts in Gə'əz and European languages into Amharic. In 1944, Hāyla Šəllāse succeeded in ridding himself, partly thanks to the support of the United States, of any British attempts to establish a permanent presence in the country, after taking part in the liberation of Ethiopia from Italian troops. The sovereign's power remained nevertheless challenged internally by the patriots, who had resisted the Italians while the king was in exile in England. This office of history therefore came into being at a strategic time, when the king needed to reassert his legitimacy and when the country needed to write the history of the five years of occupation. It also aimed to collect the manuscripts and archives that had been scattered by the Italians and to equip the newly created National Library. Thus, in the catalogue of this office's activity, I found mention of a text by Mangəstu Tāyya entitled *Yaṭalāt zaman tārīk (History of the Time of Enemies)*, probably dated 1944 or 1945.<sup>58</sup> He also published a book in 1961/1962, *Qāla nəguša nagaštnā qəddus 'ədəl (The Word of King of the Kings, the Sacred Destiny)* in 'Addis 'Ababā. He finally wrote articles for several Ethiopian national newspapers, some of which dealt with historical matters.

57 Aleme Eshete 1971, 24; Bahru Zewde 2002, 151.

58 Marsə'e Hāzan Walda Qirqos, Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library Agency, 63.1.3.07.

### 3.2 A Historiographical Article aimed at Rewriting Dynastic History in 1967

One such article, published in 1967 in *'Addis zaman*, a newspaper that replaced the famous *Bərḥānenā salām* in 1941 as the government's main press organ,<sup>59</sup> addresses a historiographical question. The article notes disagreements among various Ethiopian historical works regarding the genealogy of Yā'əqob, son of King Ləbna Dəngəl (r. 1508–1540). The authors differ on the number of generations separating Yā'əqob from Sāhla Šəllāse (r. 1806–1847), the grandfather of Mənilək II, and on the names of his descendants. The stakes are high: Yā'əqob is crucial for the Šawān dynasty to connect with the lineage of medieval kings, supposedly descending from King Solomon. Demonstrating the link between Yā'əqob and Sāhla Šəllāse, and then between Sāhla Šəllāse and Ḥāyla Šəllāse, involves a precarious historiographical task, highly controlled by royal power and central to the legitimacy of the latter on the Ethiopian throne.<sup>60</sup> The text is concise, consisting of an introduction where the author explains his motivations and a table in which he lists six works that, in his view, present divergent versions: *Ya'ityopyā ḥəzb tārik* by 'Alaqā Tāyya (1918), *Wāzemā* by Ḥərūy (1928), *Ya'alam tārik* by 'Ato Yoḥannəs Walda Masqal (1943/1944), *Maşəḥeta 'Amin* by 'Aklilu Bərḥānu Walda Qirqos (1953/1954), *YaMənilək Tārik* by Gabra Šəllāse (1967),<sup>61</sup> and *YaGondar g<sup>w</sup>abəññat* by Marsə'e Ḥāzan Walda Qirqos (1946/1947). These historians have in common to move in the literary circles of the capital and write their works while holding high government positions during the reign of Ḥāyla Šəllāse, or Mənilək II in the case of Gabra Šəllāse and Tāyya. This may explain why they were all published, except for 'Alaqā Tāyya's work, at a time when few books were.<sup>62</sup> Overall, it is a socially and politically homogeneous corpus. These historians are Christians, have received traditional religious training, and are mostly from the highlands, especially from the Šawā region. Mangəstu Tāyya's review thus directly targets a specific category of historians, belonging to the dominant elites of the kingdom and representing the most well-known figures in twentieth-century Amharic historiography. By citing the genealogy of the reigning monarch in their works, they align with longstanding historiographical practices, as dynastic lists are one of the most utilized genres in Ethiopian historiography. Regarding the reasons for this review, he presents his text as a general invitation to write a definitive version of the royal genealogy: 'Since this situation confuses the reader, being planned

59 Guidi 2020, 110.

60 Crummey 1988; Ancel and Smidt 2013.

61 This date corresponds to the Amharic text edition prepared by Marsə'e Ḥāzan and his team. The original text of the chronicle was written by his *Şahāfe tə'əzāz* Gabra Šəllāse (1844–1912).

62 Ficquet and Şiferaw Bekele 2005, 86.

right away and verified, I strongly recommend that a clarifying text should be published and printed.’<sup>63</sup>

This clarification is a matter of great concern to him, as he emphasizes later in the article that only by verifying the genealogy can the crown of King Solomon be prevented from falling into the wrong hands. He asserts that Yəkunno ’Amlāk regained the Solomonic crown, lost to the Zāg<sup>w</sup>e dynasty for 333 years, because the lineage was not broken. Similarly, the Šawān lineage has remained unbroken since ’Abeto Yā’əqob, a fact that the genealogy must confirm.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting that Mangəstu Tāyya’s article could appear in *’Addis zaman*, as the newspaper was regularly subject to government censorship, especially regarding historical articles.<sup>65</sup> However, this particular article seems problematic: although the author emphasizes the indisputability of the genealogical continuity between King Ləbna Dəngəl and Hāyla Šəllāse I, he still highlights inconsistencies within historiography and, moreover, within historiography produced by intellectuals in the service of the government. To make his point comprehensible, the author specifies that he has compiled the six different versions in a comparative table so that the reader can easily see that neither the names nor the number of generations match. Each column corresponds to a work: the author’s name, the publication date, and the page number where the genealogy can be found are listed in the upper caption.

፩ኛ	፪ኛ	፫ኛ	፬ኛ	፭ኛ	፮ኛ
፲፱፻፲ ዓ/ም/ አለቃ ታዮ ካሳተሙት	፲፱፻፳፩ ዓ/ም/ ብሉቱን ኔታ ጎሩይ	፲፱፻፴፯ ዓ/ም/ ኦ.ዩ. ዮሐንስ ወ/ማ/	፲፱፻፵፯ ዓ/ም/ አከለለ ብርሃን ወ/ቁር	፲፱፻፶፱ ዓ/ም/ ከታተሙው ከዳግማዊ	፲፱፻፹፱ ዓ/ም/ ብሉታ መርከፍ ጎዘን
ከኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ከገጽ ፶፭ና፷	ካሳተሙት ከምዕራፍ ፲፩ ከገጽ ፶፯	ካሳተሙት የዓለም ታሪክ ከም፵፮ ከገጽ ፩፻፵፪	ቆስ ካሳተሙት መጽሔት ኦሚን ከገጽ ፴፯	ግንደክ ታሪክ ከም/፲ ከገጽ ፴፬	ወልደ ቁርቆስ ካሳተሙት የገናደር ጉብኝት ከገጽ ፯
የዕቅብ ነጋሢ ሱብስቲያኖስ አብዮ አምኃ ኢየሱስ አስፋወሰን ወሰን ሰገድ ገጉሥ ሣህለ ሥላሴ	የዕቅብ ሥግወ ቃል ወረደ ቃል ሰንበልት ነጋሢ ሱብስቲ አብዮ አምኃ ኢየሱስ አስፋ ወሰን ወሰን ሰገድ ገጉሥ ሣህለ ሥላሴ	የዕቅብ ሥግወ ቃል ወረደ ቃል ሱብስቲ ነጋሢ ሱብስቲ አብዮ አምኃ ኢየሱስ አስፋ ወሰን ወሰን ሰገድ ገጉሥ ሣህለ ሥላሴ	የዕቅብ ሥግወ ቃል ወረደ ቃል ሱብስቲ ነጋሢ ሱብስቲያኖስ አብዮ አስፋ ወሰን ወሰን ሰገድ ገጉሥ ሣህለ ሥላሴ	የዕቅብ ሥግወ ቃል ነጋሢ ሱብስቲያኖስ አብዮ አምኃ ኢየሱስ አስፋ ወሰን ወሰን ሰገድ ገጉሥ ሣህለ ሥላሴ	የዕቅብ ሥግወ ቃል ወረደ ቃል ሱብስቲ ነጋሢ ከርሱቸስ ሱብስቲ የኖስ አብዮ አምኃ ኢየሱስ አስፋ ወሰን ወሰን ሰገድ ገጉሥ ሣህለ ሥላሴ
ተራ ቁጥር ፩	ተራ ቁጥር ፲፩	ተራ ቁጥር ፲፩	ተራ ቁጥር ፲	ተራ ቁጥር ፱	ተራ ቁጥር ፲፩

Fig. 1 Reproduction of Mangəstu Tāyya’s table.

63 Mangəstu Tāyya 1967, 2.

64 For an analysis on the term ‘unbroken’ in royal Ethiopian ideology, see Marzagora 2020.

65 Marzagora 2023.

This table reveals a form of evolution in the Šawān genealogical tradition, which becomes more elaborate over time. New names appear, such as Warada Qāl or Ləbsa Qāl, to fill in the chronological gaps that are particularly noticeable in 'Alaqā Tāyya's work: he jumps directly from Yā'əqob, who lived in the first half of the sixteenth century, to Nagāssi Krəstos, the historical founder of the Šawān dynasty, whose reign dates are estimated around 1682–1703. While the author does not draw specific conclusions from this table, presented at the end of the article, he does mention that he already published it sixteen years earlier, on 6 June 1951, in issue 348 of the *Ba'Ertriyā dəmş* journal.<sup>66</sup> This article decidedly has a prescriptive aim, Mangəstu Tāyya republishes it because no one has written a definitive genealogy of Yā'əqob since its initial publication. The text, as printed in 'Addis zaman, does not fit our preliminary definition of historical research archive, it is not a working document. However, in Mangəstu Tāyya's archives, mixed with his uncle's collection, various draft versions of this article and the different notes taken by the author during its preparation can be found. These documents fully belong to the category of research archives and provide significant insights into the text's development process, the author's working methods, and the censorship process to which press articles were subjected.

### 3.3 Fifteen Years of Preparation and the Sanction of Censorship: An Insight into Mangəstu Tāyya's Personal Archive

The dossier consists of twenty-four sheets of paper, all handwritten.<sup>67</sup> The first item is a set of three stapled sheets containing the handwritten version of the article printed in 'Addis zaman. Two postal dispatch bulletins, destined for 'Addis zaman and 'Ityopiā dəms,<sup>68</sup> are also stapled to these sheets. A version of the table is also attached, differing from the one sent to the editorial office as it contains eight columns. Two layers of writing are visible on the document: one in blue ink and another in red ink. A new column, dedicated to the genealogy of Yā'əqob as described in a work by Takla Şādəq Mak<sup>w</sup>əriyā, has been added in red pen. Another column, however, was already integrated into the original document written in blue ink: the one dedicated to Berhanou Dinke's work, *Ya'aččər tārık (Short History)*, published in 1941 EC (1948/1949). His work has disappeared from the printed version of the article and the table, suggesting direct censorship. At the time of the article's publication in 1967, it had already been two years since Berhanou Dinke was dismissed from his position as the United States ambassador, under unclear circumstances. Having shifted to be-

66 Ta'ammərāt 'Amānu'el, an intellectual born in Gondar in 1886 and a senior official in the Ministry of Education in the 1940s, also published extensively in this journal.

67 The file is registered as Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library Agency, 64.1.43 in the Tāyya's collection.

68 I was unable to find out if the article was also published in this journal.

come one of the most outspoken critics of Ḥāyḷa Šəllāse's government, he went into exile in the United States and published several works, where he particularly denounced the regime's control over the press.

He introduced the public press; but again it is only an empty show, serving to glorify his name and show his picture, which he arranged to have taken, now with farmers, encouraging agriculture, and then with the poor, distributing alms; one time with the army, in a marshal's uniform, and another time in his office, in civilian dress, busy with the administration of the empire.<sup>69</sup>

In essence, the former ambassador was not wrong, as the column for his work and his name were indeed removed from the original table by the author. However, the censorship was not very meticulous, and his name still appears in the second column of the article when Mangəstu Tāyya enumerates the different historians in narrative form. Censorship was a systematic operation in the editing process of Ethiopian newspapers at that time and particularly affected the editorial board of *'Addis zaman*, accustomed to publishing historical articles. Sara Marzagora has recently revisited an episode from this history: at the time of the second version of Tāyya's article, in 1967, Bərhānu Zarihun was the chief editor and had been sanctioned several times for his editorial choices by the government. Among other things, he published a review of a book on Tewodros, *And lannātu*, which the reviewer criticized because, according to him, Tewodros's merits were more relevant to justify his ascent to the throne of Ethiopia than his Solomonic ancestry. This interpretation of the legitimacy of power directly contradicted the 1955 Constitution, as Sara Marzagora noted, which reserved the throne of the King of Kings of Ethiopia exclusively for the descendants of King Solomon. Therefore, the article caused a scandal, and Bərhānu Zarihun, who had authorized its publication, was suspended from his position as editor.<sup>70</sup> Historical articles were taken seriously by the government, granting them enough potential harm to warrant censorship in case of ideas contrary to the royal ideology. One can also see the direct effect of the censorship on the methodology of the article itself: the comparison of sources, at the heart of historical methodology, is diminished by the deletion of one of the references.

As emphasized, Mangəstu Tāyya's article highlighting the inconsistencies in the official historiographical discourse may seem surprising. The reason lies in the article's perspective: without challenging Ḥāyḷa Šəllāse's Solomonic ancestry for a moment, the inconsistencies in historiography are directly attributed to the historians. Indeed, the rest of the dossier provides an answer to the question of the historians' responsibility. In the draft, rewritten and crossed out in several

69 Berhanou Dinke 1970, 34.

70 Marzagora 2023, 172.

places, there is a text titled ‘The Children of Sāhla Śállāse’, which somewhat constitutes a sequel to the initial article that only mentioned the generations separating Yā‘əqob from Sāhla Śállāse. In this text, he complains that despite the publication of his article in 1951, urging historians to publish a clarified genealogy of the royal family, contemporary publications still contain conflicting versions. Takla Śādəq Mak<sup>w</sup>əriyā, in his work *Ya’Itiyopiā tārīk kaTewodros eska Hāyla Śállāse* (*The History of Ethiopia from Tewodros to Hāyla Śállāse*), published in 1953/1954, mentions seven children for the direct branch, while Tāddasa Zawalde, in *Ya’abetohun yā ‘əqob təwəldnā aččər tārīk* (*The Short History of ‘Abeto Yā ‘əqob’s Descendance*), published in 1955/1956, mentions seven daughters and four sons. These differences create a problem that needs to be addressed, according to Mangəštu Tāyya’s:

Regarding the genealogy of ‘Abeto Yā‘əqob, I mentioned earlier that those who wrote it, ‘Alaqā Tāyya, *Blättengētā* Həruy, *Blättā* Marsə‘e Hāzan Walda Qirqos, and ‘Ato Berhanou Dinke, did not agree. Therefore, I had written a note, published in issue 348 of *The Voice of Eritrea* on 1 June 1943 EC, requesting that it [the genealogy] be verified and put in writing. Now, I am looking at the publications of Takla Śādəq Mak<sup>w</sup>əriyā and ‘Ato Tāddasa Zawalde, and as I mentioned earlier, one mentioned fewer children than the other. ‘Ato Takla Śādəq Mak<sup>w</sup>əriyā, however, promised to write it in a later history. But if he is too busy and this is not written, if one finds four children of King Sāhla Śállāse in one book but not in another, future generations will still be troubled by these texts. To prevent this, I emphasize that the genealogy from Yā‘əqob Ləbna Dəngəl to the present day must be written after being verified.<sup>71</sup>

This text is interesting because it first allows us to understand why Mangəštu Tāyya wanted to reissue his article sixteen years later: he regrets that contemporary historians, Takla Śādəq and Tāddasa Zawalde, did not take his recommendations into account. He calls for a definitive version of this genealogy, to make it understandable to future generations but, most importantly, to secure royal power. He later emphasizes in the text that every time the Solomonic crown has slipped from the hands of its legitimate descendants, it is the written genealogy that has provided proof of the continuity of the line of Solomon and thus allowed the crown to return to them. Should we see this article as a response, by the intelligentsia, to the various plots to end the royal regime that took place from 1951 onwards? A first attempt was made in 1951 by the *Bitwaddad* Nagāš, with the aim of eliminating the emperor and establishing a republic. A second

71 Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library Agency, 64.1.43, fol. 11, in the Tāyya’s collection.

attempted coup was orchestrated by two brothers, Garmāme and Mangəstu Newāy, in December 1960 while Hāyla Śəllāse was on a state visit to Brazil. While the emperor's throne remained intact that year, the Nəwāy brothers' call for reform resonated with the radical student movements that opposed the regime during the 1960s and 1970s. This opposition occasionally resulted in violent incidents, such as the murder of several students and their leader, Tilahun Gezaw, in 1969. Mangəstu Tāyya's article could therefore be interpreted as a historian's reaction to a government grappling with uncertainty. He defends the idea that historiography, in its genealogical form, plays an essential role in maintaining and protecting royal power. Based on this stance, the early historians of historiography would likely have relegated him to the status of a 'traditional' scholar, serving an ideology never questioned.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that this dossier allows for some nuances in the distinctions made by historians of the period. While Mangəstu Tāyya does not question the foundations of the Solomonic narrative, he has conducted extensive historiographical research, tracing different genealogies in the major historical works of the period. Indeed, the rest of the dossier has preserved traces of this research: one finds on loose sheets his various notes, preliminary comparative tables, the genealogy of the Śawān kings in the form of a list, as well as the genealogy of Gondar kings. There are several stages in this work, which can be seen through the use of different tools: notes in red ink add, delete, and complete the initial historical information gleaned from the works studied. One can also see the evolution of his corpus: between 1951 and 1967, he added new publications to it, reaching a total of ten volumes. It is worth noting that with the exception of the book by 'Alaqā Tāyya, *Ya'ityopyā həzb tārik*, which was edited and printed only in 1987,<sup>72</sup> all the books studied by Mangəstu Tāyya are Amharic books printed in 'Addis 'Ababā. Although we have only fragmentary information about his biography, we know that he lived in Gondar, the city from which the postal dispatches were sent, information that is corroborated by Bairu Tafla.<sup>73</sup> The works of Ethiopian historians, even if printed in small quantities, circulated outside the capital and its elites. In this regard, we know that books printed by *Bərhanenā salām*, a publishing house established and run by the government, were sent to influential people. This is the case with Marsə'e Hāzan's book *YaGondar g'abəññat*, cited by Mangəstu Tāyya: in the archives of the former, there is a list dated 1947 of the people to whom he sent thirty-eight printed copies of his book, out of the sixty-five received from the printing press.<sup>74</sup> Although Mangəstu Tāyya does not appear on this list, one can imagine

72 Hudson and Tekeste Negash 1987.

73 Bairu Tafla 2003.

74 Three copies were also sent to the National Library. See Addis Ababa, National Archive and Library Agency, 63.1.30.10., in Marsə'e Hāzan archives.

that he may have obtained the book from an acquaintance or acquired it directly from the author in 'Addis 'Ababā and brought it back to Gondar. This circulation of works could indeed be rapid: Mənilək's chronicle was printed in Amharic in 1959 EC (1967), and it is already included into the historian's article published in the same year. The documents collected and preserved by Mangəstu Tāyya over a period of about fifteen years to prepare and update an article thus allow us to witness history in the making. They once again emphasize the role of these archives in the development of knowledge and its renewal. It is likely that the historian kept all his notes to update the first version of his article and used them in the process of writing the second version. As a source of practical application, these documents provide access to an alternative perspective on historical research outside the academic realm. This research led him to collect documents, keep abreast of the latest publications and share the results of his studies. Mangəstu Tāyya's position is therefore ambiguous: he writes with objectives in line with those of the ruling power, but he also writes to advance historiography. The process of elaboration has as much to tell us as the political purpose of this knowledge and deserves equal attention from historiography.

## Conclusion

The history of Ethiopian historiography was initially written as a history of the discipline, spearheaded by members of the history department at Addis Ababa University. Over the past two decades, new perspectives have emerged, with one of the most important being the emphasis on local and regional historiographies that run parallel to, or even in opposition to, the nationalist historiography produced by scholars in the service of the government. These studies have brought to light lesser-known sources in local languages and new historians' profiles, demonstrating that there are multiple ways of writing history in Ethiopia that go well beyond the dichotomy between traditional scholars and modern professional historians.<sup>75</sup>

The corpus of archives that preserve the traces of historical research remains, with a few exceptions, a largely unexplored body of work. However, it has the potential to provide, through the tools of intellectual history, a social history of historical practices that transcends generational and ideological divides established by the history of historiography until now. These documents show that the 1940s and 1950s were a dynamic period in historiography. Individuals worked outside the university to collect sources, translate texts from Gə'əz and European languages into Amharic, and disseminate their research results through writing books and publishing articles. A major contribution of these archives is to reveal collective forms of knowledge production that are not al-

75 De Lorenzi 2015; Guidi 2015; Herman 2015; Hummel 2019; Sisay Sahile Beyene 2021.

ways apparent in the biographies of twentieth-century intellectuals. Correspondences and minutes of meetings show that these historians discussed, met each other, and read each other's works. This can help to contextualize well-known publications. For instance, Ta'ammərāt 'Amānu'el's article 'Səla Ityopyā darā-syān', often cited in the history of historiography, is recognized for its critical stance towards the Solomonic myth as a sign of modern historical thought. However, it is rarely mentioned that this text was actually written by the author at the request of Marsə'e Hāzan, on behalf of the office responsible for official historiography within the Ministry of the Pen. Thus, the history department of Addis Ababa University was not the first collective experience of historical work in Ethiopia, nor was it the first professional framework, as the office paid historians for their work. A different chronology and sociology of the history of historiography is possible through the archives, especially by presenting the activities of historians forgotten by the academy. Research archives allow to reflect on the means by which knowledge was disseminated in the country, shedding light on processes that are difficult to document, such as the censorship of the press from the 1940s onwards. They are crucial for writing a political history of knowledge in Ethiopia and reveal Hāyla Śəllāsē and his government's influence on the intellectuals working around it. These intellectuals, far from being naive about the royal narrative, especially regarding the Solomonic line, can be both distant from the historical construction and aware of its fictional character, and want to preserve it because it is assimilated to the stability of the political regime. Finally, the act of preservation and archiving emerges as a political act: one does not publish material that contradicts the royal ideology, but one does not necessarily cause it to disappear either.

## Archives

National Archive and Library Agency, 'Addis 'Ababā.

Marsə'e Hāzan Walda Qirqos's archive collection.

'Alaqā Tāyya Gabra Māryām's archive collection.

## References

- Aleme Eshete 1971. 'Alaqa Taye Gabra Mariam (1861–1924)', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, 25 (1971), 14–30.
- Ancel, S. and W. Smidt 2013. 'Legitimization of a Pretender to the Throne: A Short Amharic–French Biography of Hāyla Sellāsē I Published in 1930', *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 28/1 (2013), 203–238.
- Asfa Wossen Asserate 1980. *Die Geschichte von Shoa (Aethiopien) 1700–1865* (Wiesbaden: Studien zur Kulturkunde, 1980).
- Bahru Zewde 2000. 'A Century of Ethiopian Historiography', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 33/2 (2000), 1–26.



- Fayola, T. 2006. *Myth, History & Society: The Collected Works of Adiele Afigbo* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006).
- Ficquet, E. and Shiferaw Bekele 2005. 'Le marché du livre éthiopien à l'épreuve de la diversité', *Politique africaine*, 99 (2005), 83–96.
- Ficquet, E. and A. Mbodj-Pouye 2009. 'Cultures de l'écrit en Afrique: Anciens débats, nouveaux objets', *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 64/4 (2009), 751–764.
- Garretson, P. 1978. 'Some Amharic Sources for Modern Ethiopian History, 1889–1935', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 41/2 (1978), 283–296.
- Gori, A. 1999. 'La poesia di alaqa Täyya in onore di Šah Zakkäryäs', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, 43 (1999), 65–112.
- Guidi, P. 2015. 'Amarrer une périphérie à la nation éthiopienne: Trois histoires du Wolaita depuis 1964', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 117–118/2 (2015), 18–23.
- 2020. *Éduquer la nation en Éthiopie: École, État et identités dans le Wolaita (1941–1991)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2020).
- Harneit-Sievers, A. 2002. *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies in Africa and South Asia*, African Social Studies Series, 2 (Leiden–Boston, MA: Brill, 2002).
- Herman, M. 2015. '(Re)writing the History of Goğğam in Ancient and Mediaeval Times: The Prism of the Nineteenth-Century Regional Historiography', in A. Bausi, A. Gori, and D. Nonsnitsin, eds, *Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies: Proceedings of the International Conference Manuscripts and Texts, Languages and Contexts, the Transmission of Knowledge in the Horn of Africa* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 119–142.
- Hiribarren, V. 2020. 'Tournant archivistique et tournant numérique en Afrique: Entretien avec Vincent Hiribarren', *Sources: Materials & Fieldwork in African Studies*, 1 (2020), 273–282.
- Hirsch, B. 2013. 'Genèse de l'historiographie dans le royaume chrétien d'Éthiopie', in F.-X. Fauvelle and B. Hirsch, *Les ruses de l'historien: Essais d'Afrique et d'ailleurs en hommage à Jean Boulègue* (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 137–175.
- 2020. 'Le récit des guerres du roi 'Amda Šeyon contre les sultanats islamiques, fiction épique du XVe siècle', *Médiévales*, 79/2 (2020), 91–116.
- Hudson, G. and Tekeste Negash 1987. *History of the People of Ethiopia* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1987).
- Iggers, G., E. Wang, and S. Mukherjee 2008. *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- Hummel, S. 2019. *Das hagiografische Werk zu Šarḍa Petros: Werkgenese und Teiledition*, Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie, Universität Hamburg (2019).
- John, A. and P. Sebald 2005. *An African Family Archives: The Lawsons of Little Popo/aneho (Togo) 1841–1938*, Sources of African History, 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Laferté, G., P. Pasquali, and N. Renahy 2018. *Le laboratoire des sciences sociales: Histoires d'enquêtes et revisites* (Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2018).
- Marzagora, S. 2020. 'Refashioning the Ethiopian Monarchy in the Twentieth Century: An Intellectual History', *Global Intellectual History*, 7/3 (2020), 533–557.
- 2023. 'The Emperor, the Intellectuals and the Press', in T. J. Gajarawala, N. Srivastava, R. S. Rajan, and J. Webb, eds, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Postcolonial Print Cultures* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 167–187.
- Mangästu Täyya 1967. 'ጌጥራ' ('Yəṭara', 'Address'), አዲስ ጊዜ (Addis zaman, 'New era') (10 Naḥase 1959 EC = 16 August 1967 CE).

- Messay Kebede 2003. 'Eurocentrism and Ethiopian Historiography: Deconstructing Semitization', *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 1/1 (2003), 1–19.
- Moyn, S. and A. Sartori 2013. *Global Intellectual History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- Müller, B. 2006. 'À la recherche des archives de la recherche: Problèmes de sens et enjeux scientifiques', *Genèses*, 63/2 (2006), 4–24.
- Riffard, C. 2023. 'Dans les archives littéraires francophones africaines: Approche génétique et constitution de corpus', *Sources: Materials & Fieldwork in African Studies*, 5 (2023), 43–69.
- Rubenson, S. 2003. 'Ethiopian Historiography in the Twentieth Century', in R. M. Voigt, ed., *Die athiopischen Studien im 20. Jahrhundert. Ethiopian Studies in the 20th Century* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2003).
- Sisay Sahile Beyene 2021. *A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Treatise: Tārik Zamədra Gondar (The History of the Land of Gondar)*, PhD dissertation, Universität Hamburg (2021).
- Solomon Gebreyes Beyene 2019. 'The Tradition and Development of Ethiopic Chronicle Writing (Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries): Production, Source and Purpose', in A. Bausi, A. Camplani, and S. Emmel, eds, *Time and History in Africa. Tempo e Storia in Africa*, Africana Ambrosiana, 4 (Milano: Accademia Ambrosiana, 2019), 145–160.
- 2022. 'Pagan Religious Practices in Medieval Ethiopia: Development and Resistance of the Christian Kingdom (1434–1468)', *Entangled Religions*, 11/5 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.11.2022.9864>.
- Tāddasa Ta'ammərät 1992. 'ተረጎፍ ፡ ታሪክ ፡ በኢትዮጵያ' ('Taratnā tārik ba' Ityopyā', 'Tales and history in Ethiopia'), *ወይይት (Wayyət, 'Dialogue')*, 1/2 (1992), 71–97.
- Ta'ammərät 'Amānu'el 1997. *ስለ ኢትዮጵያ ደራሲያን* ('Səla Ityopyā darāsyan', 'About Ethiopian writers'), *Bulletin de la Maison des études éthiopiennes*, 11 (1997), 33–68.
- Volff, B. 2013. *La perception du pouvoir en Éthiopie à travers les biographies amhariques du ras Makwännən (1852–1906)*, PhD dissertation, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris.
- Wion, A. 2006. 'The National Archives and Library of Ethiopia: Six Years of Ethio–French Cooperation (2001–2006)', online paper (2006), <https://hal.science/hal-03775957v1>, accessed on 4 November 2023.
- 2024. 'Questioning Standards in Ethiopic Classical Writings through two Distinctive Features of the *Ḥatātā*: Autarchic Logic and First-Person Writing', in L. Cantor, J. Egid and Fasil Merawi, eds, *In Search of Zär'a Ya'əqob: On the History, Philosophy, and Authorship of the Ḥatātā Zär'a Ya'əqob and the Ḥatātā Wäldä Ḥəywät* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 67–90.
- Woolf, D. 2011. *A Global History of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

