

## The European Travelers and their Contributions in the History of Ethiopia

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### **Abstract:**

This paper deals with selected notes about European travelers respectively, (Alvares, F, Bruce, Sapeto, G, Massaia, G, Flad, J.M, Antonelli, P, ILG and A).whom they seem to be, played a fundamental role in Ethiopian history, in all fields of knowledge mentis. This includes spreading of Christianity and evangelization of indigenous population, with special reference to the rite of Catholicism, and its culture and linguistic variations. Hence their contributions cover many multifarious sides for example, social, economic and industrial frustrations status of the country, security destabilites, and administrative situation of the vast regional areas. Furthermore their well known reflects in the inertial Ethiopians's polices and their early foreign Affairs with their neighbours, and outside world countries in general, and European ones in particular.

### **المستخلص:**

تتناول هذه الورقة ملاحظات منتخبة تدور حول الرحالة الأوروبيين تبعاً (الفارز، جيمس بروس ، سابيتو الايطالي، وماسايا، فلاد، انتونلي واللج) والذين فيما يبدو إنهم أدوا دوراً مقدراً في تاريخ اثيوبيا في كافة مجالات المعرفة والتي اشتملت على حملات التبشير بالمسيحية والتتصير بين المستوطنين من السكان المحليين وغيرهم. هذا إضافة إلى مؤشرات على درجة من الخصوصية إلى تعاليم ومعتقدات المذهب الكاثوليكي وثقافته والأدبيات اللغوية، علاوة على ذلك فقد طغت إسهاماتهم على العديد من الأوجه المتنوعة من

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قبيل البنيات التحتية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والصناعية بالدولة والمعطيات الأمنية للاستقرار والتنظيم للأوضاع الإدارية بالمناطق الإقليمية النائية الممتدة الانتشار والإمام بانعكاسات السياسات الداخيلة لاثيوبيا والمبكر منها من شئون خارجية مع الدول الاخرى بالجوار وبلدان ماوراء البحار عموماً والأوروبية منها بصفة خاصة.

### **Introduction:**

Ethiopia is separated from southern Arabia by the Red Sea. Most probably the name is derived from the Greek and signifying land of burnt faces. It has long been the official designation of the country, still sometimes referred to abroad as Abyssinia. Probably had its origin in the term as Habashat, the name of one of the tribes in the east of the country, who were known to the area Arabs, as a result of which the Arabs extended the meaning to refer to the area in general as Habash. The word Habash came to be rendered in various European languages as Abassia, Abyssinia, Abyssinie, and Abessinien, etc. Arabs, seeking a derivation for the term, later identified it, probably incorrectly, with the Arab world for mixed race. Knowing this, Ethiopians tended to reject the word Abyssinia as the designation of their country, while often referring to themselves by the Amharic term Habasha. The Ethiopian Studies as a discipline was founded in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The man who started this great task was Job Ludolf (1624-1704), a German, born in Frank-furt in Main. He was one of the first Europeans to write the history of Ethiopia in Latin. His main sources were literary acquisitions which he was able to collect from different people, particularly from Abba Gregory, his Ethiopian teacher. The work shows how extensive his knowledge of Ethiopia was. It was translated immediately into English and French. Still today after two and half centuries, it is useful for anyone who wants to study the history of Ethiopia.

About one hundred and fifty years later another important Ethiopicist appeared again in Germany; this was August Dillman who lived from 1823-1824. If Ludolf is the founder of Ethiopian Studies in general, Dillman is the founder of scientific Ethiopian Studies in Europe. He published two serious studies on ancient Ethiopia in

German. Both these works are the result of long term and through studies of both primary and secondary sources in Geez and other languages. The critical approach which he employed in writing qualifies him as an objective and authoritative historian.

After Dillmann, Ethiopian Studies were not limited to Germany alone, but also expanded to other countries. In France, R. Basset added a new contribution by translating a chronicle in a very masterly way and commenting on it according to other available sources.

A prominent French scholar who devoted himself to Ethiopian Studies, was Antoine d' Abbadie (1810-1898), who together with his brother Arnaud, spent many years in Ethiopia and succeeded in achieving enormous results in different fields of human knowledge. During his ten years stay in Ethiopia, he worked mainly in the fields of history, geography, languages and natural sciences. The material which he collected in the above fields is accumulated in Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.

**Alvares, F.**

Francisco Alvares, a Portuguese Roman Catholic priest who wrote the first detailed travel book about Ethiopia, the *Verdadera Informacan dast terras do Preste Joan das India's* (True Information on the Countries of Prester John of the Indies), 1540 .

In the year 1515 Alvares accompanied, the Portuguese ambassador who called Duarte Galvao, Designate to Ethiopia, and then know in Europe as the country of Prester John of the Indies, a some what mythical designation. Since the term India was then applied in discriminately to the tropical regions of Africa and southern Asia. When Galvo died in the year 1517. At an island in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, Alvares was attached as chaplain to his successor, landed at Massawa on the coast of Eritrea in 1520. The Portuguese. Who came in a vain effort to forge an alliance with the African Christian Kingdom. (Alvares 1881) Which they regarded as a natural ally in their conflict with the Ottoman Turks, remained in Europe for six years, and returned to Portugal in 1527. In 1532 he presented letters from Lebna Dengal (reigned1508-40), to Pope Clement VII (in office 1523-34). He remained in Rome until his death about ten years later. (Pankhurst 1955)

Alvares, who was an acute observer, later wrote a graphic account in Portuguese on his travels, which attracted considerable interest in Europe were several widely-read translations of it appeared. Though far from complete, the work includes interesting descriptions of the antiquities of both Aksum and Lalibala, account of Ethiopian governmental and social institutions, and a narrative of Portuguese negotiations with Lebna Dengel. The work was of particular interest because it gives a clear picture of the Ethiopian empire in its heyday, just before the invasion of the Muslim conqueror Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim. Also called *Gran*. (Beckingham and Huntingford 1961).

**Bruce, J.**

James Bruce (1730-1794) was a Scottish explorer who visited Ethiopia from 1769-1772, and is best known for his *Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile* during the year (1770). In Ethiopia he seems to have been referred to as El Hakim Yagoube. (Chessman 1936)

Born at Lambert, in Stirlingshire, Scotland, he studied at Edinburgh University, and began training for the bar, but, after marrying a wine merchant's daughter, he went into her father's business. After his wife's death in the year 1754, he travelled to Spain in the year 1757, where he became interested in Arabic manuscripts, and learned Arabic. He was subsequently appointed British consul in Algiers in the year 1763. (Reid 1968)

Deeply interested in the origins of the Nile, he went to Egypt in the year 1768, wearing Arab dress. Having received letters of introduction, he sailed down Nile to Aswan, and then traveled east across the desert to Kosseir (Quseir) on the Red Sea coast. From here he sailed to Jidda on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula from where, after a short stay he sailed to Yemen, before landing at Massawa on the African coast in the year 1769. (Murray 1808)

After encountering some opposition from the Naib. The local ruler, he proceeded into the interior of Ethiopia, at that time relatively isolated from Western contacts, and in the throes of civil war. He visited Adwa and Aksum, the two main towns in the Tigre' province before arriving at Gondar, the imperial capital on February of the year 1770.

(Reid 1968) At Gondar he won the friendship of empress Menteweb, and gained a good knowledge of Ethiopians personalities and politics together with his Italian

Assistances, to whom he was manifestly un fair in his subsequent writings, he also visited the sources of the Blue Nile, on the year 1770, thus accomplishing his life s' ambition. (Bruce 3rded. 1790). At the end of December of the year 1771 he left Gondar and travelled westward to Sennar on his way home. En route he visited France in the year 1773, where he gave an account of his travels to the great French naturalist, where he was received at the French court. (Bruce Isted., 1796). In the year 1774 he returned to London where he was greeted with initial interest, but later encountered disbelief, partly because his visit to France soured his welcome. And after that he returned to Scotland during the year 1776, where he remarried again anther wife. During the year 1780, he began to write his Travels, and on completing them spent his last years in retirement. (Murray 1808)

Bruce's Travels which appeared in five volumes in 1790, thought the work of a vain man occasionally prone to exaggeration, was important as the first extensive description of Ethiopia since the account of the Portuguese Jesuits over a century and a half earlier. Besides containing useful descriptions of Ethiopians government and customs, they included extensive summaries of the Ethiopian royal chronicles, which had not Hitherto been known abroad. (Bruce 3rded. 1790).

#### **Sapeto, G.**

Giuseppe Sapeto (1811-1895) was an Italian considered as a member of the mission to the poor founded in Paris about the year 1625 by a political agent, who acquired the Red Sea of Assab for Italy.

Born at one of Italy province that called Carcare and after that he became a Lazarist missionary at the age of 18. He traveled to Lebanon and Egypt before sailing to Massawa during the year 1837 with two other French brothers, who were sent to spend ten years from the year 1838 to the year 1848 travelling in Ethiopia. He went in land visiting Adwa and Gondar, and later joined the mission of an Italian Lazarist, who fell seriously ill, however, and returned home. After recovering he returned to Massawa as a traveller rather than as a missionary,

visited the Danakil salt depression and the country of the Bogos, and Habab in the northwestern Ethiopia in the year 1851. During these travels he collected Ge'ez (ancient Ethiopic), Tegré', and Bilan (Cushitic Language of Western Eritrea) vocabularies. (Grumme 1972)

In the year 1858, when Emperor Te'wodros defeated and killed the Agaw Negusse', who rebel against him, he took Sapeto his interpreter as a prisoner, but later on he released him. To take his way towards Paris, where he became curator of Oriental manuscripts at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, and subsequently professor of Arabic at Florea and Genoa. (Work 1935)

After the opening of the Suez Canal in the year 1869, Sapeto was entrusted by the Italian Government with the task of obtaining a port on the Red Sea coast of Africa. Acting on behalf of Italian shipping company, he purchased the port of Asseb in November of the year 1869 from two local Danakil chieftains for a quantity of Maria Theresa dollars. He returned to Assab in the year 1870 to conclude the agreement, and purchased two further strips of territory. (Pankhurst 1964)

The Italian government by then desirous in bringing its normal possessions at Assab under effective control, ordered Sapeto to returned to Assab, and he arranged for the signature by the local chiefs of further agreement, notably one with the Sultan of Raheita, to the southeast of Assab, who in the year 1880, placed himself under the Italian protection . Sapeto who also attempted to open up contact with Mohammed Hanfari the Muslim Sultan of Awsa which lasted to the south of the Dankil region, remained in Assab until the year 1881.(Pankhurst 1964). On his returned to Italy he gradually dropped from public view. A man of scholarly interests as well as public ambition, he had attended the Fourth International Congress of Orientalists in the city of Florence in the year 1878, and produced a number of learned writings, including "Etiopia", study of Ethiopian government, geography, and history, Published in the year 1890. He died in relative obscurity at Genoa in the year 1895.(Work 1935; Pankhurst 1964).

**Massaia, G**

Cardinal Cugliemo Massaia (1809-1889), who was Born at Bova in one the kingdom of the united to Italy, was an Italian Catholic missionary who worked for 25 years organizing missions, chiefly in the south and the southwest in Ethiopia. He was ordained with the name Father Gugliemo. After receipt in Rome of report on Ethiopia from a French explorer and Father Sapeto, Massaia was sent to Ethiopia in the year 1846 to evangelize the Galla. With the title of Apostolic Vicar of the Galla. He was known in Ethiopia as Abuna Masseyas, and, because of the anti-Catholic sentiment, he traveled to the province of Gojam, under the name Signor Bartonelli,. In the year 1849 he consecrated as Bishop Monsignor, a Lazarist priest who subsequently played a major role in the year 1853 in promoting the Ethiopian rite of Catholicism.

Massaia was compelled to leave Ethiopia in the year 1879, and in the following year held a conference at the Convent of the Capuchin Fathers in France, where he announced and asked for more new missionaries for the Galla missions.

On November of the year 1884, Massaia was elected a Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). He died at Italy. Seventy –five years after his death, the Italians Fascists attempted to represent Massaia as Precursor of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, although there is no evidence in Massaia career of his having had any political interests.

Emperor Menilek II, who became a good friend of Massaia, printed Massaia's grammar in Amharic and Oromo (Galla) at his own expense .At the Pope's order, Massaia wrote a record Entitled "My thirty-five Years of Mission on the Ethiopian Plateau", which considered with his letters that collected and published during the year 1936 in Rome, a fascinating account, to be translated later into English, French and German. That containing acute observations about men and manners in Ethiopia.

**Flad, J.M.**

Johann Martin Flad (1831-1915), a German- born missionary, spent about 60 years in Ethiopia Among his other activities, he worked to convert the Flasha (Ethiopians of Jewish faith), and produced an

Amharic translation of the Old Testament that was widely read throughout the country.(Giessan and Basel 1922)

He was Born at a town in southern Germany, and trained as a missionary at Switzerland. Originally a member of Basel Mission, he entered Ethiopia in the year 1855, accompanying one of the missionaries called Krapf, who had been sent by the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, to Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868) to try to resume the Protestant missionary activities which had been originally started in the year 1826, and been ceased with the expulsion of the missionaries during the year 1838.(Blance 1868)

From the year 1861 up to the year 1915, Flad worked in the service of London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Falasha. With other missionaries he founded a school at village that called Avora, near Gondar, in the year 1856, and 1861; he founded an anther missionary station at a place that lasted just north of Lake Tana.(Rubenson 1966)

Apart from his four years with the Falasha, among whom he met with limited success, Flad was also held for four years as a prisoner of Emperor Te'wodros. The remainder of his time in Ethiopia was spent directing the affairs of the mission, and managing its finances. He translated the Old Testament into Amharic, translated and wrote so many several religious tracts and school books in Amharic, and also saw them through the press. His diary and that, together with the records of the other captive missionaries and British emissaries, give some insight into Ethiopian cultural and political history at that time and especially into events leading up to the British military expedition of the years 1867-1868. Which occasionally Flad acted during its events, as a messenger for the two monarchies, the Khedive of Egypt and Emperor Te'wodros of Ethiopia together. He also acted as the intermediary between Robert Napier, the commander of the British military expedition, and Te'wodros, at the time of their confrontation at the famous Maqdala battle in the year 1868.(Flad 1869)

In the course of his nine journeys from Europe to Ethiopia, Flad brought in a quantity loads of literature for distribution in Ethiopia. Most of it was in Amharic, but some was in Ge'ez and other national

languages. The literature included his own work, and those of earlier missionary writers.(Rubenson 1966)

**Antonelli, P.**

Count Pietro Antonelli (1853-1901), an Italian traveler, diplomat, and politician, who played an important role in early Ethiopian-Italian relation, particularly as negotiator of the Wechale (Uccialli) Treaty of 1889, the Italian text of which appeared to make Ethiopia a protectorate of Italy.

Count Antonelli first visit to Ethiopia, from the year 1879 lasted to 1881 took him to the provinces of Shawa, Gojam, and Walaga. In the year 1882 he returned as the Italian Government's official representative, with instructions to include trade agreements with King Menilek of Shawa, later to become Emperor Menilek (1889-1913), and Muhammad Hanfari, Who ruled the "Afar" (Dankali) sultanate of Awsa (Aussa) from about 1862-1902. Menilek, Who trusted Antonelli, signed a treaty with him in April the year 1883, and ratified the convention already accepted by Hanfari.(Savard 1977)

Because of this success, Antonelli became Italy's resident diplomatic agent at Menilek's court. When the Italians occupied Massawa in the year 1885, and the war broke out between Italians and Ethiopians, he tried to break the alliance between Menilek and Yohannes IV (1872-1889). The Treaty of Wechale named for a village in Wallo, was drafted mainly by Antonelli in Rome. By the time finally agreed to sign it, on May of the year 1889, Yohannes had fallen at the battle of a Matamma in Sudan, and Menilek had become emperor. Antonelli managed to gain some territory which became the nucleus of Italian Eritrea. But the Italian could not, as they had hoped, control Ethiopia's foreign affairs through Article 17 of the Treaty of Wechale', and thereby turn Ethiopia into their protectorate because refused to accept any limitations on his sovereignty. Antonelli, who knew Amharic, accepted the Amharic reading of Article 17, but did not change the Italian version to correspond with it. The Italian Government therefore notified the other European powers of Italy's "protectorate" over Ethiopia, Menilek protested, and Antonelli left Ethiopia for good in the year 1891. The dispute led ultimately to the

battle of "Adwa" on March 1<sup>st</sup> , of the year 1896, at which the Ethiopian forces defeated the Italian invaders.

As a member of the Italian parliament, from the year 1890 onwards, Antonelli defended his early pro- Shawa policy, and maintained that he, and not Menilek, had been cheated. After a brief period as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the year 1894, he became a career diplomat in South America in the year 1895, serving successively as Italian minister in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he died in 1901.(Rubenson 1977)

### **ILG, A.**

Alfred ILg (1856-1916),the Swiss craftsman, who was born in a city that stretched to the northeast of Zurich, and studied at the Zurich Polytechnic, was the principal diplomatic who worked to Emperor Menilek II, as an adviser during the years 1889-1913.

In the year 1878 he went to Ethiopia with two compatriots at the request of Menilek, then king of Shawa, who had asked a Swiss trader at the port of Aden to find him some young European craftsmen able to act as engineers and to train Ethiopian workers in his field. On his arrival, Menilek asked ILg to make him a pair of shoes, which he did, although unacquainted with the trade. The king then requests him to make a rifle. ILg protested his ignorance, adding that an imported one would be superior. Menilek insisted, however, and ILg did as he was asked. The monarch, highly pleased, ordered the gun to be kept in a place of honor in his armory.(Gilmour 1906)

ILg, who received a salary monthly, was involved in some of Menilek's early technical innovations. He built the first modern bridge over the Awash River in the year 1887, and a few years later erected Menilek's palace at the city of Entoto, at the north of the city of Addis Ababa, and at Addis Ababa, itself. He also installed the country's first piped water supply, for palace use, in the year 1894. The public could not believe that water could flow uphill, but Menilek, a great advocate of innovation, was easily convinced. When the tape was first turned on, however, the water did not to flow, for a European "friend" had secretly stopped up the pipe with cotton. The system was nevertheless put into speedy operation, and was greatly acclaimed. Well satisfied, Menilek gave ILg concession, on March of the year 1894, to built and

operate a railroad from Jubuti through the capital to the White Nile. The railroad was built from the coast of Addis Ababa, but the later stretch was never completed. (Keller 1918)

Ilg accompanied Menilek on several expeditions. He also went to Europe on business. In the year 1887, he made an abortive attempt to purchase bullet-making machinery, and equipment for a mint. In the year 1891, he met members of the Italian cabinet in Rome. At that time and again later, after another visit in the year 1894, he warned Menilek of Italian plans to invade Ethiopia. (Work 1935)

After the opening of diplomatic relations with foreign powers which followed the Ethiopian victory at Adwa in 1896, Menilek put Ilg in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the year 1897. His duties were to interview foreign representatives and to conduct diplomatic correspondence on Menilek's behalf. He thus played a prominent part in the negotiations leading to the peace treaty with Italy, as well to the concluding of treaties with the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and other European powers. Though a foreigner, Ilg was well trusted, for he came from a small neutral country without colonial ambitions. (Gilmour 1906)

He served Menilek for 20 years with loyalty and devotion. He finally retired from the emperor's service in 1906. He died of a heart ailment in Switzerland on January, of the year 1916. (Keller 1918)

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