The Journal of Eritrean Studies (JERS) is a publication of the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) in Eritrea. It was originally published by the College of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Asmara, the first journal regularly published by the university after Eritrea’s independence. The journal was launched to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of key issues relevant to the past, present and future of Eritrea.

The journal seeks to benefit from the works of specialists in different academic disciplines engaged in research on Eritrea. In the past, JERS had published results of studies on Eritrea’s history, culture, politics, economy, society, environment, languages and related methodologies. It is intended for academic specialists and students as well as general readers and practitioners who have interest in Eritrea.

The first publication of JERS appeared in 2004 and four volumes were published by 2006. Following the restructuring of the University of Asmara and the establishment of the various colleges in Eritrea, the publication of the JERS was discontinued until the idea of its reinstatement was first initiati in 2010. A number of academic staff at CASS, including individuals who earlier served in JERS, met and agreed to approach the Dean of CASS to allow them to start collecting manuscripts for publication and make use of any resources from the sales of the earlier publications of the journal. With the Dean of CASS and the Director of Bureau of Higher Education Administration and International Linkages of the National Board for Higher Education (NBHE) assenting to the proposal, the participants of the initial meeting, comprising as an ad-hoc editorial team, published a call for papers. It also attempted to notify the wider public through the internet.

A number of manuscripts were submitted either through the newly-created email of the journal or in person to the ad hoc editors. Five papers and one book review were selected for publication following peer reviews. Given the financial burden of publication and the need for retaining a publisher to ensure continuity of the journal, the editorial team approached Ato Zemhret Yohannes, Head of the Cultural Affairs of the Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), who is also in charge of Hirdi Publishers, if Hidri could publish the journal. Ato Zemhret accepted the proposal and suggested that the membership of the journal be made more inclusive by inviting academics outside of the CASS (such as those in various ministries and in Diaspora).

The ad hoc editorial committee welcomed these and other comments and has been working on them. A short list of about twenty-five scholars from inside...
and outside the country was prepared and emails were sent inviting them to join the JERS as members of the editorial or advisory board. They were also informed that they would be asked to review articles. Many accepted the invitation and joined the JERS boards. A group of editorial committee members will continue to serve as editor and editorial support team based in Eritrea. It has also been proposed, and agreed upon, that in the future, select articles in Tigrigna, Tigre and Arabic will be published to attract more readership.

Among the many well-established scholars who accepted our invitation to join the editorial board are Asghede Hagos and Gebre Hiwet Tesfagiorgis. They agreed to read the entire content of the current issue of the journal and their valuable comments and suggestions have undoubtedly enriched this issue of the journal. The editorial team would like to thank Asghede and Gebre Hiwet. We would also like to thank all the scholars who have expressed their interest and willingness to serve in the editorial and advisory boards. We look forward to many issues of the journal and the continued participation of all those who have interest in Eritrean studies.

We welcome contributions, broadly conforming to latest APA style and formatting guidelines. Contributions have to be submitted electronically to the email address and in hard copy to the mailing address of the journal.

**For correspondence and submissions:**

The Editor  
*Journal of Eritrean Studies*  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
P.O. Box 12676, Asmara, Eritrea

E-mail: jerstudies@gmail.com
Content

ARTICLES

Senai Wolde-Ab
Protection under the scanty law of author’s rights (copyright) in Eritrea

Saleh Mahmud Idris
Dahalik: An endangered language or a Tigre variety?

Tesaray Tewolde
Apparent biliteral verbs in Tigrinya

Abbebe Kifleyesus
Children’s cultures: Some conceptual issues and research potentials in highland Eritrea

Ghebrehiwet Medhanie
Aloes of Eritrea: The need for their conservation

BOOK REVIEW

Kab Rix’ ካብ ሪቕ ሕፍንቲ (ካብ ሪቕ ሕፍንቲ) by Tekie Beyene
Reviewed by Abraham Tesfalul
Protection under the scanty law of author’s rights (copyright) in Eritrea

Senai Wolde-Ab

Abstract

The ongoing proliferation of literary and artistic works in Eritrea and the increasing exposure, through modern media of communication, to similar foreign works carries with it varied questions on the legality of the means for procuring and distributing such works. At the heart of this lies the issue of the copyright of the authors of these works. This article first touches on the international perspective of the concept copyright for context. It then attempts to bring to light the issue of copyright law and practice in Eritrea. The principal aim is to provoke thoughts and invite further scholastic analysis.

1. Introduction

People often ask if the practice of duplicating a CD set and selling/renting same to the public is tolerated by the law or if they can photocopy a book and keep one for their private use. Some question the legality of photocopying and distributing textbooks in colleges. Others would want to know if one of Haile Ghebru’s song, ዳሁስ ጉማማ (rhus gamma), may be played by an invited band in a wedding tent, if Tekle Tesfazghi’s ከም ሊልያይ (käm dəlayäy) may be played as a background in a bestseller Tigrigna film or if Yemane “Baria’s” lula could be sang in a piano bar. One may ask if it makes legal sense for a Liverpool-Arsenal Barclays Premier League soccer game to be aired live on Eri-TV or for a painter’s work to be purchased and sold at a threefold profit. Whether one may prevent recital by others of one’s public speeches, a professor’s lectures or a priest/sheik’s sermons also are appropriate questions in a copyright discussion. Wondering if one has to seek the permission of an author to translate the latter’s book is thought provoking. Modern-day copyright questions ask if the following can be
copyrighted: a Hollywood actor’s gait, the latest Armani design for women’s outfit, a famed hip-hop vocalist’s strange haircut, the scent of a new Versace *eau de toilette* or software for ‘Googling’ Tigrigna texts. Can one freely sell Raphael’s 500 year old painting *The School of Athens*? Can one freely distribute copies of the text which sheik Ibrahim Sultan read to the UN General Assembly in the late 1940s? Or can one design a temple exactly similar to the *Pantheon* which was completed in 128 AD?

The common legal concept that binds the works of mind mentioned above is called copyright or author’s right. This is a right that gives the producers the exclusive right to reproduce, adapt, distribute, perform and display the products and in effect prohibit others from doing the same. However, copyright laws allow third parties a limited use of these rights or allow them to exercise other rights in relation to the products. Discussions on copyright law are usually focused on the interaction between the rights of the authors and third parties. This article will, among others, dwell on this issue.

The recent increase in art products in Eritrea (Aron 2007)\(^1\) calls for a few notes on the legal regime within which these products are meant to operate. The laws governing copyright are intended to motivate creativity by rewarding authors for the sweat of their brows. These laws carefully balance the reward due to the authors and the need to allow the public to exercise some limited rights. This article is partly intended to acquaint artists in Eritrea with their rights and equip them with legal armours to exercise and defend their rights within the limits of

\(^1\) Over and above the numerous music albums and movies being increasingly generated, at least in the field of literature, the named Eritrean writer, the Reverend Musa Aron, stated that every week an average of one book is being published in Eritrea.
the law. It also intends to inform the public on their rights and the consequences of breaching the rights of authors.

2. Basics of copyright

Open any book or look at the cover of an original CD or DVD and your eyes meet a familiar symbol “©” or the phrase “All Rights Reserved”. We all know that these items represent the term copyright. What, however, is a copyright? How is it created? Why is copyright granted? Who is the creator or author? Does copyright expire?

A. Copyright as an intellectual property

It is common knowledge that copyright is a type of intellectual property (IP). What, however, is an IP? A simple definition of IP is that it is a form of proprietary right given for producing items of intellectual labour.

Notable among the different types of IP are copyrights, patents and trademarks. In fact, “the concept of IP was originally designed to cover ownership of literary and artistic works [copyrights], inventions (patents) and trademarks” (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001:3). This limitation owes its roots to the fact that it was these three types of IP that were subjected to rigorous coverage in the two pioneering international IP instruments – the 1883 Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001) and the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.

The twentieth century, especially with the coming of the World Trade Organization (WTO)’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), witnessed an
expansion of the notion of IP, and several types of IP were added to the conventional IP list. We now have plant production rights, topographies of semiconductor products (layout designs of integrated circuits), undisclosed information (such as trade secrets), databases, data exclusivity rights and others (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001) recognized as types of IP. Each category of IP protects a distinct interest. Copyright protects the form or other original aspects of personal intellectual creation in science or art; patent protects inventions; trademark protects the connection between a word (or several words), a symbol or a picture and the business from which a product or service emanates (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001).

B. IP as distinguished from the object to which it extends

A distinction needs to be made, however, between ownership of the IP on an object and ownership of the object to which the IP extends. For example, whereas IP on a book remains with the author thereof, ownership of the same book sold in a bookshop remains with the purchaser thereof.

The distinction between the ownership of IP on an object and the ownership of the object to which the IP extends should, therefore, lead one to making a distinction between two independent rights functioning simultaneously on any such object. A Dell laptop, a BMW car with its blue and white quadrant trademark, a bottle carrying the Coca-Cola brand, a CD playing the Beatles or a DVD of Titanic, a map of Eritrea,

---

Michelangelo’s sculpture *David*, Leonardo da Vinci’s painting *Mona Lisa*, the blockbuster drug *Lipitor* from Pfizer, a copy of Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* or the Reverend Musa Aron’s *wärkäha* (ወርቀሃ), all give two independently functioning rights to the authors, creators or inventors of these products on the one hand and on the other to the persons who have legally acquired them, typically through purchase. Hence, whereas one can sell or resell a bottle of Coca-Cola, one may not use that famous mark for distinguishing brand new sesame oil. Along the same line, whereas one can buy a DVD and enjoy watching the *Titanic*, one may neither make duplicates of the DVD for sale nor display the movie to the public.

Similarly, whereas a pharmacist suffering from obesity has the liberty of reducing his cholesterol by consuming *Lipitor* (now generic by the way), one is likewise restrained from reproducing the drug by using Pfizer’s documents that are obligatorily disclosed for obtaining the patent on the drug. In a nutshell, the distinction is between the tangible rights (for the consumer) and the intangible rights (for the IP owner) or, stated differently, between the corporeal (for the consumer) and the incorporeal (for the IP owner) rights.

The distinction described above is also contained in Eritrean copyright laws. Article 1663 of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea (TCCE) presents this dichotomy as follows:

(1) The incorporeal ownership of the author shall be *independent of* the ownership of the material object which constitutes the protected work.

(2) The rights [of an author] ... shall not vest in the acquirer of the object by the mere fact of his acquisition.

(3) The author may not require the owner of the material object to place this object at his disposal so as to enable him to exercise his rights. (*emphasis added*)
Hence, IP is an intangible right of ownership given to persons who, as a result of their intellectual labour, have produced a distinct item, an object or a product. As such, the IP follows the item, object or product *until the expiry of the term of the IP right*, into whoever hands such an item, object or product may fall.

C. Copyright: Proper nomenclature?

A question frequently asked in discussions on copyright is whether the term “copyright” is a proper term for the IP granted to literary and artistic works of the mind. The term is strange for a student of the civil law system. Basically, there are two major legal traditions – the civil law and the common law. The distinction between the two legal systems is attributed to the nature and status of the judicial organs vis-à-vis the law that the judicial organs apply in their adjudications. A civil law judge is trained to stick more to the literal interpretation of the legislative instrument and is inspired by the philosophies underlying natural law. A common law judge, on the other hand, enjoys wider latitude in interpreting the law, and such interpretation binds judges in the lower hierarchy serving as a guide in resolving similar disputes coming to benches in the horizontal hierarchy. Following a principle known as *stare decisis*, the interpretation of the law by a common law judge remains binding and is to be followed by other courts as a precedent in cases with similar fact situations until overturned by the same court or a court of higher echelon.

Different nomenclature is used in each tradition to describe the concept of copyright. In general, both legal traditions employ, or at least have agreed to commonly employ, when acceding to international instruments, the term “literary and artistic works”
to identify the type of works that now constitute the subject matter of copyright (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001).³ “Copyright” is the term employed to refer to the legal system introduced in the common law world to protect literary and artistic works whereas the civil law system employs the term droit d’auteur (author’s right) to refer to the legal system introduced in the civil law world to protect literary and artistic works (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001).

Substance-wise, the content of the respective legal systems differs based on the justification for the grant of the rights. Goldstein (as cited by Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001) notes:

These two traditions reflect different philosophical justifications. The droit d’auteur system is largely premised upon notions of natural rights and the inherent right of an author to the fruits of her intellectual and creative endeavors. The copyright system accords protection to authors for more instrumentalist reasons: the grant of rights is intended as an incentive to creativity and hence the production of a wide variety of works, to the betterment of society. (p. 513)

Hence, the common law system, taking more of a black-white approach, identifies a given work as copyrightable or not, whereas the civil law system, in pursuit of rewarding the author in proportion to his endeavours, tolerates the inclusion of some additional works into the basket of literary and artistic works –

³ For instance, the 1886 Berne Convention which took the title “Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works” was signed by nations representing both legal traditions: Germany, Argentina, Belgium, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Paraguay, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Tunisia. After decades of vacillation, the US finally ratified the Berne Convention in 1988.
though with lesser rights than that accorded to the conventional literary and artistic works. In this regard, the civil law system has introduced the notion of *neighbouring rights* or *related rights* (a modern terminology) which enjoys a narrower scope of rights and duration than those given to the other literary or artistic works. These related rights include rights given to producers of phonograms (sound recordings), broadcasters, performers and often producers of videograms and printed editions which producers are generally not considered as authors in the ordinary sense of the term. Moreover, the civil law system, which was an inspiration to the Berne Convention (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 2003), adds what is termed as *droit moral* (moral right(s))\(^4\) whereby an author has the right to be identified as the originator of the work and not to see the disparagement or defacement of his works. Furthermore, whereas the civil law system gives the copyright ownership to persons who are hired to create literary and artistic works, the common law is not certain on this issue (Dinwoodie, Hennessey and Perlmutter 2001).\(^5\) Eritrea belongs to the civil law club of nations. It therefore makes sense to use in the subsequent sections the term “author’s rights” to refer to the general concept of copyright described above.\(^6\)

---

\(^4\) Lange, LaFrance and Myers (2003) dubbed Berne Convention a “moral rights-based Convention”.

\(^5\) See, for instance, Article 1647(3) of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea (TCCE), a reflection of the civil law system, which reads:

> [The author of a literary or artistic work] shall have [the] right [of literary and artistic ownership] notwithstanding that he executed the work in pursuance of a contract of employment or a contract for the performance of a project entered into with a third party.

\(^6\) For a general background reading on the history of literary and artistic rights, see: *A Brief History of Copyright*, available at, [http://www.complainants.info/a-brief-history-of-copyright-law/](http://www.complainants.info/a-brief-history-of-copyright-law/) (accessed on 06/12/2008).
3. Constitutional and statutory foundations for author’s rights in Eritrea

A. The constitution

The analysis of any national legal issue best begins with its constitution, as it is the nation’s supreme law. Analysis of the Eritrean law of author’s rights should therefore begin with the country’s constitution. Addressing the State’s obligation to foster and enhance development and creativity in the Eritrean society, Article 11(3) of the Constitution requires the State to “promote the development of arts, sport and science and technology and shall create an enabling environment for individuals to work in an atmosphere of freedom and manifest their creativity and innovation.”

More specific to the ownership issues related to IP, Article 23(1) of the Eritrean Constitution provides that “… any citizen shall have the right, anywhere in Eritrea, to acquire and dispose property, individually or in association with others, and to bequeath the same to his heirs or legatees.” This provision may be interpreted to refer only to properties such as a house, a car or a business which may be “acquired and disposed of” as well as “bequeathed to heirs or legatees”. However, through a closer understanding of the nature of IP and through an expansive interpretation of the Constitution – as is the tradition with interpreting constitutions in order to accommodate as many legitimate interests as possible – it can be argued that the term “property” in Article 23(1) also refers to IP. This may be noted as the constitutional basis for the enhancement and protection of author’s rights and other IP rights in Eritrea.

7 The Eritrean constitution was approved and ratified by a Constituent Assembly on 23 May 1997, but is yet to be implemented.
B. The Eritrean law of property

Let us briefly go through the Eritrean law of property which expressly accommodates author’s rights as a legitimate proprietary right with full legal protection. That legal regime is the set of provisions in Articles 1126–1674 (Book III) of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea (TCCE). Book III governs the legal aspects on goods and properties and divided into six Titles deals with goods in general and possession (Title VI), individual ownership (Title VII), joint ownership, usufruct and other rights in rem (Title VIII), collective exploitation of property (Title IX), registers of immovable property (Title X) and literary and artistic ownership (Title XI).  

Depending on the tangibility (corporality) of the subject of ownership, the TCCE divides ownership of property into corporeal or incorporeal ownership. A corporeal ownership is exercised on what are generally termed tangible goods – i.e., movable or immovable things and an incorporeal ownership is exercised on incorporeal properties (rights) identified by law. To that end, Article 1647(1) of the TCCE provides that “[t]he

---

8 Please note that the 1991 TCCE which has amended the 1960 Civil Code of Ethiopia as Proclamation No. 2/1991 has repealed and/or amended or suspended some articles placed within the range of articles comprising each of these Titles of Book III (the Book on Goods). The provisions governing Literary and Artistic Ownership (1647–74) have been allowed to continue without any repeals or amendments.

9 Article 1126 of the TCCE, thus, provides that all goods are movable or immovable. However, Article 1128 of the TCCE states that “Unless otherwise provided by law, claims and other incorporeal rights embodied in securities to bearer shall be deemed to be corporeal chattels” with the definition for corporeal chattels, provided for in Article 1127 of the TCCE being that “Corporeal chattels are things which have a material existence and can move themselves or be moved by man without losing their individual character.”
author of a work of the mind shall have on the work he created, by the mere fact of his creation, an *incorporeal right of ownership* (emphasis added).”

Therefore, the TCCE provisions, added to the umbrella provision in the Constitution, have laid the foundation for the recognition, regulation and protection of author’s rights in Eritrea in such a way that any person shall have the right to acquire and dispose such rights, individually or in association with others, and to transfer or bequeath the same to his assignees, heirs or legatees as applies.

4. The legal regime of author’s rights in Eritrea

Articles 1647–74 of the TCCE regulate author’s rights in Eritrea. This section systematically analyzes the provisions of twenty-three Articles under the following sequence of topics: the definition of an author and the types of works that are entitled to legal protection under the TCCE; the rights due to the author and to third parties; the limitations on and restrictions to the rights of the author; the expiration of author’s rights; and the infringements of the author’s rights and the consequences and remedies of infringement.

A. Author and protectable literary and artistic works

Article 1647(1) provides that “[t]he author of a work of the mind shall have on the work he created, by the mere fact of his creation, an incorporeal right of ownership.” This provision is the gateway to the world of author’s rights in Eritrea. Properly dissected, it constitutes four important elements: literary and artistic work is a work of the mind and the rights are a reward to the fact of creation; only the author of such work is entitled to the rights due to literary and artistic works; the rights are
granted immediately after the creation of the product without any formalities; and the rights come in the form of an incorporeal ownership of the authors.

I. Who is an author?

The four elements listed above behoove us to first seek the definition of “author.” Most national and international instruments on literary and artistic works do not define an author. Nevertheless, a general definition is that an author is a person or group of persons who, on their own or for hire, have created original works of the mind and are thus entitled to grant of rights of authorship (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 2003). It is possible that two or more persons may jointly produce a literary or artistic work. For all practical purposes, unless the final product is one that has distinctly separate works (for instance, the lyrics, the vocals, the melody and the composition in a single musical track on a CD), joint authors enjoy a single, inseparable right on the work they have produced together. Article 1668 of the TCCE, for instance, provides: (1) A work produced as a result of the cooperation of several authors shall

10 The 1976 US Copyright Act (Title 17 of the US Code), the TCCE, the Berne Convention and the TRIPS may be cited in this regard.

11 Different legislations have differing rules on what is called Work for Hire doctrine, i.e., whether persons hired to create copyrightable works are entitled to the rights. Some copyright legislations grant the rights of authorship to persons who have been hired to create literary and artistic works. See Article 1647(3) of the TCCE as cited in footnote 5 above. On the contrary, in the US, the general rule, under §201(b) of the Copyright Act of 1976, is that if the work is for hire, “the employer or other person for whom the work is prepared is considered the author” and owns the copyright unless there is a written agreement to the contrary. The US Congress, through the Work Made for Hire and Copyright Corrections Act of 2000, later introduced detailed provisions to regulate literary and artistic works made for hire.
be jointly owned by them; (2) Author’s rights shall be exercised by common agreement between the co-authors; (3) Where each of the authors contributed a different type of work, each of them may, unless otherwise agreed, utilize separately his personal contribution provided that such utilization is not detrimental to the use of the common work.

On the other hand, it is possible, and paragraph (3) of Article 1668 seems to indicate, that in a single product, there could be various independently protected works of the mind. For instance, a final DVD version of the movie series ካይወት (hǝywät) entitles the scriptwriter, the director, the costume designer, the composers of the soundtracks and the authors of each track [if the movie included different sets of tracks owned by different authors] – with each track further entitling the lyricists and melody producers to independent rights – the person who prepared the English-translation of the sub-title, the producer of the DVD, the designer of the poster on the DVD cover, and the person who shot the photograph at the cover to independent author’s rights with the condition that the respective rights shall be exercised in a manner that does not affect the existence and the exercise of the rights of others.

**II. What types of works are entitled for protection under the TCCE?**

To discuss this issue, one needs to first identify a standard legal instrument, national or international, for the protection of literary and artistic works as a reference point. The most identifiable instrument in this regard is the Berne Convention, not yet acceded to by Eritrea but whose principles are the inspiration for modern national and international laws on literary and artistic works including the TCCE. Without the need to compare the provisions of the TCCE with those
contained in the Berne Convention, it would suffice for the purpose of this section to state that the TCCE, though not heavily influenced by the main elements of Berne Convention, at least draws its inspiration from Berne Convention. Hence a cross-reference to Berne Convention is justified to elucidate the discussions in this section. The basic question is: what works may be protected as literary or artistic endeavours in Eritrea? The TCCE, in Article 1648, has the following list of works that shall be deemed as works of the mind:

(a) literary works such as books, booklets, articles in reviews and newspapers, lectures, speeches, sermons, theatrical and other dramatic works;
(b) musical compositions with or without text, dramatic-musical works, radio phonic or radio visual works, choreographic works or pantomimes the production of which is reduced to writing or otherwise;
(c) the works of the figurative arts such as drawings, paintings, engravings and sculptures, as well as photographic and cinematographic works;
(d) illustrations, maps, plans, sketches, plastic works pertaining to geography, topography, architecture or other sciences; and
(e) any other work created by the intelligence of their author and presenting an original character.  

Use of the verb “deemed” in introducing the list in Article 1648 may be construed to carry two concepts. First, the mere fact that a piece of work belongs to the list contained in Article 1648 is not enough to entitle the work to the protection accorded by the TCCE: there are additional requirements, as we shall soon see, that all works of the mind must fulfil before they can be fully fledged protectable works. Second, the TCCE has provided for

12 Read Articles 2 and 2bis of the Berne Convention as well as §102(a) and §103 of the US Copyright Act for corresponding list of what by those laws are respectively considered as literary and artistic works.
other works (for instance compilations of other’s works) that, though not original by themselves, are nevertheless granted rights of authorship. Thus, the term “deemed” implies that the list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. What follows is a brief discussion of some common requirements that works of the mind must (or need not) meet in order to get protection and see if the TCCE contains such requirements.

(i) Originality

Literary and artistic works must be original. Protection is given only to those parts that are original in an author’s work. In fact, the very idea that author’s rights are granted to prevent others from copying the work carries the latent concept that

---

13 The US Supreme Court, in the famous 1991 case, *Feist Publications v. Rural Telephone Service*, 499 U.S. 340, 111 S.Ct. 1282, 113 L.Ed. 2d. 358 stated, for instance, that “… [t]he mere fact that a work is copyrightable does not mean that every element of the work may be protected. Originality remains the sine qua non of copyright; accordingly, copyright extension may extend only to those components of a work that are original to the author.” If such interpretation is adopted by Eritrean Courts in requiring originality as an element of author’s right entitlement, it would then mean that an artist who paints over a hand-woven cotton fabric will be entitled only to a protection for his/her painting while the weaver keeps his/her right to the special art of weaving the fabric. Similarly a photographer will maintain his rights on a digital photograph while a graphic artist who added special effect graphics to the photograph will be entitled to protection limited only to his/her modifications.

14 The principle of preventing others from copying the work (i.e., from infringing the IP right) is an important concept. In general, IP rights are not positive rights, i.e., they are not rights that are given to the IP right-holders to commercialize their products. There are two reasons for this. First, the commercialization of IP products is subject mainly to commercial and trade rules not to IP laws. Second, the IP right holder does not have a right to stop the re-commercialization of the items produced by his/her IP once (s)he puts the items into a market circulation – a principle called exhaustion rule. On the contrary, IP rights are negative rights, i.e., they principally entitle the IP right holder, or his/her assignees,
the work must be original. The term “original” is not defined in 
most author’s rights laws; hence, courts had to establish a 
working definition therefor (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 
2003).

Although the TCCE, as with the Berne Convention, does not 
expressly state that the work of the mind must be original to be 
granted legal protection, it can be inferred from its provisions. 
The catchall paragraph (e) in Article 1648 of the TCCE states, 
“any other work created by the intelligence of their author and 
presenting an original character (emphasis added)”. We may 
rely on this paragraph, until special laws are later developed, to 
list new works such as software (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 
2003), scents of perfumes (odours) (Koelman 2006; Field 
2008) or the recipe for a special stew in a downtown Asmara 
restaurant or for a special ice cream. Similarly, Article 1649 of 
the TCCE, which gives full protection to translations and 
adaptations (otherwise called derivative works), makes an 
indirect reference to the originality requirement when it states, 
“[w]ithout prejudice to the rights of the author of the original 
work, translations, adaptations, musical arrangements and other 

to prevent others from exercising the rights due to the author even if the 
items have entered the hands of the n^{th} buyer. The rights of the author 
follow the items into whosoever hands they may have entered.

15 The US Supreme Court, for instance, in the late 19^{th} century cases called 
the Trade-Mark Cases, 100 U.S. 82 (1879), held that originality requires 
an independent creation plus a modicum of creativity. The Court stated 
that to be protected by copyright, works must be “… founded in the 
creative powers of the mind. The [works] which are to be protected are the 
fruits of intellectual labour…” In another case, Goldstein v. California, 
412 U.S. 546, 561, 37 L.Ed. 2d 163, 93 S.Ct. 2303 (1973), the US 
Supreme Court held that to be the original, the work of an author must be 
the product of some “creative intellectual or aesthetic labour”.

16 In 2006, a Dutch Appellate Court upheld a ruling that the scent of a 
perfume is a copyrightable work.
renderings of a literary or artistic work shall be protected as original works (emphasis added).”

(ii) Idea (fact) v. expression

Similarly, Article 1650 guarantees protection to collected works such as encyclopaedias or anthologies if “by the choice or arrangement of the material [they] constitute intellectual creations.”

(iii) Fixation
The TCCE requires that the work of the mind be merely created. However, should the created works be contained in some material from which their creation can be discerned? In some author’s rights legislations, there is a requirement that in order to be granted legal protection, a given work of the mind be fixed in a tangible medium of expression. The Berne Convention which only requires that the work be expressed in any mode or form—hence an indication that the work be placed in some medium where one can trace the work—leaves it to the individual States whether to make fixation a requirement for protection.

---

18 See footnote 17 above for a full citation.
19 In a most pithy fashion, TRIPS Article 9(2) describes the idea-expression dichotomy as “Copyright protection shall extend to expressions and not to ideas, procedures, methods of operation or mathematical concepts as such.” As does §102(b) of the US Copyright Act describes the same as, “In no case does copyright protection for an original work of authorship extend to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in such work.” A more complete list of works that are not covered by US copyright laws includes: facts; works created by the United States Government; works not fixed in a tangible form of expression; ideas, concepts, principles, or discoveries; and words, phrases, or familiar symbols. See, Works Not Covered by Copyright, available at, http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/works-not-covered-copyright (accessed on 06/12/2008).
20 See Article 2(1) of the Berne Convention.
21 A common definition for fixation may be derived from §102(a) (Subject matter of Copyright) which contains the introductory clause, “Copyright protection subsists… in original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which they...
Article 1647(1) of the TCCE provides that “The author of a work of the mind shall have on the work he created, by the mere fact of his creation, an incorporeal right of ownership (emphasis added).” The debatable issue here is whether the phrase “mere fact of creation” is tantamount to fixation in a tangible medium of expression from which the work can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device. The term “creation” is closer in the continuum of its various meanings to the pole of fixation than the opposite pole of mere conception. Hence, we find an embedded requirement of fixation in Article 1647(1) (Koelman 2006).

One can interpret the term fixation to also carry the requirement that the work be fixed not in any medium for tracing the work but in a medium, regardless of its quality, capable of suitably containing the work for the end to which the work is produced. Thus, a poem intended for publication in the daily ḥadas 'erǝtra cannot be protected while the author was verbally narrating it to his colleagues. A mere scribbling of the poem at the back of his notebook would be sufficient. A script for an intended movie may only get the protection for writings and not...

---

22 Article 2(2) of the Berne Convention provides, “It shall, however, be a matter for legislation in the countries of the Union [the union of countries that have ratified the Berne Convention] to prescribe that works in general or any specified categories of works shall not be protected unless they have been fixed in some material form (emphasis added).”

23 §102(b) of the US Copyright Act, cited in footnote 19 above.

24 A somewhat in-between standard is what is called the standard of perception. A good example is the Dutch Copyright Act which does not contain an exhaustive list of subject matter that can be protected but simply provides that anything can be copyrightable as long as it is perceptible and original.
for movies for it has not translated itself into a movie-fixing medium. An amateur recording at the early stages of the production would likewise be sufficient for protection.

(iv) Quality: A requirement?
One may ask if the quality of a literary and artistic work should be considered as an element for protection purpose. Author’s rights law does not require that the work be classy or upmarket, or one that generates bounties of cash, or carrying the finest of expressions or even one that adheres to the morale of the society. These are matters of market and circulation, and permissibility for distribution of the product and not criteria for entitlement to author’s rights protection. Whether a certain song copied to a CD is sold only to friends of a vocalist or it is a Raymok (an award for artistic works during the annual national festival held at the Asmara Expo) winner should not matter; whether the ethics of a recently released movie are admissible for an Eri-TV broadcast does not affect the protection status of the movie; whether a novelist writes a fiction for fun or for paying his debts is not a concern for the law of author’s rights. Article 1647(2) of the TCCE succinctly states: “[The author] shall have [an author’s] right regardless of the nature, form of expression, merit or purpose of the work.”

(v) Registration and notice
It is reasonable to ask if there is someone somewhere who registers and deposits literary and artistic works so the works can be legally protectable. One can also be curious to know if the customary copyright notice we see at the opening pages of any book – All Rights Reserved – has any legal significance, and if not displaying such a notice causes any loss of right to the authors. In short, we ask if there is any formality requirement we have to meet before we communicate our work to the public. The answer depends on the responses to such
questions as: When is the protection triggered? Is it at the time of creation of the work? Is it at the time of deposit of copies of the first products with some government office? Or after that government office has issued a certificate of registration? Or after the notice ‘All Rights Reserved’ has been placed on the final product?

Article 5(2) of the Berne Convention states that “[t]he enjoyment and the exercise of these rights shall not be subject to any formality.” However, the practice of nations on this issue varies, and some of them require the fulfilment of formalities as condition precedent for the establishment of the rights of authorship. For instance, Section 10 of the 1909 US Copyright Act had expressly provided that no copyright protection should be given to any work unless a prescribed notice was affixed to each copy of the work published or offered for sale lest the work enter the public domain and enjoy no protection. The 1976 amendment to the 1910 Act, however, dropped this requirement and US copyright protection now begins at the moment of fixation; nevertheless, authors are advised to keep notice in order to rebut claims from people who may, by way of defence, claim that they innocently infringed the copyright (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 2003).

Similarly, because of the shift in trigger for protection from notification to fixation, the 1976 amendment dropped the 1910 requirement that mandatorily required the registration and deposit, customarily with the Library of Congress, of unpublished works in order to qualify for copyright protection. However, under the 1976 amendment, there are some instances where registration – with the US Copyright Office – is a prerequisite for taking some actions such as, filing claims for
infringement of rights provided in §106\textsuperscript{25} and for obtaining a court’s blessing to stop the importation into the US of infringing items from abroad. Moreover, registration is a \textit{prima facie} evidence of a claimant’s valid copyright and the date on which a work was created (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 2003).

On the other hand, the TCCE contains no provisions that expressly or impliedly require for the registration and deposit of works of the mind or the affixation of a notice on the copies of the work. Literary and artistic ownership is given to the author, according to Article 1647(1), “by the mere fact of his creation.” Thus, works created in Eritrea do not require the authors to register and deposit their works to be legal or to constitute a ground for claims against infringements. The practice of keeping copies with the Ministry of Information (MoI) may serve other purposes (such as inventorial) and the MoI or the Ministry of Trade and Industry should not be perceived as the government office(s) where literary and artistic works should be deposited for an entitlement to an author’s rights. The practice of putting the familiar notice \textit{All Rights Reserved} in the opening pages of books published in Eritrea is also not a legal prerequisite for obtaining, publicizing or proving author’s rights in Eritrea.

(vi) Works excluded from protection
Finally, it must be noted that the TCCE has excluded some works, though legitimately works of the mind, from protection rendering them freely reproducible. These include official texts of the Government of Eritrea,\textsuperscript{26} daily news articles on current

\textsuperscript{25} This does not apply to §106A though, which deals with the protection of the author’s moral rights.

\textsuperscript{26} Article 1651 of the TCCE provides that: (1) Official texts of a legislative, administrative or judicial nature shall not be subject to the provisions of
events which are mere press information and publicly made speeches. The reason for the exclusion of such works from protection is probably because such works are basically intended to be widely circulated to the public and that a higher public interest on information is served by making such works freely reproducible.

B. What are the rights of an author under the TCCE?

I. General notes on author’s rights

In discussing author’s rights, we need to first highlight the fact that the rights due to authors come in the form of a single package containing various rights. To this end, Article 1647(1) reads: “The author of a work of the mind shall have on the work he created, by the mere fact of his creation, an incorporeal right of ownership (emphasis added).” Use of the singular noun “right” signifies the oneness (package character) of the myriad of rights given to authors. In a nutshell, author’s rights are one-to-many and many-from-one.

It is only in recent legislations that the list of author’s rights has started to appear in a single article. The 1976 US Copyright Act is a good example in this regard. A glance through the arrangement of its various sections makes it easy to identify the rights due to the authors and to third parties in different literary and artistic works: §106, Exclusive rights in copyrighted works; §107, Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use; §108, Limitations on exclusive rights: Reproduction by libraries and archives; §109, Limitations on exclusive rights: Effect of transfer of particular copy or phonorecord; and §110, this Title [on Literary and Artistic Ownership]. (2) They may be freely reproduced.

27 See TCCE Article 1657 as cited in Section B(II)(i)(1) below.
28 Ibid.
Limitations on exclusive rights: Exemption of certain performances and displays. In other laws, for example, the Berne Convention and the TCCE included, one needs to go through all the provisions of the relevant law to identify and list the rights due to authors and the limitations that apply to all or some of these rights.

II. Buffet of rights

The TCCE provides authors with a number of rights. For the purpose of organization, we shall divide these rights into two groups: primary rights of authorship (the important and significant ones) and secondary rights of authorship (the less important and less significant ones).

(i) Primary rights of authorship
1. Production and reproduction of works

Article 1653 of the TCCE gives the author the exclusive right to produce and reproduce the works. Production means the presentation of the final version of the work at such a level where the work can be reproduced or made ready for publication or commercial circulation. Production is the basis for the exercise of most, if not all, of the subsequent rights belonging to the author and to third parties.

Once the author has produced his work, a number of rights follow. Most notable among these rights is reproduction of the work. According to Article 1653(2) of the TCCE, only the author may, during his life, authorize the reproduction of his/her work. Reproduction means the copying of an original work in such a way that the essence of the original work is substantially contained in the new product(s). Duplication of a book, burning Tesfay “Fhira’s” track romay (ቁምያ) on a CD,
copying Helen Meles’s album ከላወት (_haläwat_) on a USB flash for playing it on a laptop, photocopying the famous picture displaying Zerisenay Tadesse’s waving of the Eritrean flag on the Athens running field from ከዳስ ይርትራ ከadastr 'erǝtra or even taking a scanned image of the same from ከዳስ ይርትራ, making a duplication-by-hand of Aboy Weldeab’s photo, etc., are all reproductions of the originals which should be authorized by the author only. In all these examples, a “copy” of an original is made in one of many possibilities. A good definition for “copy” is contained in the US Copyright Act, which states in part:

‘Copies’ are material objects, other than phonorecords, in which a work is fixed by any method now known or later developed, and from which the work can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device. The term ‘copies’ includes the material object, other than a phonorecord, in which the work is first fixed.  

Under Eritrean law, the only exemption regarding the reproduction of works is the regulated reproduction in the press of articles of topical interest published in newspapers and reviews as well as public speeches. Article 1657 of the TCCE provides:

(1) Articles of topical interest published in newspapers and reviews may be reproduced in the press, whether printed or broadcasted, unless such reproduction was expressly reserved.
(2) The source shall always be clearly stated.
(3) Daily news articles on current events which are mere press information may be freely reproduced.

29 §101 of the US Copyright Act.
Article 1658 of the TCCE also provides:

Speeches delivered in political assemblies, at public meetings or on the occasion of official ceremonies may be freely reproduced by the press, whether printed or broadcasted, during fifteen days from the day on which they were made.

2. Publication (distribution) of works

Not only is the author entitled to produce and reproduce his works or to authorize the same, (s)he is, according to Article 1652 of the TCCE, also entitled to publish, or authorize the publication of the works that (s)he produced or reproduced with the proviso that upon his/her death this right passes to his/her heirs or a person(s) named by him/her. The term “production” is to be understood to mean “public distribution” in any form (sale, transfer or ownership, rental, lease or lending, etc.), a term interchangeably used with “publication” in the realm of literary and artistic ownership. Article 3(3) of the Berne Convention construes publication to mean an act that constitutes the making of copies (reproduction) of the works and making them available to the public (i.e., distribution):

The expression ‘published works’ means works published with the consent of their authors, whatever may be the means of manufacture of the copies, provided that the availability of such copies has been such as to satisfy the reasonable requirements of the public, having regard to the nature of the work. The performance of a dramatic, dramatico-musical, cinematographic or musical work, the public recitation of a literary work, the communication by wire or the broadcasting of literary or artistic works, the exhibition of a work of art and the construction of a work of architecture shall not constitute publication (emphasis added).
Similarly, §101 of the US Copyright Act defines “publication” to mean:

… the distribution of copies or phonorecords of a work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending. The offering to distribute copies or phonorecords to a group of persons for purposes of further distribution, public performance, or public display, constitutes publication. A public performance or display of a work does not of itself constitute publication (emphasis added).

However, the author, who has opted to distribute the products of his work, can control only the first public distribution (entry into market of such products) since, once in public hands, the buyers or users of the distributed products can, without restriction, fix the price for resale, rent, lease etc. of the distributed items anywhere in the world, provided they do not reproduce the products. The author’s invisible right to own the first set of published products is, pursuant to this principle called “exhaustion rule” or “first sale rule”, extinguished after the first sale (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 2003). Thus, whereas Ato Tek’e Tesfay is the only person who can authorize the printing and distribution (including reprinting and redistribution) of his żämänawi mäźgäbä x’alat Təğrəñña (食べ物 あるものが っていました ところ), he cannot, however, control the resale or rental price set by persons who have initially bought

30 This principle, latent but discoverable in the TCCE, is illuminated in §109 of the US Copyright Act as:

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 106(3) [the right to distribute], the owner of a particular copy or phonorecord lawfully made under this title, or any person authorized by such owner, is entitled, without the authority of the copyright owner, to sell or otherwise dispose of the possession of that copy or phonorecord.
the printed/reprinted reproductions from him or his authorized distributors. At no time may, however, such persons reproduce (copy), except for private use, the dictionary without the consent of Ato Tek’e.

3. Adaptation (alteration) of works

Article 1654(1) of the TCCE\(^{31}\) entitles the author to authorize the adaptation of his/her work into other works as derivative works.\(^{32}\) However, there is, in TCCE Article 1654(2), a requirement that the derivative work should explicitly refer to the base work unless it is easily knowable that the derivative work is based on a given base work. This makes it clear that the fundamental difference between the base work and the derivative work is the medium through which the work is to be communicated while the substance and end-purpose of both works remain the same. Hence, works based on the original one, which are intended for entirely different purposes, are not to be considered derivative works. That is why Article 1654(3) of the TCCE does not consider parodies, pastiches and caricatures as derivative works. Thus, whereas Ato Solomon Drar can object the production of a film based on his book, k’ya ‘asärätäw šämontä däx’ayəx’ (ቀያ መሰርተው ሶሞንተ ደቓይቕ), he may not prohibit Cobra from making a caricature out of the book. Ato Solomon may not also object to his book’s being made part of the pastiche (compilation) Digest prepared by the Research and Documentation Center or to his book’s being made the subject of a parody in one of Sandiago’s zälku dä’a (ቤልኳ ደልኳ).

\(^{31}\) As do Article 12 of Berne Convention and §106(2) of US Copyright Act.

\(^{32}\) The TCCE, for instance, lists theatrical, cinematography or television works as derivative works of other original works. See also §101 of US Copyright Act.
4. Public display (performance) of works

The TCCE is not explicit on whether authors have the right to public performance of their works. Thus, one would have to make an *a contrario* reasoning to locate the right. Article 1656 of the TCCE provides that “[t]he author may not forbid private performances of his work given free of charge at a family gathering or in a school.” This provision may be interpreted to carry the latent, opposite meaning that the author may forbid public performance of the work. This is why we have an author’s exclusive right to authorize public performance of the works. To understand what constitutes “public performance”, we need to clarify the two terms comprising the phrase. The first term is the adjective “public” which, in the reverse context of Article 1656, should mean any gathering outside a family or school circle or a routine gathering of acquaintances. The second term is the noun “performance” which could mean reciting, playing, displaying or communicating a work by and/or through a medium designed to that end. Thus, public performance means the displaying, reciting or making available

---

33 We may get further assistance in understanding the term “public performance” from §101 of the US Copyright Act which defines the phrase “to perform or display a work ‘publicly’” to mean:

1. to perform or display it at a place open to the public or at any place where a substantial number of persons outside of a normal circle of a family and its social acquaintances is gathered; or
2. to transmit or otherwise communicate a performance or display of the work to a place specified by clause (1) or to the public, by means of any device or process, whether the members of the public capable of receiving the performance or display receive it in the same place or in separate places and at the same time or at different times.

34 §101 of the US Copyright Act defines the verb “to perform” as, “to recite, render, play, dance, or act it, either directly or by means of any device or process or, in the case of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, to show its images in any sequence or to make the sounds accompanying it audible.”
a work of authorship to a gathering outside close family or acquaintances’ circles.

Most literary and artistic ownership laws make a distinction among the types of works where the right to public performance may be exercised and the types of media which are considered appropriate devices for such purposes. For instance, the Berne Convention limits the right of authorizing public performance (or communication to public of the performance) of works only to authors of dramatic, dramatic-musical and musical works. The Convention, however, allows the related (neighbouring) right of authorizing the broadcasting of works to all literary and artistic works. Other legislations also make a distinction between public display and public performance. For instance, §101 of the US Copyright Act defines the verb “to display” as “to show a copy of it, either directly or by means of a film, slide, television image, or any other device or process or, in the case of a motion picture or other audio-visual work, to show individual images non-sequentially.”

Thus, by tying the verbs “to perform” and “to display” to the adverb “publicly” and presenting a definition for the phrase “to perform or display a work publicly”, the US Copyright Act has, in §106 (4)-(6), constituted three different rights for authors related to the right to perform a work publicly and the right to display a work publicly as giving the author the exclusive right:

(4) in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and motion pictures and other audiovisual works, to perform the copyrighted work publicly;
(5) in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works, including the individual images of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, to display the copyrighted work publicly;
(6) in the case of sound recordings, to perform the copyrighted work publicly by means of a digital audio transmission.

As a conclusion, while we cannot be certain of the limitations on the types of works which require the authorization of the authors before they can be publicly displayed, performed or broadcasted, we can be certain of two principles: that authors in Eritrea have the exclusive right to publicly display or perform their works or authorize these acts to others; and that if any other person or entity publicly displays or performs any literary or artistic work of another person for gain, for entertainment or for any other purpose, such public display or performance constitutes an infringement of the rights of the author.

Thus, Wedi Tkuabo would be legally justified to be discomforted seeing a vocalist singing the former’s የገርመና ሰመና (yəgärmäna ‘lo) in a piano bar, as would Haile Ghebru hearing his የርሄስ ጎማ (rəḥus gama) by an invited band in the midst of a torta slicing ceremony inside a wedding tent, or Beyene Hailemariam hearing one of his stupendous poems recited in a holiday gathering, if any of these acts were done without the consents of the respective authors.

(ii) Secondary rights of authorship

Following are what may be identified as secondary rights of authorship, so named by the writer of this article because of their lesser degree of significance compared to the four rights discussed above. They are:

1. Article 1665 of the TCCE, by way of embracing moral rights of authorship, allows the author to “prevent his work, if altered by a third party, from being presented as his own.”
2. The author has the right to assign, in whole or in part, his/her incorporeal rights of the production, reproduction and distribution (publication) of his/her works.\textsuperscript{35}

3. Articles 1666–67 of the TCCE allow any person, so long as (s)he can present sound evidence of his/her being the true author, to present his/her works anonymously or pseudonymously.

4. Pursuant to Article 1659 of the TCCE, the author has the exclusive right to “publish his speeches and articles in book form or to issue a collection thereof.”

5. The author, under Article 1674 of the TCCE, has the inevitable right to bring legal action against any person who has violated his/her rights of authorship and claim compensation.

6. Although not specifically provided for in the TCCE, in a practice now called “copyleft” (in contrast to “copyright”), a generous author may make part or all of his/her works available for free use by the public. This is recurrent practice in sharing of computer software.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} Article 1664 of the TCCE merely states that the conditions for the assignment of rights of authorship shall be as prescribed in the part of the TCCE which regulates Contracts of Publication (Articles 2672–97).

\textsuperscript{36} The most notable example in this regard is the so called GNU Operating system or the GNU General Public License movement under which software and computer operating systems such as Linux are freely available to the public as “open source technology” where users can contribute to the development of the software or operating system. See GNU General Public License, available at, http://www.linux.org/info/gnu.html (accessed on 13/02/2010) and The GNU Operating System, available at, http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html (accessed on 13/02/2010). See also What is Copyleft available at, http://www.fsf.org/licensing/essays/copyleft.html (accessed on 06/12/2008).
C. Limitations on and restrictions to author’s rights

Pending the enjoyment by the author of the exclusive rights enumerated above, the TCCE provides for various limitations on and restrictions to the author’s rights and a parallel channel whereby third parties enjoy a limited set of rights on the same works of authorship.

I. Limitations on rights of authorship

The principal limitation to the rights of authorship is the fact that author’s rights are not held in perpetuity. The TCCE, unlike other legal instruments,\(^3\) is not uniform on the time for the expiry of the exercise of authorship rights.

\(^3\) The Berne Convention, in its Article 7, contains different periods of limitation for different types of works:
- Life of the author plus fifty years after his death. This is the catchall period of limitation and countries can exceed this minimum limitation. The US and most European countries, for instance, have opted to go for a Life + seventy years period of limitation. (Lange, LaFrance and Myers 2003);
- in case of cinematographic works, a permissible period of fifty years after the date of public display of the work or the date of the making of the work;
- in case of anonymous or pseudonymous works, fifty years from the date of publication (if there is doubt as to author’s identity) or life of the author plus fifty years after his death (if there is no doubt as to his identity);
- in case of photographic works and works of the applied art, a minimum of twenty-five years from the date of their making.
- Moral rights, according to Article 6bis(2), are expected to last, after the death of the author, at least until the expiry of the economic rights for the type of work for which the author had been granted the economic rights.
First, there is an indication that the author can exercise the rights for life. In this regard, Articles 1653(1), 1653(2) and 1654 provide that the author “during his life” has the respective rights to produce, reproduce, and authorize the adaptation of his work. Second, there is an indication that upon the death of the author, a right can pass to his heirs or persons named by him. This is so for the right to publication –Article 1652(2) of the TCCE – although it is not clear whether the right passes to succeeding heirs perpetually. Third, there are other provisions which limit the exercise of rights to fifty years from the date of the publication of the work. These are:

1. Article 1670 which states that the author’s rights to authorize the production, reproduction or adaptation of his work may be exercised by his heirs for a period of fifty years from the date of publication (hence, the heirs will have no such right if the author had lived for more than fifty years after the date of publication of the work); and

2. Article 1672 which provides that a work published after the death of its author may be protected for a period of fifty years from the date of publication (with the inference that such right will pass to the heirs).

Whenever may be the expiry of the respective rights of authorship, once such expiry date passes, the protected work, to use an author’s rights law parlance, enters the public domain whereby any person may freely exercise the rights previously

38 The meaning of the term “to authorize” as used in the TCCE is not clear. It may be taken to carry the same meaning as “to assign” whereby only the assignee, by virtue of the transfer of the rights of authorship, is allowed to exercise the assigned rights. The term may, however, be interpreted to mean “to allow” whereby the author and any person with a permission from the author can exercise the rights.
limited to the author. This means, Bereket Mengsteab was within his rights when he used a poetic dirge for *ngusä wädi 'elfu* (*ንጉሰ ዋዲ እልፉ*) into his May 24 celebration compositions.

**II. Restrictions to rights of authorship**

The most important restriction to the exercise of the right of authorship is related to public policy and morals. It was previously stated that the rights of authorship are given regardless of the “nature, form of expression, merit or purpose of the work” (Article 1647(2) of TCCE). However, this concept being related only to the establishment of the right of authorship, it is to be borne in mind that authors will not, for reasons of public safety and under the pain of criminal prosecution, be allowed to display or communicate works whose contents might invade the moral territories of the Eritrean society.  

**D. Rights due to third parties**

Without dwelling on the details, a brief listing of the rights that third parties may rightfully exercise on literary works of the mind is in order.

1. For works which have entered the public domain, any person is allowed to freely exercise the rights due to authors. This is to say, any person is free to reproduce any song or make a song out of a poem produced more than fifty years ago.

2. Article 1655(1) of the TCCE gives any person the free right to translate the works of others without

---

39 Articles 609-611 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE) provide for varying punishments to the publicizing of art works considered offensive to public morality.
authorization from the authors.\textsuperscript{40} However, the translators have to expressly state in their translations that they did not receive an authorization from the author (Article 1655(2)) lest this be considered prejudicial to the rights of the author and thus actionable in courts (Article 1655(3)).

3. Third parties may, pursuant to Article 1656 of the TCCE, free of charge, display the protected works of others in family gatherings or in schools. This is to say, a history teacher may, for free, show his/her students the movie \textit{barud 77} (ባሩድ 77) or any one may bring a copy of the movie \textit{kwana} (ኳና) and enjoy it with his/her family.

4. According to Article 1654(3) of the TCCE, any person may, without the authorization of the authors, make a caricature on or a parody of the work of others or prepare a pastiche (a piece of creative work, e.g. in literature, drama, or art, that is a bundle of things borrowed from other works) out of the works of various authors.

5. As long as they can show some intellectual creativity, third parties, as allowed by Article 1650 of the TCCE, are free to prepare organized compilations of the works of others in forms such as encyclopedias (for writings) and anthologies (for musical and other arts). A mere selection of the best tracks of the year in Eritrea, or the \textit{Raymoc} award winning tracks, and selling them on a CD may not attract the attention of the courts as showing an intellectual creativity, as likely with the

\textsuperscript{40} This is contrasting with Article 8 of the Berne Convention which reserves the right to make and authorize the making of translations to the author and §§106(2) and 101 of the US Copyright Act which respectively give the right to make derivative works to the author and include translations in the definition of derivative works.
compilation of all ḥadas ‘erǝtra or ḥǝdi editions of 2010. It shall be for the courts to decide what constitutes an intellectual creativity for a compilation. It should also be noted that a compilation should be made from the works of various authors because only the author can “publish his speeches and articles in book form or to issue a collection thereof” (Article 1659). So Cobra was within his rights as he gave us the humorous bundle of caricatures in his latest collected publication. Along the same lines, Tkuabo Ares’E’s collection of select articles of Aboy Weldeab mrus’at ‘ank’äs’at ‘aboy wálđǝ’ab (ኣጋይ መሶስት ከወንጆ ከወንጆ) 1941–1991 could pass the legal test only if the collection appeared after the passing away of Aboy Weldeab or if Aboy Weldeab had consented to the collection and publication of those select articles.

6. By way of encouraging intellectual exercise and critical thinking, Article 1660(1) of the TCCE entitles anyone to freely write analyses on or reviews of the protected works of others.

7. Article 1660(2) of the TCCE allows any person to make and keep single copies of the works of others for private use only; however, one may not make a second copy and sell, rent or offer same for a gift. You may want to have a copy of the movie miłǝnu (ማለኑ) at home. Go buy the movie from its authorized sellers and make a single copy for use at home. As long as you want them for private viewing purpose, you are also free to record the series ḥǝywät (ህይወት) or Dawit šlan’s new hit tracks from Eri-TV. You may keep those copies for yourself or give them to your friends for their private uses. You shall not, however, reproduce and sell them or display them publicly; any grievances which authors may have
because of such impermissible acts entitle them to take legal actions.

8. Products of literary and artistic rights (books, CDs, paintings etc) that you have lawfully purchased or otherwise received are at your mercy if you want to sell them or offer them for rent at any price. You may not, however, make duplicates of these works, as the right to reproduce these works is reserved to the authors.

9. Can one cite the writings of others? The answer is “Yes.” Article 1661 of the TCCE, a reflection of what is known as the fair use doctrine, allows us to make short quotations not exceeding forty lines (in the case of a poetical work) or 10,000 letters (in the case of any other work). Article 1661 does not state that we need to cite the source of our quotation. Professors advising us on our theses of course require us to cite the source for every statement we borrow from others lest we become plagiarists. That is academic ethics. From legal point of view, however, Article 1661 seems to have kept the threshold for plagiarism for quotations exceeding the limits set therein.

10. As noted earlier, the press, pursuant to Article 1658 of the TCCE, has the right to freely reproduce, within fifteen days from the day on which they were made, printed or broadcasted speeches delivered in political assemblies at public meetings or on the occasion of official ceremonies.

11. Finally, we should mention a practice called compulsory licensing. Traditionally, countries have reserved the right to authorize the reproduction of produces of IP in the interest of the public if the owners of such produces do not make them easily available to the public. A good example would be the forced production of Ciprofloxacin in the wake of the anthrax virus-tainted
terror mails sent to some government officials in the environs of Washington, D.C. immediately after the 9/11 attacks (Abbott 2002). Similarly, Article 1673 of the TCCE allows the government to authorize the presentation (public performance) or reproduction of a literary and artistic works after they have been published by their authors; however, the government cannot authorize the alteration of the work. The conditions and forms of such authorization will have to be regulated by further regulation.

E. Infringement of author’s rights and its consequences

Infringement of a literary or artistic right, simply defined, means the exercise (or the contribution in or aiding of the exercise) of the rights of authors without the consent of the authors. All rights reserved for authors may not be exercised by any other person without the risk of civil and criminal liabilities.

It is often asked if an honest infringement of the rights of authors – as the writer assumes is the practice on many street corners, households, offices and internet cafés in Eritrea – relieves the infringer from liability. To this the legal community responds with the legal maxim, ignorantia legis neminem excusat (ignorance of law excuses no one or ignorance of law is not defense to liability). In reality, however, the courts do not give the fullest measure of the punishment for infringement without first weighing the level of knowledge of the infringer as to the wrongfulness of the defendant’s acts. The punishment for the infringement of the rights of authorship takes two forms: civil and criminal, that is, court actions between the author and the infringer for the recovery of damages caused to the author (civil), and court actions between the state, via public
prosecutors, and the infringer for delivery of criminal punishments against the harm caused to the society at large by the wrongful acts (criminal).

Both in civil and criminal author’s rights infringement cases, the courts in general make a two-tier investigation. First, a determination is made whether the author’s right was infringed, that is, whether the alleged wrongdoer exercised one or more of the rights due to the author without the author’s consent. Second, the extent of the infringement is weighed to help assess the damage caused to the author.

A reference to the experience of other jurisdictions, especially the US courts, which have a well advanced jurisprudence on copyright infringement, might help. There, a court looks at two elements to establish copyright infringement and the extent thereof: (1) an investigation as to how available the products of the author were to the alleged infringer (called the access test); and (2) an assessment of the extent of the work illegally copied or otherwise infringed (called the substantiality or substantial similarity test). With regards to the substantiality test, there is a conventional practice in benches presiding over infringement claims on motion pictures or books to tolerate the depiction of scenes without which a given piece in any movie related to the subject of the movie cannot otherwise be shown – called scènes à faire, i.e., scenes in a book or film which are almost obligatory for a genre of its type. Hence, if we apply this test to movies produced in Eritrea, an earlier movie depicting the Second Congress of the E.P.L.F. would probably have shown Aboy Weldeab’s famous “... ’ǝgzi’ǝbǝher kä’a barixuwa ’ǝyu ‘ǝmo, näza zäwedi ’ǝzi’a zitǝnki wäyəlä’u (እግዚኣብሄር ያሪኹዋ ይወን ሰንጂወ የእኗ ይወን ይወን ይወን የእኗ ይወን ያስሃጆን),” speech. The authors of that movie cannot sue the authors of a subsequent movie which needed to include the Second Congress of the E.P.L.F. and thus
kept Aboy Weldeab’s speech again, because that speech has become the *scene a faire* of the meeting. As would all movies have the image of the Cathedral if some plots of the movies need to capture the Independence Avenue in Asmara. It should be left for Eritrean courts if they wish to gain inspiration from these workable tests.\footnote{The substantiality test was popularized by the famous 1987 US copyright dispute *Steinberg v. Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.*, 663 F.Supp. 706 (S.D.N.Y 1987).}

As to the civil side of the infringement, Article 1673(2)/(3) of the TCCE point to the part of the TCCE which allows for the recovery of all damages (financial and material) caused by the illegal actions of others (Articles 2027–2178). Article 1673(1), moreover, allows the author to demand “the cessation of such infringement and the destruction of the copies or adaptations of his work made in breach of the law.” On the criminal side, except where the infringer committed the wrongful act in furtherance of a fraudulent act, a public prosecutor cannot initiate a criminal charge unless the author first files a complaint to that effect.\footnote{Article 677–78 of TPCE.} Criminal infringements of literary and artistic ownership include the intentional:

1. counterfeiting or reproducing, even in part, by print, lithography, photography, engraving or photogravure or by other copying process, of a literary, musical, pictorial or plastic composition, or any other intellectual work protected by author’s rights;
2. selling, offering for sale, importing or exporting, distributing or placing on the market of the infringements of such works; and
3. causing to be shown or performed publicly a literary, musical, cinematographic, radiophonic or other works,
The punishment for these offences is simple imprisonment spanning from 10 days to two years and/or a fine of one Nakfa to 5,000/10,000 Nakfas depending on the gravity of the offence and the circumstance of commission of the offence. In the case of such offences being committed in furtherance of fraudulent representation, the punishment is either simple imprisonment spanning from 10 days to two years or rigorous imprisonment spanning from one to five years and a fine of one Nakfa to 5,000/10,000 Nakfas.44

F. Extraterritoriality of Eritrean laws

An important question in the issue of infringement is whether the Eritrean civil and criminal laws on author’s rights can be applied to protect literary or artistic works originating in Eritrea if infringed outside Eritrea, i.e., if the rights contained in the TCCE apply globally to protect works originating in Eritrea. For example, can Ato Alemseged Tesfay take a civil action or initiate a criminal action in an Eritrean or a foreign court against the copying and free distribution of his book እንፋልል (.Emitል) in the US without his consent or can Bereket Mengsteab take similar actions for the free availability of his songs on a website based in Germany. Could they also prevent the importation into Eritrea of such copies? In other words, we are asking if Eritrean laws on author’s rights have extraterritorial application. The TCCE neither clearly states if it is intended to protect abroad works originating in Eritrea nor if the rights it gives are intended to go beyond Eritrean territory.

43 Articles 675–76 of the TPCE.
44 Ibid.
On the civil side, there is a provision in the Transitional Civil Procedure Code of Eritrea (TCPCE) which allows a person residing in Eritrea to sue a person residing outside Eritrea in Eritrean courts.\footnote{Article 20 of the Transitional Civil Procedure Code of Eritrea, titled “Defendant residing abroad” reads: (1) Where the defendant resides, carries on business, or personally works for gain abroad, the suit shall be instituted in such court in Eritrea as the plaintiff may choose, unless it relates to immovable property which the defendant owns in Eritrea, in which case the suit be instituted in the court of the place where such property is situate. (2) Where the defendant is a foreigner not residing, carrying on business or personally working for gain in Eritrea but he owns movable or immovable property in Eritrea the suit may be instituted in the court of the place where such property is situate.} However, the substantive law on the basis of which the plaintiff will sue the defendant, that is, the TCCE provisions on author’s rights, is not clear if it covers infringements abroad of works originating in Eritrea. On the criminal side, the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE) contains a provision where a criminal action may be brought for an offence committed outside Eritrea against the interests of any Eritrean by any person living outside Eritrea.\footnote{TPCE Article 18, titled “Other offences committed in a foreign country” reads: (1) This Code shall also apply to any person who has committed an offence in a foreign country against an Eritrean national or to any Eritrean national who has committed in a foreign country an offence of another kind than those specified in the foregoing Articles, if the offender was not tried in the foreign country for the offence, provided that: (a) the act to be tried is prohibited by the law of the State where it was committed and by Eritrean law; and (b) it is of sufficient gravity under the latter law to justify extradition. (2) In the case of all other offences committed in a foreign country by a foreign national, the offender shall, save as otherwise expressly provided, failing extradition, be prosecuted and tried only if the offence is punishable under Eritrean law with death or with rigorous imprisonment for not less than ten years.} However,
such action is allowable only in serious offences that qualify for extradition of the offender. Offences against the literary and artistic works are not likely to be extraditable.

A related issue in this regard is if the provisions of the TCCE and TPCE on author’s rights apply to works originating outside Eritrea. For example, is the public display, for pay or otherwise, of foreign films, the live airing of a Premier League football match, the downloading and showing for pay of foreign films by internet cafés, the translation and selling of foreign books or the copying-to-CD-and-sale of foreign music tracks, considered an infringement actionable in Eritrean courts? In other words, we are asking if, as much as we may want our laws to apply extraterritorially, our laws similarly protect works originating outside Eritrea from infringements inside Eritrea. In international law parlance, this is called reciprocity. On the civil side of this issue, the TCCE is simply silent. On the criminal side, however, the TPCE clearly states that it is intended to punish any person who commits any one of the offences contained in the Code, and the infringement of author’s rights (regardless of their origin) is one of these offences.

47 Article 11 of the TPCE, titles “Offences committed on Eritrean Territory: Normal Case” reads:
(1) This Code shall apply to any person whether a national or a foreigner who has committed one of the offences specified in this Code on the territory of Eritrea. The national territory comprises the land, sea and air. The extent of this realm is determined by law.
(2) Nothing in this Code shall affect immunities of foreign persons enjoying an official status as sanctioned by public international law.
(3) If the offender has taken refuge in a foreign country his extradition shall be requested so that he may be tried under Eritrean Law.

48 See above note 43.
As complicated in other jurisdictions, such as the US (Thornburg, 1995; Partridge 2010), as the question of extraterritoriality is, the issues raised in the previous paragraphs would have been easily resolved if Eritrea had joined the WTO – hence the TRIPS – or if it had ratified the Berne Convention which provides for the protection in all member States of works created and recognized as copyrightable by the laws of any one member State.\(^{49}\) Thus, Alemseged and Bereket, in the respective works mentioned above, would easily get protection in the US and Germany and could sue there. Similarly, authors of the foreign works could petition Eritrean courts to stop infringement of their works in Eritrea.

5. Conclusions and recommendation

There is a need to educate the public in the area of author’s rights because many a person in Eritrea, often without moral guilt, continues to infringe, regardless of the depth of their knowledge of the law, the rights of authors.

The now scanty provisions of the TCCE will need to be updated and expanded in a number of areas. These include the detailed incorporation of neighbouring rights, the issue of extraterritoriality of the author’s rights law, clearer provisions on the expiry of author’s rights and the issue of infringement in Eritrea of foreign-based works. The TCCE provisions on author’s rights are indisputably old; one needs to make numerous assumptions and needs extraneous sources to construe some of its provisions. The Ministry of Justice has, since late 1997, been spearheading a comprehensive law reform process by preparing draft civil, penal, civil procedure, criminal procedure and commercial codes based primarily on the

\(^{49}\) Article 5(1) of the Berne Convention.
respective transitional codes. The draft Civil Code section on literary and artistic ownership is more or less a replica of the corresponding TCCE provisions except for a new chapter that has been added to provide for neighbouring rights. Compared to standard copyright laws, however, the provisions in the draft Civil Code are still scanty and have to be made whole.

On the international sphere, by virtue of reciprocity, as much as it is in Eritrea’s interest to ensure the international protection, with the assistance of other countries, of literary and artistic works produced in Eritrea, it is equally important for Eritrea to respect within its territory the literary and artistic rights of the nationals of other countries. This is what is basically achieved by the Berne Convention and the TRIPs. Eritrea is not yet a member of the 165-member Berne Union or the WTO (TRIPs). Membership in these clubs will ensure a global protection to the literary and artistic products on Eritrea.\(^50\)

Although this article is limited to author’s rights, IP in general is an area that has not yet received the required attention in Eritrea, both in law and in practice. The recent proliferation of improved inventions and the attempt to organize the improvers as well as the increase in software being designed by college students are, for example, areas that should be a subject for serious legal discussion and scholarly publications similar to that contained in this article. From the legislative point of view, the best solution is for Eritrea to have a comprehensive IP law. Except for an attempt in the mid-1990s to draft an industrial property and copyright law for Eritrea, IP still remains basically unregulated. IP law is generally a reflection of, and a legal encouragement to, the economic and intellectual development

---

\(^50\) Although joining the WTO is not primarily driven by the need to protect IP rights since the WTO is a package of numerous agreements on goods, services, investment etc in which IP is only a small part.
of a country and as the nation strives to develop itself, the enactment of a comprehensive IP law is a necessary tool to the achievement of that goal.

References


Dahalik: An endangered language or a Tigre variety?¹

Saleh Mahmud Idris

Abstract

This article is a preliminary report of a sociolinguistic research in an area that escaped scientific research for centuries. Its purpose is to raise awareness about the importance of the study of Dahalik (a linguistic variety spoken in the islands of Dahlak, 58 kilometres east of Massawa), and to share with fellow researchers, the results of a preliminary research. In order to determine whether Dahalik is a dialect of the Tigre language or a distinctive language by itself, the report makes comparisons between the Dahalik spoken in the islands of Dahlak and the different dialects of the Tigre language in terms of lexical similarities, mutual intelligibility levels, and some grammatical features. In addition, it tries to make lexical comparisons between the different varieties of Dahalik that are spoken in the different islands. The article attempts also to look at the sociolinguistic aspect of the issue by reporting the speakers' perceptions and attitudes towards their own language and the other languages in the region. Issues like language maintenance and language shift are also discussed by looking at the domains in which Dahalik is functioning and the motives behind it. Furthermore, it highlights the factors and some indicators of endangerment in order to draw attention to the subject.

1. Introduction

The Dahlak Archipelago encompasses a group of more than 200 islands 58 kilometres east of Massawa in the Red Sea. Only four of these islands are inhabited. Dahlak Kabir with an area of 643 square kilometres is the largest island in the archipelago.

¹ Parts of this article have been published in two different workshops’ proceedings: Proceedings of the First National Workshop of the Eritrea Chapter of OSSREA, Asmara (2007) and Proceedings of International Workshop: History and Language of the Tigre-Speaking peoples, Napoli (2010).
Historically, the Dahlak islands were used as a bridge between the Arabian Peninsula and the eastern coast of Africa. Archaeological evidences found on these islands show that life on these islands was sustained throughout the Old South Arabian period to at least the late Bronze Age times\(^2\). The early residents of the Dahlak islands used a water engineering system that is well known in South Arabia from the pre-Islamic period, cutting bedrock to build underground water reservoir. This could be an indication that there was cultural interaction, through Dahlak, between the east and west sides of the Red Sea. People from both coasts might have met on these islands for the first time, without any common language, which is an ideal situation for a pidgin language to develop. Then the children of the pidgin speaking parents might have created a

Creole language. If this hypothesis is true, then the study of the Dahalik language could contribute much to our understanding of language change and its progress and to our knowledge of universal linguistic features. In addition, it might provide valuable information about the first settlers of the islands.

In the seventh century, the Dahalik (people of Dahlak) formed an autonomous sultanate. Despite subsequent invasions from Yemen and, later, from Ottoman Turkey, the Dahlak sultanate flourished and reached its highest level of civilisation around the 11th century AD (Smidt 2005). The Arabic inscriptions found in the Dahlak burial grounds are evidence of the high level of cultural development of the Dahlak sultanate.

The Ummayad Caliphs used Dahlak as a prison and exile islands (Smidt 2005). Similarly, the Italians and the Ethiopians used one of these islands, the Nokra island, for the same purpose. Eritreans who opposed the occupation of their land by the Italians and opponents from other Italian colonies were imprisoned and sent to the detention camp at Nokra (Pateman 1998). During the Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea, Nokra remained to be one of the worst Ethiopian prisons. Although many of the prisoners might have died due to mistreatment and the harsh environment, we can still speculate that some of them had survived and ended up living in the islands. Ancestral oral history of some families supports this hypothesis. Some families are still named after places they came from. One of the informants in this research, Abdu Ahmed Kamarani, whose ancestors came from the island of Kamaran, is one such example.

Owing to the archipelago’s location at the crossroads of various civilisations, the extraordinary composition of its people and its
historical importance make the study of Dahlak in general and the study of its language in particular a worthwhile subject. Dahlak is the least known linguistic variety in Eritrea. According to impressions of some previous scholars and visitors, Dahlak was assumed to be a different dialect of the Tigre language. For example, in the 17th century, a Dutch geographer by the name Olfert Dapper, noted that “the language of Dahlak differs ‘to some degree’ from the language spoken in the coast” (Dapper as cited in Smidt 2005). Similarly, in 1853, the Swiss Vice-Consul of the French Consulate at the Port of Massawa, Werner Munzinger, noted that the language spoken in Dahlak was hardly understood by Tigre speakers in Massawa. In 2000, a French researcher, Marie-Claude Simeone-Senelle, reported that monolingual Dahlak speakers did not understand continental Tigre. However, none of these scholars conducted actual intelligibility tests. Their statements were based on speakers’ perception and quick lexical observations.

Recent visits to the islands by the researcher show that there are Arabic, Afar and Dahlak speakers in the Dahlak archipelago. Although there is no recent official census on the islands, the Dahlak claim that they are the ethnic majority of the estimated 2,500 residents of the Dahlak islands. As far as linguistic competency in this language is concerned, those who speak Dahlak at this time are fewer than those who speak the other two languages.

4 Smidt, “Dahlak Ethnography”, 64-70.
2. Lexical similarities between Dahalik and Tigre dialects

The analyses of the lexical similarities between Dahalik and the Tigre dialects are based on the findings of a standard word list of about 300 basic words. The Swadesh word list, which was also used and adapted by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), was used to collect about 300 basic words from Darbushet, Salaet [səələɛ:t] and Jamhile in the main island, i.e., Dahlak Kabir, and from Ageddi in Nora and from Dihil [dəhəl] in the Dihil island. In each case the data were gathered from a group of 10 people of between 9 to 60 years of age. In most cases, Arabic words, real objects and gestures were used to describe the concept so that the respondents would be able to provide the researcher with the corresponding words in their language. Data analysis was carried out according to the following procedures:

1. A Dahalik wordlist was arranged in pairs with wordlists from five dialects of the Tigre language spoken in Semhar, Mensa, Sahil, Marya Kayah and Barka.
2. An attempt was made to establish a set of regular sound correspondence between Dahalik and the Tigre dialects.

Table 1: Regular sound correspondences between Dahalik varieties of Dahlak Kabir and Nora and the Tigre language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds</th>
<th>Manner and Place of Articulation</th>
<th>Corresponding sound in Dahlak Kabir and Nora (Dahalik) &amp; example words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[s̓]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar ejective affricate</td>
<td>[ʔ]  voiceless glottal plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t̓]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar ejective stop</td>
<td>ሪንትልት = እሊት t’alit ~ ኮlidit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t̊]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveo-palatal ejective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʔ]</td>
<td>Voiceless glottal plosive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar plosive</td>
<td>[d] Voiced alveolar plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar fricative</td>
<td>ኤርት = ነስጎ bəzuh ~ bədoh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Regular sound correspondences between Dahalik variety of Dihil island and the Tigre language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds</th>
<th>Manner and place of articulation</th>
<th>Corresponding sound in Dahalik (Dihil) &amp; examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[s’] ﺱ</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar ejective affricate</td>
<td>[t’] Voiceless alveolar ejective stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t’] ﺪ</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar ejective stop</td>
<td>ﺱ-ھ-ھ = ﺪ-ھ-ھ  s’ahaj ~ t’ahaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] ﺥ</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar plosive</td>
<td>[d] Voiced alveolar plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[z] ﺧ</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar fricative</td>
<td>ﺧ-ھ-ھ = ﺪ-ھ-ھ  bəzuh ~ bəduh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. All words which are identical within the pairs were marked “s” for the same.

4. Those words which only differed phonologically, and where the difference was predictable on the basis of the set of regular sound correspondence, were marked “c” for cognates.

5. Those words which only differed in one or two vowels or one consonant, even in the cases where the sound correspondence could not be proved, were marked “pc”, i.e., possible cognates. For example [radʒab] ~ [rajab]

6. Other words were considered as different and marked “d”.

7. Finally, words of the first three categories, i.e., “s, c, pc” were regarded as the same. In this way, wordlist from Dahlak Kabir variety of Dahalik was compared with five dialects of the Tigre language. Word lists from the three Dahalik dialects were also compared with each other in the same way. All differences and similarities were calculated as a percentage of the total number of glosses for which data was available.
Table 3: Total number of comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sahil</th>
<th>Mansa</th>
<th>Marya Kayah</th>
<th>Barka</th>
<th>Samhar</th>
<th>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
<td>321</td>
<td>321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>306</td>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Sum of words considered exactly the same “s” by dialect pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sahil</th>
<th>Mansa</th>
<th>Marya Kayah</th>
<th>Barka</th>
<th>Samhar</th>
<th>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>309</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>312</td>
<td></td>
<td>311</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>308</td>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274</td>
<td></td>
<td>280</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>276</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
<td>116</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Percentage of words considered exactly the same, “s” by dialect pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sahil</th>
<th>Mansa</th>
<th>Marya Kayah</th>
<th>Barka</th>
<th>Samhar</th>
<th>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Percentage of all the same words, “s + c + pc” by dialect pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sahil</th>
<th>Mansa</th>
<th>Marya Kayah</th>
<th>Barka</th>
<th>Samhar</th>
<th>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dahalik, Dahlak K.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above comparisons between Dahalik and the 5 dialects of the Tigre language are made on the basis of a word list from a...
Dahalik variety which is spoken in different villages of the island of Dahlak Kabir. There are two other varieties of Dahalik which are spoken in two different islands. These are the Nora variety of Nora Island, and the Dihil variety also called Dihilia spoken in Dihil Island. Nora Island is located in the far east of the Dahlak archipelago and its residents have less contact with the Eritrean mainland. As a result, the Dahalik speakers believe that the Nora variety is the purest Dahalik.

On the other hand, Dihil Island is found in the north western end of the archipelago with the closest proximity to the mainland. Its residents maintain strong ties and contacts with the Tigre speakers of the mainland of Eritrea through marriage and trade. Their Dahalik variety is believed to be the closest to the Tigre language. For example, unlike the Dahalik of Dahlak Kabir and Nora, the [t’] voiceless alveolar ejective stop and the [tʃ’] voiceless alveo-palatal ejective are not replaced by [ʔ] voiceless glottal plosive. They are distinctive phonemes of the Dihil variety of Dahalik. This could probably be due to the close proximity of Dihil from the coast and the relatively greater contact with the Tigre speaking people of the mainland. The absence of voiceless alveolar ejective affricate [s’] in this variety, however, raises another question. If the presence of these phonemes is attributed to the greater contact of the residents of the Dihil Island then why is the voiceless alveolar ejective affricate, which is more frequent phoneme in the dialects of Semhar and Senhit, replaced by the voiceless alveolar ejective stop [t’], a phenomenon found in the dialects of Sahil and Barka? Despite such peculiarities, all three varieties of Dahalik show a high degree of lexical similarities, and mutual intelligibility is also expected to be high. Therefore, the result of the above comparisons is also valid for the other two
dialects. The following display of comparisons of the word lists from the three Dahalik dialects proves this fact.

### Table 7: Total number of comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dahalik of Dahlak Kabir</th>
<th>Dahalik of Nora</th>
<th>Dahalik of Dihil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>317</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: The sum of words considered exactly the same “s”, by dialect pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dahalik of Dahlak Kabir</th>
<th>Dahalik of Nora</th>
<th>Dahalik of Dihil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>278</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9: Percentage of words considered exactly the same, “s” by dialect pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dahalik of Dahlak Kabir</th>
<th>Dahalik of Nora</th>
<th>Dahalik of Dihil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10: Percentage of all the same words, “s + c + pc” by dialect pairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dahalik of Dahlak Kabir</th>
<th>Dahalik of Nora</th>
<th>Dahalik of Dihil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observing the raw data above, it became clear that the lexical relation between the Dahalik and the five dialects of Tigre is very low. Furthermore, some of the common words are of Arabic origin which could mean that both Dahalik and the dialects of Tigre have borrowed them independently. According to some literature, similarity below 60% is always an indicator
of poor intelligibility (Grimes 1992). In addition, difference in
function words and affixes, syntactic and morphological
rearrangements, certain kinds of regular sound shifts, and
semantic shifts, which are quite common in the case of Dahalik,
can be the cause of poor mutual intelligibility.

Although the lexical comparison between Dahalik and the five
dialects of the Tigre language is showing significant
differences, it is hard to reach into a conclusion on the basis of
lexical relations alone. There are other social (perceptions and
attitudes), political (policies and ideologies) and linguistic
factors that need to be considered before deciding that two
linguistic varieties are one language or different languages.
Thus, the following sections make preliminary attempts to look
at these factors.

3. **Brief grammatical observations**

3.1 **Phonetics and phonology**

*Consonants:* All consonants of the Dahalik are presented in the
following chart. Consonants presented inside parenthesis are
attested in Dahalik in recently borrowed loan words. All
phonemes are represented in International Phonetic Alphabet
(IPA).
The above chart shows the complete phonemic inventory of Dahalik consonants. It consists of 25 consonants out of which three, i.e., /x/, /k'/, and /z/, occur in few recently borrowed
loan words such as [t’abaxa], cooked; [‘arak’], sweat; and [mazra’a], farm. Similarly, /tʃ/ and /t’/ are attested as phonemes in the variety of Dihil only. In the varieties of Dhalak Kabir and Nora, these phonemes occur in few loan words from Tigrigna, Arabic and Tigre: e.g., [t’abaxa], cooked; [‘antʃ’awa], rat; and [betʃ’], eggs. Thus, the native Dhalik consonants seem to be 20 phonemes only.

**Gemination**: All consonants geminate except in the cases of /ʃ/, /h/, /h/, and Semi-vowels. The Semi-vowels, however, are geminated in some loan words; e.g., [hawwata], hunted/fished; [sajjaːd], fisherman. Unlike in the Tigre language, gemination of glottal-stop is attested, e.g., [naːk’uʔa], of its bottom.

**Ejectives**: Only one ejective, i.e., /k’/, is attested in the native words of Dhalak Kabir and Nora varieties of Dhalik. The place of the other 3 ejectives, namely, /s’/, /t’/ and /tʃ’/, is taken by a glottal stop in all word positions. The disappearance of these ejectives in Dhalik seems to be the main cause of poor mutual intelligibility between Dhalik and Tigre.

**Palatalization**: Unlike in the Tigre language palatalization doesn’t occur when Dentals and Alveolars in the final position of the word are attached to the first person singular pronoun suffix. Examples are: [hɔt], sister; [hɔtte], my sister; [raʔas], head; [raʔase], my head; [ʔarəd], land; [ʔarde], my land; as opposed to [hɔtʃʃe], my sister, [raʔaʃʃe], my head, respectively in the Tigre language.

**Vowels**: Like that of the Tigre language, Dhalik has seven vowels. These are high front /i/, mid central /ə/ [i], high back
/u/, mid front /e/, mid back /o/, low front /a/ and long low front /a:/.

Vowel quality: All vowels can be articulated as either long or short depending on their positions in the word. For instance, /e/ tends to be long at penultimate position in a CVC syllable, e.g., [saraqeq:t] bush; [qidda:fe:t] garbage. The vowel length, however, except in the case of /a/, which is a vowel quantity case like in the Tigre language, is not contrasted. It is a matter of articulation. The phonemic contrast between /a/ and /a:/ can be shown in a set of minimal pairs.

Syllabic structure: Like that of the Tigre language, the syllabic structure of Dahalik is CV and CVC.

3.2 Nominal morphology

Independent personal pronoun: There are slight differences between Tigre’s and Dahalik’s independent personal pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Dahalik</th>
<th>Tigre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>?ana</td>
<td>nihna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd masculine</td>
<td>?ontu</td>
<td>?ontun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd feminine</td>
<td>?onti</td>
<td>?ontan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd masculine</td>
<td>ḥatu</td>
<td>ḥutu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd feminine</td>
<td>ḥata</td>
<td>ḥtan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples:
1. ?ana dibbet ha??ibaki kohaddi.
   I at home wash-you-SF will-want
   I will give you a bath at home.
2. ?itu titakkala bardan sab wa?astabde harre.
   He stood up among people and began to speak.
3. ?itun me?eju.
   They came.

**Independent genitive pronoun:** The independent genitive pronoun is \([na:]\) as opposed to the \([na;j]\) of Tigre. Like in the Tigre language, in Dahalik \([na:]\) is used to express qualification or possession. Examples:

   a) **Qualification:**
      Six boy ball-FS made-3FS-for-them of cloth.
      She made a ball out of clothes for the six boys.

   b) **Possession:** sakin da na:he ta.
      knife this-3F my COP 3FS
      This is my knife.

**Independent demonstrative pronouns:** The Dahalik independent demonstrative pronouns are different from that of the Tigre language. The following table shows the comparison.
Unlike in the Tigre language, in Dahalik independent demonstrative pronouns for objects which are not in sight are not attested.

**Suffixed genitive pronoun:** The following table shows the forms of suffixed genitive pronouns of Dahalik and Tigre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Dahalik</th>
<th>Tigre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; person common</td>
<td>-e, -he</td>
<td>-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; masculine</td>
<td>-ka</td>
<td>-kun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; feminine</td>
<td>-ki</td>
<td>-kin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; masculine</td>
<td>-u, -hu</td>
<td>-un -hun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; feminine</td>
<td>-a, -ha</td>
<td>-an, -han</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first and third persons, there are two forms of the suffixed genitive pronouns. When the modified nouns end in a vowel or semi-vowel sound the /h/ transitional sound comes between the final vowel of the noun and vowel of the suffixed genitive pronoun.

Examples:

[ʔaw] ‘father’; [ʔawhe] ‘my father’; [ʔawhu] ‘his father’

Unlike in the Tigre, when the suffixed genitive pronoun for the first person singular [e/he] is combined to nouns ending in dental or alveolar, the dental and alveolar consonants do not palatalize.
Examples:
Tigre = [ʔarəd] ‘land’; [ʔarəd3d3e] ‘my land’
Dahalik = [ʔarəd] ‘land’; [ʔarde] ‘my land’

As far as the function of the suffixed genitive pronoun is concerned it is used to express possession or qualification. It is also used as a subject of some prepositions.

4. Intelligibility of Tigre (Marya Tsallam) by the Dahalik

A biographical story from the dialect of Marya Tsallam of the Tigre language which was previously used in a 1997 dialect survey of the Tigre language was played to 10 randomly selected Dahalik subjects from Darbushet and Jamhile in Dahlak Kabir, 10 from Dihil and 10 others from Agaddi in Nora. Each of the 10 subjects in each site was asked, based on

---

In 1997, intelligibility tests were carried out in five Tigre dialects using recorded texts from the dialects of Marya Tsallam and Mansa to measure the degree of mutual understanding between speakers of the five major Tigre dialects. These Two dialects were selected on the assumption that the dialect of Marya Tsallam represents the western and northern dialects, and the dialect of Mansa represents the dialects of Samhar and Anseba regions.
the story, to answer 10 simple questions. The same questions were used in the 1997 dialect survey of the Tigre language. An introduction and a shorter story for use as practice were also prepared in the same way. After the practice story, the main story was played in its entirety once and then bit by bit to the subjects individually. Questions were inserted after each section of the main story, and this was done by a Dahalik speaker in order to avoid misunderstanding of the question because of dialectal variation in the paraphrasing of the question or in the pronunciation of the words.

At each research site, results were scored numerically: one for a full correct answer, half for half correct, and zero for incorrect answer. Then, scores of all subjects for each question were summed up and added to the sums of the other nine questions and divided by the total number of frequency of questions asked and multiplied by 100, in order to find the average percentage. For example, the sum of scores for questions one up to 10 for Dahalik of Jamhile and Darbushet were, one, three, four, three, one, three and half, six, five, three and half, and three. The total sum of all correct responses is 33. Ten questions each for 10 respondents brings the number of frequency of questions asked to 100. Therefore: 33 ÷ 100 x 100 = 33%. This means the average intelligibility of Marya Tsallam by Dahalik speakers of the Dahlak Kabir is 33%. The following table shows how the Marya Tsallam dialect was understood by the three dialects of Dahalik and the other dialects of the Tigre language.
Table 11: Understanding of the Marya Tsallam Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect of the Story Dialect of the Respondents</th>
<th>Marya Tsallam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahil</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansa</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marya Kayah</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barka</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samhar</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dahalik of Dahlak Kabir</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dahalik of Nora</strong></td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dahalik of Dihil</strong></td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From linguistic point of view, mutual intelligibility is the main factor for deciding whether two dialects are of the same language. According to the hypothesis of mutual intelligibility, none of the Dahalik dialects is a dialect of the Tigre language. However, in many cases, divisions/classifications are done on some socio-political grounds. For example, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian are mutually intelligible but they are all officially recognised as separate languages (Chambers and Trudgill 1986: 4). Similarly, Hindi and Urdu are mutually intelligible, but they are called different languages because they are associated with different countries and different religions. As far as linguistic facts are concerned, Serbo-Croat is a single Slavic language used by two ethnic groups, the Serbs and the Croats, but on socio-political grounds they are considered two different languages. On the other hand, Cantonese, Taiwanese and Mandarin are mutually unintelligible. However, the Chinese people and the Chinese government declared that all three of them are forms of a single Chinese language (Wardhaugh 2006: 28-30).
Thus, in an attempt to look beyond the linguistic facts, I interviewed some Dahalik men and women and some non Dahalik speakers of the Tigre language. The Dahalik respondents claim that they speak a different language called Dahalik. Furthermore, they say that the Tigre people do not understand their language. The Tigre speakers, on the other hand, say that the Dahalik speak a mixture of Tigre and other languages which is difficult for Tigre speakers to understand. When they were asked on whether they consider the Dahalik as Tigre, most of the respondents hesitated, probably because of the confusion between their perceptions of Dahalik as a different language and the official status of Dahalik as a variety of the Tigre language.

Both the linguistic and the socio-linguistic findings of this preliminary survey show that Dahalik may not be considered as a dialect of the Tigre language. Given the complicated nature of classifying linguistic varieties into languages and dialects, however, it is not a straight forward task to designate Dahalik as a separate language or a dialect of the Tigre language. A serious multidisciplinary research is required to look for further evidences. In any case, whether Dahalik is a different language or not might not be as pressing an issue as its possible endangerment. The concern is that this is a unique and an endangered linguistic form which contains a very important aspect of the history of the people and the country. So far, nothing has been done to study and document the richness and secrets of this linguistic variety. Therefore, the primary issue now is the high endangerment risk that this language faces.
5. Endangerment

Dahalik is the single most endangered linguistic variety in Eritrea. The findings of this preliminary sociolinguistic survey identified five main endangerment factors: Firstly, Dahalik is not among the so far written varieties of Eritrean languages. This denies it a certain prestige, which might in turn contribute to its extinction. There are already some indications which show that Dahalik is considered as less prestigious in the Dahlak Islands when it is compared to Afar or Arabic. According to my respondents, for example, if three Dahalik speakers are joined by a speaker of another language when they are speaking in Dahalik, they would shift into Arabic, but the opposite is not always true.

Secondly, since most of the domains of language function such as schooling, administration, religion, court proceedings, etc., in the Dahlak islands, are taken by Arabic, there are few domains in which Dahalik can function. So, even the few children who learn Dahalik from their parents forget it soon after they start school or go to work, and shift to other languages, particularly Arabic.

Thirdly, because the non-Dahalik residents of the islands do not speak the Dahalik language, the offspring of intermarriages are often non-Dahalik speaking children. According to the responses from the survey, intermarriage among Dahalik and the Afar is very common. Marriage with other nationalities, which is also not a rare phenomenon, tends to have the same effect of diminishing the status of Dahalik.

Fourthly, those Dahalik speakers who go to the mainland frequently are shifting to the Tigre language of the Massawa
area and taking this back to the islands. As a result, many Dahalik words and other linguistic structures are dying and being replaced by Tigre words and structures. For example, the Dahalik variety spoken in Dihil [dɔhəl], an island with greater contact with Tigre speakers, is closer to the Tigre language than the Dahalik variety spoken in Ageddi, a small village in the island of Nora.

Fifthly, Dahalik is also threatened by potential investment projects such as tourism and fishery. If such projects are fully implemented, they may result in the displacement of some of the Dahalik speaking population from their home islands, leading to the further decline of the Dahalik speaking population and more linguistic shift in the islands. Such changes may also create an atmosphere for more dominant languages to threaten the Dahalik variety. In addition, the spread of other languages through the media is endangering the survival of this variety.

6. Conclusion

Dahalik is the least known linguistic variety of Eritrea. For long, it was assumed that it might not be very far removed from the Tigre language. The preliminary findings of this survey, however, suggest that Dahalik might be a distinctive language with its own grammatical structures and history. The intelligibility level between the Tigre of Marya Tsallam and the Dahalik of Dahalak Kabir, Nora and Dihil is about 33%, 23.5% and 51% respectively. Words of common origin make about 50-60%. The brief glances at its grammar show important differences.
Linguistic evidences, however, are not the only criteria for the classification of linguistic varieties into languages and dialects. In many cases, divisions/classifications are done on some socio-political, historical, and ideological grounds. As in the case of the Scandinavian languages, mutually intelligible languages are considered as different languages. On the other hand, for the same reason, mutually unintelligible languages are considered as one language.

Dahalik is endangered due to several factors. The older generation of the community seems to be the last generation effectively using the language. It, therefore, needs to be studied and documented before we lose the older members of the community who are still holding this invaluable, unique human property.

The following are some of the major areas that deserve future research:

- Full description of Dahalik grammar;
- Measuring the intelligibility of Dahalik texts by Tigre speakers of the mainland;
- Accompanying lists of names of plants and animals with pictures and matching them with their scientific names; and
- Writing a short Dahalik-English dictionary.

Furthermore, in order to understand the contribution of Dahalak to our understanding of Eritrean history, a multidisciplinary research in collaboration with archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists and historians is needed.
References:


Apparent biliteral verbs in Tigrinya

Tesfay Tewolde

Abstract

There are verbs of Tigrinya which seem to have more than four radicals. There are also Tigrinya verbs which look like biliterals. However, evidences from Tigrinya itself show that almost all verbs of this language are either triliterals or quadriliterals and one of the radicals of the latter is always a dental or an alveolar. On the other hand, Tigrinya has three verbs which need cross linguistic evidences in order to show up their underlying radicals. These are niʕ– as in niʕa ‘come (2ms)’, haz– as in ħazä ‘seized (3ms)’ and ?iyiy– as in ?iyiyu ‘is (3ms)’. The aim of this paper is to examine these verbs in comparison with their counterparts in Ugaritic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Amharic, Phoenician, Tigre, Gišiz and Arabic and see if they are underlyingly or originally triliterals.

List of abbreviations and symbols used

1s(g) = first person singular
2ms = second person masculine singular
2fs = second person feminine singular
3ms = third person masculine singular
3fs = third person feminine singular
1p(l) = first person plural
2mpl = second person masculine plural
2fpl = second person feminine plural
3mpl = third person masculine plural

3fpl = third person feminine plural
3fpl = third person feminine plural

i = high central vowel
ä = mid central vowel
P’= ejective bilabial stop
t’ = ejective dental stop

š = voiceless palatal fricative
x’ = ejective velar fricative
h = voiceless pharyngeal fricative
ʔ = voiceless glottal stop
Introduction

Tigrinya verbs are either triliterals as in kädʕä ‘betrayed (3ms)’ or quadriliterals as in qäntʕäsä ‘cut (3ms)’. Moreover, one of the radicals of the latter is always a dental or an alveolar as in the case of n in qäntʕäsä. There are verbs which seem to have more than four radicals. But, this is only because they have affixes and/or some of their radicals are reduplicated as in (1.1) below (cf. Tesfay 2002 for details). There are, however, seemingly biliteral verbs. If some of the radicals are glides, pharyngeals or laryngeals we may observe processes of assimilations or deletions. These processes make the verbs look like biradicals or biliterals. For instance, the verb habä ‘he gave’ looks like a biradical on the surface. But, its third radical can be seen in other words derived from the same root as in yiwwähab ‘let it be given’. Thus, almost all the seemingly biliteral verbs show up their underlying radicals in their conjugations or derivations from the same root. As can be observed below, Tigrinya has only three verbs which either do not show up or need some effort in order to show up their underlying radicals. These are niʕa ‘come (2ms)’, hazä ‘seized (3ms)’ and ?ïyyu ‘is (3ms)’. The aim of this paper is to see if these verbs have underlying or original triliteral forms. But, let us first have a brief discussion on the verbs with reduplicated or apparently reduplicated radicals.

1. Some assumptions for reduplication

This paper will not discuss the details of reduplication process in Tigrinya. However, the examples in (1.1 and 1.2) could show

---

1 I am grateful to Dr Tarantola, A. and Mr Saleh Mahmud for their comments on the article. I also thank Saleh Mahmud for the Tigre data. Errors are, of course, my responsibility alone.
that onomatopoeic words (both primary and secondary) could be the cause for reduplication whereas (1.3 and 1.4) indicate that the reduplication may only be apparent and not real.

1.1 Reduplication of final consonants

Onomatopoeic words can reduplicate the last consonants. For example, in hiwizwizwiz there are segments **hwz** as radicals. The final consonants **w** and **z** are reduplicated and we have hiwizwizwiz + bälä ‘said (3ms)’ to mean ‘gleamed’ (cf. also McCarthy 1982: 153 – 4 for Arabic) and we can have the same meaning in ??a + *hwzwäzä > ähwäzwäzä ‘gleamed (3ms)’. Sometimes even a noun with three consonants could reduplicate its consonant as in sařri ‘grass’ and safrärä ‘grass grew/became green’ probably because the verb sašarä ‘won (3ms)’ with the root sšr had already another meaning.

1.2 Total reduplication

Onomatopoeic words can reduplicate all of their consonants as in qätqätqätqätqät’. There is no limit for the number of reduplicated forms. For instance, we can say qätqät’, qätqätqätqät’, or qätqätqätqätqätqätqätqätqätqätqät’ and together with the verb bälä ‘he said’ function as verbs, and thus, we have qätqätqät bälä ‘he trembled’ which literally means ‘tremble tremble…he said’. But qätqätqät’ alone is not a verb. The meaning of qätqätqätqätqät’ bälä ‘he trembled’ can be expressed by tän– + qätqät– + ä > täŋqätqätä ‘he trembled’. We have also the form ?anqätqätä ‘made others tremble’ < ?an– + qätqät–ä. Moreover, the word ?anqätqätä may have a meaning similar to täŋqätqätä ‘he trembled’. The total reduplication of qätqät is accomplished here by mapping one root morpheme onto two root morpheme positions in
separate tiers as in Fig. 1 which is later changed into a possible verb by zero derivation (cf. Jensen 1990). Prefixes such as tän– and suffixes such as –ä are then added to the verb. The reduplication of such words occurs prior to the change into verbs. Besides, semantic changes are made. Thus, they can be listed in the atomic core of the lexicon (cf. Roeper and Siegel 1978; McCarthy 1982) and hence the reduplicated segments could be treated as any independently listed elements in the lexicon and each of the reduplicated consonants can be regarded as a consonant of the root. We can also assume that entire root reduplication is limited to verbs derived from onomatopoeic words. In verbs such as tänqäťqäťä and ?anqäťqäťä, the prefixes ?a + n– and tä + n–, and also the suffix –ä, are put in tiers different from each other and from that of the reduplicated qäťqäť (cf. McCarthy 1982: 152–153) as in the following:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C v c</th>
<th>c v c</th>
<th>c v c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>affixes</td>
<td>? n q t' q t'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>root</td>
<td>qť’</td>
<td>qť’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Fig. 1

1.3 Proto–Semitic dual ending

Proto–Semitic dual endings are –a (nominative) and –ay (genitive/accusative) followed by nunation or mimation as in Akkadian –an (nominative) and –ayn (genitive / accusative).
Duality is a linguistic expression for natural pairs. But this restricted use of duality is secondary (cf. Moscati et al. 1964). In Tigrinya we have –an/-am and –ayn forms to show the relationship between two things. For instance if x is an item, x + am (–an) shows someone or something in (excessive) possession of x or have the quality/characteristics of x. Observe the following:

1.i. hinzi ‘poison’ + am > hinzam ‘someone with hinzi, i.e. poisonous’

   ii. libbi ‘heart’ + –am > läbbam ‘wise’

   iii. sinni ‘tooth’ + –an > sännan ‘someone with big tooth’

   iv. riʔsi ‘head’ + –an > raʔsan ‘someone with big head’

   v. siga ‘meat’ + –am > *säggam > säggäw ‘fat’

The above examples show that the morphemes –am/-an are suffixed to the nouns in (1i - v) to form adjectives. Nominals such as libbi ‘heart’, and sinni ‘tooth’ can develop into other nominals as in (1i - iv) above and the consonants (including those of the suffixes) can function as roots in forming verbs such as läbbämä ‘became wise’, and sännänä ‘have/grow big tooth’. The consonants of the suffixes are taken as part of the root in order to fill the C-slot in the verb patterns of Tigrinya. The consonants hńzm (1i), lbm (1ii), snn (1iii), rʔsn (1iv) and sgw (v) are used in the formation of verbs. The first n in sännänä is geminated by automatic spreading. But, this does not apply to the second n because it is part of a different morpheme (cf. McCarthy 1982: 147 – 148 for the representation of different morphemes like root and affix). Just as the verbs hankäṣä ‘became lame (3ms’), wäkkälä ‘represented (3ms’) and maʔkälä ‘became the centre (3ms)’, we say hanzämä ‘became poisonous’, sännänä ‘have big tooth’, raʔsänä ‘have big head’
and säggäwä ‘became fat’ (cf. Lipinski 1997 for m > w). On the other hand, nominals such as ʕɨbud ‘mad’ or sħut ‘mistaken’ do not need the consonant n for the formation of verbs because they have already formed verbs whose radicals are ʕbd and sht (cf. Jensen 1990 and Kiparisky 1983 for the different levels in the lexicon).

1.4 Other factors

We can form nominals (nouns and adjectives) and intransitive verbs in Tigrinya from onomatopoeic words preceded by n– as can be demonstrated in the following examples:

2.i. n–+ ťɨr ‘jump’ > näťär–ä ‘jumped (3ms)’

ii. n–+ fir ‘fly’ > näfär–ä ‘flew (3ms)’

iii. n–+ fis/š ‘blow’ > näfäs–ä ‘blew (3ms)’

In (2i–iii), the n–preformative is prefixed to onomatopoeic words. In (2iii), for instance, n–preformative followed by an onomatopoeic word fiš or fis ‘gentle blowing’ form a word with the consonants nfs which could be listed in the lexicon as its root. Intransitive verbs such as näfäs–ä ‘blew’, and words such as näfas > nifas ‘wind’, or näfsi/näbsi ‘soul’ can be formed from this triconsonantal root (cf. Lipinski 1997: 394 for related views in other Afro-Asiatic and for n preformative and pūš ‘to blow’ in napāšu). However, the biliteral onomatopoeic words cannot be changed to verbs as they are. They become verbs after taking the prefix n– as a third radical.

Furthermore, it can be noted that Tigrinya has verbs such as sässänä “increased (3ms)”, gägäyä “forgot (3ms)” and zazämä “completed (3ms)”. Since mapping is from left to right (cf.
McCarthy 1982) the phonetic realization of such verbs must have been impossible. Factors like deletion, insertion or assimilation of some segments may bring about such similarities of consonants in a root. For instance, lääläwä ‘burn slightly’ and läbläbä (most probably related to läwläwä) ‘burn slightly’ are semantically almost the same. Deletion, assimilation or some other idiosyncratic processes could make the formation of the former from the latter possible. The words sässänä, gägayä and zazämä may be derived from *säysänä, *gäygäyä and zämzämä or zämzämä respectively [cf. Segert 1997:179 for a reduplicated form glgl “wheel” and for the derivation of kkb “star” from *kbkb in Ugaritic (with a reduced second radical) which corresponds to Tigrinya kokäb>koxäb “star” or to Hebrew ko:ka:b “star”]. The words näwnäwä and näñäwä have the same meaning and the latter can be derived from the former by deleting w. The two n’s in näñäwä are listed in the lexicon as parts of two morphemes: näw and näw followed by –ä (3ms) and the word näñäwä is derived from näwnäwä by deleting the segment w in the first syllable. Words like näñäwä are phonetically realized because they later on develop into a root and are listed in the lexicon just as other triliteral root consonants (cf. McCarthy 1982 for the derivation of roots from other roots) and hence can be treated as triliterals and not as biliterals. However, further research is also needed.

2. The Verbs niä’a ‘come (2ms)’, hazä ‘seized (3ms)’ and ʔiyyu ‘is (3ms)’

From the discussion so far (cf. also Tesfay 2002), we assume that the verbs with the consonants related to (1.1–1.4) are not biliterals. Apart from these, the only suspected underlying bilateral verbs are hazä, ʔiyyu, and niä’a. Let us take a look at each one of them.
2.1 ħazä ‘seized’

The verb ħazä looks like a biliteral. But if we compare it to other verbs we can see that there is an epenthetic consonant t inserted to substitute the lost segment. Observe the following:

3.i. säräxä ‘he stole’, misrax ‘to steal’

ii. täsärqä ‘it was stolen’, misrax ‘to steal’

iii. ?asräxä ‘he caused to steal’, misrax ‘to steal’

iv. ħazä ‘he seized’, mihaz ‘to seize’

v. tätahzä ‘it was seized’, mithaz ‘to seize’

vi. ḥathazä ‘he caused to seize’, mithaz ‘to seize’

The verb hazä is a type A verb. In all Tigrinya verbs of type A, such as säräx’ä (3i), the prefixes tä– and ?a– are affixed to the simple perfective stems in order to change them to passive and causative forms respectively (see 3i–iii).

But, in the case of hazä there is a segment t inserted between the prefixes and the stems as in (3iv–vi). For the passive form, we see tätahzä instead of tähazä and for the causative, we see ḥathazä instead of ḥahazä.

Moreover, the infinitive of the passive and the causative forms of type A verbs like säräx’ä or sábäřä ‘he broke’ is /mi+c₁c₂ac₃/ (/c₁c₂c₃/ indicate the first, second and third radicals of the root respectively) as we can see from (3i–iii). In the case of /ħazä/, however, t is inserted after /mi–/ as in (3v–vi).
This insertion of $t$ is to fill a C-slot in the passive, causative and infinitive patterns. Let us observe the following type A verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive Form</th>
<th>CV Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.  täsärqä</td>
<td>C V C V C C –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.  tätahzä</td>
<td>t ä 1 V 2 3 –</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causative Form</th>
<th>CV Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. ʔasrāqā</td>
<td>C V C C V C –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. ʔathazä</td>
<td>? a 1 2 V 3 –</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it is clear that the $t$ that precedes consonants ħ and z in tätahzä, ʔathazä and mithaz is inserted in order to fill the C-slot, a consonant position that was left empty after the deletion of the first radical. In several other Semitic languages, ħazä corresponds to ʔahazu etc. So, we see that the first radical of the root in ʔahazä is ?. Therefore, one may assume that in Tigrinya too the first radical in ħazä was ? (see Tesfay 2002 for the discussion on insertions).

2.2 ʔìyyu (3ms) ‘is’

The Tigrinya verb to be ʔìyy- takes different suffixes indicating number, person and gender such as -u (3ms). The suffixes are exactly the same as the Tigrinya gerundive suffixes. Except that of the 1sg (1sg possessive suffix -āy > -ā in the verb to be) they are also the same as the possessive suffixes.
Different Semitic languages have different roots of the verb to be. For instance, we have kwn (verb to be) in Phoenician (cf. Segert 1997: 186), kwn and hlw in Gĩiz and also kwn and nbr in Tigrinya as forms of the verb to be. In these languages, they can be used as the past forms of the verb to be. For the present, Tigrinya uses the verb to be ʔiyy– (+gerundive suffixes such as –u) which is related to Aramaic verb to be hwy (cf. Kaufman 1997: 128) and to Modern Hebrew verb to be haya (cf. Berman 1997: 329). We can expect h>? as in halläwä >*hallo>?allo ‘there is’ in Tigrinya and hagär>?agär ‘country’ in Amharic. In the gerundive form of Tigrinya the ungeminated w can be deleted as in:

4 zäwiru >*zäiru >zäyru ‘went round’

As in indicated in Tesfay (2002), vowel sequence is not permitted in Tigrinya. As we can see in (4) above, there is a vowel sequence in *zäiru after the deletion of w. Since such a sequence is not permissible in the language, the vowel i in vowel position in *zäiru becomes y when it takes the consonant position.

Comparative studies indicate the origin of Tigrinya verb to be ʔiyy– can be hwy or hyw. As in the case of Modern Hebrew haya “to be” and Tigrinya gerundive form cäcic (<cacic), the vowel following the first radical of Tigrinya verb to be can originally be expected to be a. The suffixes which occur attached to Tigrinya verb to be are the same as the gerundive suffixes and more or less similar to the possessive suffixes. I assume the deletion of the segment w, the change of h>? and assimilation processes as in the following:
Tesfay Tewolde

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.ia.</td>
<td>*hawiy- &gt; *hiyiw- &gt; *hiy- &gt; ?iyy- + -suffix as in ?iyy-u ‘he is(3ms)’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ib.</td>
<td>*hayiw- &gt; *hiyiw- &gt; *hiyi- &gt; ?iyy- + -suffix as in ?iyy-u ‘he is(3ms)’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iia.</td>
<td>*hawiy- &gt; *hiyiw- &gt; *hiy- &gt; ?iyy- + -suffix as in ?ixa ‘you are (2ms)’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iib.</td>
<td>*hayiw- &gt; *hiyiw- &gt; *hiyi- &gt; ?iyy- + -suffix as in ?ixa ‘you are (2ms)’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iiia.</td>
<td>*hawiy- &gt; *hiyiw- &gt; *hiy- &gt; ?iyy- + -suffix as in ?ina ‘we are’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iiib.</td>
<td>*hayiw- &gt; *hiyiw- &gt; *hiyi- &gt; ?iyy- + -suffix as in ?ina ‘we are’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, it is not difficult to see the change from hwy/hyw to ?yy (which may be changed to ?y). Moreover, I assume the following:

a. The change of a>i by regressive assimilation as in
   *hawiy- > *hiyiw- or hayiw- > *hiyiw-
b. The deletion of w as in *hiyiw- > *hiyi or *hiyiw- > hiyi
c. The change of h>ʔ
d. The change of i>y as in hiy > ?iyy or ?iyi- > ?iyy-

As we can observe from the examples in (5ia-iiia and 5ib-iiib), we have the assumed original form in column I, the regressive assimilation of a by i in column II, the deletion of w in column III, the change of h to ʔ and also the change of i to y in column IV while in column V examples of the current forms are given.

In Tigrinya, regressive assimilation is very common. For instance, we have birux ‘blessed(m)’ > burux or birux ‘blessed(m)’ + ti > birixti ‘blessed(f)’. In the same manner, we expect i>i if ?iyy– is immediately followed by a vowel initial suffix as in ?iy(y)–u > ?iyy–u. Thus, we see ?iyy–ä ‘I am’, ?iyy–a ‘she is’, ?iyy–u ‘he is’, ?iyy–än ‘they are (f)’ and ?iyy–om ‘they are (m)’. Furthermore, it is possible to degeminate the
element \textit{y} in \textit{ʔiyy-}. Since the suffix initial vowels are back and central vowels, we observe a process of regressive assimilation, i.e., \textit{i}>\textit{i}. But when the initial segments of the suffixes are consonants, however, we observe other phonological processes. As indicated in Tesfay (2002), the syllabic structure of Tigrinya is \textit{cv} or \textit{cvc}. If sequences of segments different from \textit{cv} or \textit{cvc} occur in the language, we find phonological processes such as deletions in order to make the sequence permissible. If the initial elements of the suffixes are vowels, we get sequences of segments permissible in the language. But if the initial elements of the suffixes are consonants, we get sequences which are not permissible in the language. In \textit{ʔiyy-}+\textit{u}, for instance, we have \textit{cvc} followed by \textit{cv}. In \textit{ʔiyy-} followed by -a (3fs), -om (3mpl), -\textit{än} (3fpl) and -\textit{ä} (1sg) too, we have \textit{cv} and \textit{cvc} structures which are permissible in the language. On the other hand, the structures we see when \textit{ʔiyy} (which becomes \textit{ʔiyy-} by assimilation in \textit{ʔiyy-u} etc.) is followed by consonant initial suffixes are not permissible. In, for instance, \textit{ʔiyy-ka}, we have \textit{cvcc} followed by \textit{cv} or \textit{cvc} followed by \textit{ccv}. Tigrinya does not have \textit{cvcc} or \textit{ccv} syllabic structures. Hence, we have \textit{ʔiyy-ka} > \textit{ʔixa} ‘you are (2ms)’. In the process, we see the deletion of the segment \textit{y} and the change \textit{k}>\textit{x}. Moreover, we have \textit{ʔiyy-ki} >\textit{ʔixi} ‘you are (2fs)’, \textit{ʔiyy-na} >\textit{ʔina} ‘we are’, \textit{ʔiyy-kum} > \textit{ʔixum} ‘you are (2mpl)’ and \textit{ʔiyy-kin} >\textit{ʔixin} ‘you are (2fpl)’.

In the Tigrinya dialects of Tigray, we observe the insertion of \textit{i} before the consonant initial suffixes in order to make the syllabic structure permissible as in \textit{ʔiyy-na} >\textit{ʔiyyina}. The form \textit{ʔiyyina} is \textit{cvc} followed by \textit{cv} and another \textit{cv} which is acceptable in the language.

In some dialects of Tigrinya we may observe the change \textit{i}>\textit{i} irrespective of what form of suffixes follow the verb to be
?iy(y). Hence, we have forms like ?iyy-u ‘he is’ and ?ina ‘we are’. I assume this is due to analogy. There is regressive assimilation when ?iyy- is followed by back or central vowel initial suffixes. The change of i>ɨ in this situation (i.e., ?iyy-followed by vowel initial suffixes) may have an effect on the change of i>ɨ on other contexts (i.e., even when ?iyy- is followed by consonant initial suffixes). But in the standard, the segment i remains as it is if consonant initial suffixes –ka, –ki, –kum, –kin and –na follow ?iyy- as in ?ina ‘we are’, ?ixa ‘you are (2ms)’, ?ixi ‘you are (2fs)’, ?ixum ‘you are (2mp)’, ?ixin ‘you are (2fp)’.

The relation of Tigrinya verb to be ?y(y) to Aramaic verb to be hwy and to Modern Hebrew verb to be haya seems clear. Since ?i(i)y(y) is related to triliteral verb to be forms such as hwy in other Semitic languages, we may assume that in Tigrinya too it was originally triliteral.

2.3 niʕә

The verb niʕә ‘come’ (also realized as näʕә or naʕә) is only conjugated in the second person singular and plural imperative forms as in (7ia–iva) below. So, it may not be easy to discover the deleted or assimilated segments. Nevertheless, in Gĩziz this verb can be conjugated in all persons in the perfective, imperfective and jussive forms. In these conjugations one can see the segment /w/. For example:

6. i tänäʕawku, tänäʕawka, etc.

   ii. yitnäʕaw, yitnäʕawwu, etc.

In Tigrinya, we have the verb tänäʕawä(< tā+näʕaw+ā) ‘became restless (3ms)’. There is also a Tigrinya word niʕi相对较少.
niṣwwi ‘restless/one who goes here and there/disturber’. Since tä– can be a passive marker, it can be seen that they are derived from the root nʕw. So, one may at least suspect that ni(ā/a)ʕa was originally a triliteral verb. But, let us see the data below:

 ia. niṣ–a ‘you (2ms) come’  ib. gibär ‘you (2ms) do’

7. iia. niṣ–i ‘you (2fs) come’  iiib. gibär–i ‘you (2fs) do’

 iiiia. niṣ–u ‘you (2mpl) come’  iiib. gibär–u ‘you (2mpl) do’

 iv. niṣ–inä ‘you (2fpl) come’  ivb. gibär–a ‘you (2fpl) do’

 va. niṣ–umä ‘you (2mpl) come’

In (7ib–ivb), we have imperative suffixes that we get in any Tigrinya verb of imperative form. However, we can see that 2ms (7ia) and 2fpl (iva) suffixes that are found affixed to the stem niṣ– of the imperative form are different from their counterparts in (7ib) and (7ivb). It can also be noted that there is a segment n in (7iva). At least in some dialects of Tigrinya, it is possible to say niṣ–umä (7va) instead of niṣ–u (7iiia). Furthermore, the stem niṣ– takes n when the order is intended to be done in a more gentle way (as in 8i–iv). The examples in (8ia–iva) have the meaning ‘let you come and go with me’ or ‘with us’ or, shortly, ‘let us go’. The forms in (8ib–ivb) are used when the speaker wants to show affection as in the case when the mother wants her child to come closer towards her. Observe the following:
Tetray Tewolde

ia. niʕannay ‘let you (2ms) come and go with me/us’

ib. niʕanni ‘please you (2ms) come’

8. iia. niʕinnay ‘let you (2fs) come and go with me/us’

iib. niʕinni ‘please (2fs) come’

iiia. niʕunay ‘let you (2mpl) come and go with me/us’

iva. niʕanay ‘let you (2fpl) come and go with me/us’

We have indicated in (7ib–ivb) the imperative suffixes we get in any Tigrinya verb of imperative form. By comparing the imperative suffixes in (7ib–ivb) to the imperative suffixes in (7ia–va), in (8ia–iva) and in (8ib–iib) we can understand that the last n is not part of the suffixes. It is, in fact, highly probable that it is part of the root and if that is the case this verb is a triliteral verb. None the less, let us look for other evidences in other Semitic languages.

3. Related Semitic elements

The second person singular (2ms) imperative form of Amharic is na, whereas in Tigrinya and Giʕiz the 2ms is niʕa. It is interesting to observe that in Tigre, we have the forms nāʕa ‘come (2ms)’ and niʕano ‘come (2mpl)’ which can be compared to Tigrinya niʕa/nāʕa ‘come (2ms)’ and niʕumā ‘come (2mpl)’ respectively. Different Tigrinya suffixes can be affixed to Tigrinya stem niʕ- of niʕa (also realized as nāʕa or naʕa). Tigrinya niʕ– can be compared to biblical Hebrew particle -na (cf. Barth 1893: 18; Leslau 1987: 382) and to its counterparts in Tigre, Giʕiz and Amharic. The Hebrew particle is often rendered as ‘please/I pray’ and is associated with imperative contexts interpreted as a marker of politeness (cf.
Testen 1997). According to Testen (1997: 175–186) Tigrinya and Gišiz niš– (also naš–/näç–) are related to Hebrew na–, Syriac ni and Ugaritic mς. Furthermore, Testen (1997) assumes the following:

1. The proto–form is *nʕm ‘be good’ and its meaning is a plausible starting point for the development of the meaning ‘please’.

2. The final segment m in nišm is deleted as in the case of the loss of word final nasal segment in the Semitic accusative ending.

3. In Ugaritic, the process nʕm > mʕm > mʕ can be hypothesized. In other words, the first radical of the root nʕm may have become m due to the influence of the final radical m which was later deleted. According to Robert Ratcliffe (cited by Testen 1997: 179) the change may also be due to a process of metathesis of the nasals (n…m > m…n).

4. The form *tiʔtw as the proper imperative corresponding to early Semitic verb ‘come’ is proposed (Tigrinya has the verb root ʔtw ‘come in’).

5. At the earliest stage of Semitic, the notion ‘come’ with a marked degree of politeness, i.e., unmarked *ti ‘come’ contrasted with marked *ti– nʕm ‘please come’ is hypothesized.

6. Since ti–‘come’ formally looked like the 2ms morpheme, ti–nʕm would have looked like the jussive form of nʕm. Thus a simple process of back formation
(*ti–nʕam–‘may you come’) was able to produce an imperative *nʕm from the seemingly jussive ti–nʕm.

7. The Ethio–Eritrean Semitic imperative stem for ‘come’ can be traced back to Northwest Semitic ‘please’ particles, while in Arabic nʕm ‘be good’ was replaced by *taʕaalay–.

In Amharic the process cacʕâ > cácca as in bälʕâ> bālla ‘ate’ is common (cf. also Barth 1893) and the relationship between Northwest Semitic –na, –ni, Amharic na and also Tigrinya, Tigre and Giʃiz niʕa/nāʕa can easily be traced. I think we may also relate the form ti–nʕm to Giʃiz tânʕaw– (as in 6 above) and to Tigrinya phrase niʕa ʔito ‘come and enter’. Testen (1997) derives –na, –ni, mʕ and nʕ from the same proto–form nʕm with the meaning ‘be good’ that later developed into ‘please’. We can see that Tigrinya examples in (7i–iv) and (8i–iv) and also the Tigre examples indicated above support Testen’s assumptions. In (8ia–iva) and (8ib–iib) there is a last segment n which is not found in other Tigrinya imperative suffixes (see 7ib–ivb). We have seen above that in Tigre, we have nāʕa ‘come (2ms)’ and niʕano ‘come (2mpl)’. Furthermore, (8ib–iib) indicate a polite form of come and a gentle feeling of fondness or liking that the speaker has towards the addressee. (8ia–iva) shows a fairly polite request ‘to go together/let’s go’ (not ‘to come’). The meanings ‘to come’ and ‘to go’ are different meanings. However, nʕm with the meaning ‘come’ and ‘go’ may have the sense of affection (8ib–iib) or polite request (8ia–iva) which may be traced back to the meaning ‘please’.
4. Conclusion

Most Tigrinya verbs are either triliterals or quadriliterals. But the words ʔiyyu, hazä and niʕa (sometimes pronounced as naʕa or nāʕa) and some verbs with reduplicated or seemingly reduplicated radicals may need further discussion. In (1.1), we see the prefix ʔa + the root hwz with the last consonants of the root reduplicated. We also find the reduplication of the last radical of a triliteral root such as sʕr. However, they are not biliterals. In (1.2), we observe reduplication in verbs such as tänqätˈqätˈä and ʔanqätˈqätˈä. The reduplication of qäťqäť in such words occurred prior to the change into verbs. Besides, semantic changes are also made and hence can be listed in the atomic core of the lexicon. Thus, I assume that the reduplicated segments could be treated as any independently listed elements in the lexicon. It can also be assumed that the forms in (1.3–1.4) are only apparent reduplications.

The other verbs which seem biliterals are ʔiyyu, hazä and niça. In Tigrinya, one of the radicals in ʔiyyu is lost (as we can see from Huddlestone 1988 and others, the verb ‘to be’ in English and other languages is in some ways distinct from other verbs and the same can also be true to Tigrinya ʔiyyu). But, the data from Aramaic and Hebrew show that its lost radical was w. The verb hazä has lost the first consonant of the root. However, the consonant is substituted by the epenthetic consonant t, just as the t that substitutes laryngeals and pharyngeals as in Amharic bälla and mäblat which are related to Tigrinya bälʕä and miblaʕ respectively. The evidence in other Semitic languages shows that the first radical in hazä was /ʔ/.

As far as the imperative form of the verb niʕa (7ía–iva) is concerned, it has lost one of its radicals except in the 2fpl. But
in the 2fpl (7iva), we get n as a root final radical. In some dialects of Tigrinya (at least), we find m as a root final radical (7va). Very interestingly, the imperative forms with final radicals n (7iva) and m (7va) are also used for deference or politeness. Besides, we can observe in (8ia–iva) and (8ib–iib) that n is phonetically realized as a final root radical and the forms are used in order to show softer imperative/jussive and affection respectively [cf. Tesfay 2002, 2010 for the differences of the object suffix -ni, and also detrimental or applicative -ni from the form -ni in (8ib-iib, 9i-ii)] as in for instance:

9.i.  nišinni  za  gwal  -äy
     please come (2fs)  this (2fs)  daughter  my
     ‘Please come my beloved daughter’
ii .  nišanni  zi  wädd  -äy
     please come (2ms)  this (2ms)  son  my
     ‘Please come my beloved son’

which indicate that the stem with the final root radical n is closer to the please particles of Northwest Semitic. Another observation worth noting is that the stem nʕ– followed by n can have the meanings ‘to come’ as in (7iva) and (8ib–iib) and ‘to go’ as in (8ia–iva). (7iva) can be used for deference, (8ib–iib) is used to show affection and (8ia–iva) is used for polite imperative. The meaning ‘please’ could be included in all of them. In fact, it is this element which is common to all of them and which makes them closer to the Northwest Semitic ‘please’ particles. Testen (1997) assumed the root nʕm for Northwest Semitic please particles (–na, –ni, or ūm) and Ethio–Eritrean Semitic niʕ–(also naʕ–/näʕ) ‘come’. The Tigrinya data
discussed in this article proves that Testen’s assumption is perfectly right. Assuming the possible phonetic changes between n, m and w (cf. Lipinski 1997), it is not difficult to see the same origin of the GiṢiz root nʕw ‘come’ as in (6) and nʕm. Hence, we can see that haza leaves its substitute, the epenthetic segment t while nʕa shows up its final radical n or m in some of its conjugations. As in Tigrinya, the second n in niʕano is, I assume, part of the root. But the verb to be ʔiyyu has lost the middle or last radical w. Nonetheless, all of them can be regarded as originally triliterals.

References


Children's cultures: Some conceptual issues and research potentials in highland Eritrea

Abbebe Kifleyesus

Abstract

Research on children and childhood has much to gain from serious consideration of diverse theoretical models, and anthropology at the cross roads of child research has profound implications not only for our understanding of the social and cultural construction of childhood but also for the ways we distinguish it from adulthood. The cultural ideal of the importance of children to continue and maintain the group, the respect for parents and responsibility for their care in old age, strong masculine and feminine identity and the primacy of male over female children in terms of power and authority, the division of labour by gender and age, the conduct and character of children who in time become adults and conform with the norm of the group are all cultural constructions ideologically based on the recognition of the pragmatic fit of the set of social, economic and political expectations. More importantly, the view that cultural learning overestimates the role adults play and underestimates the contributions that children make to cultural reproduction and lack of appreciation of the scope and force of children’s culture, particularly in shaping adult culture, marginalises children and childhood and obscures our understanding of how cultural forms emerge and why they are sustained. This article examines the theoretical nature of children’s cultural experiences and the ways in which they are organised and discusses children’s cultural identity and currency using some empirical data from an Eritrean rural highland society.

1 A version of this article was presented at the Second International Conference on Early Childhood Care and Development in Asmara, Eritrea. I would like to thank Ar'aia Habtai of the Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education for his insightful comments during the conference presentation of this piece of work.
1. Introduction

The social spaces of difference are important because these sites are constituted by the presence and activity of people whose voices continue to be silenced. These voices belong to those who occupy subordinate positions of power, including women and children. Culture, portrayed in terms of a unified system of meaning, privileges the voices of the powerful. In turn, cultural meanings that may be held by the groups that oppose dominant interpretations continue to be excluded so as to uphold this representation of culture. This article looks at the linkages between anthropological knowledge and the subject of children and examines the structures of power that have deemed certain kinds of knowledge more important or valuable than others. It also investigates what this situation meant for the present state of studies of children's cultures, and considers the definitional, conceptual and methodological issues surrounding anthropology's rethinking of the concept of culture and the questions of voice and agency in the context of children's cultures using my own field research about children in rural highland Eritrea.

In what follows, I suggest how current thinking about these issues has had repercussions for the study of children's cultures in anthropology. Using examples from my field research with children in the highlands of Eritrea, I will argue two major points. First, the study of children's cultures requires a conceptualisation of culture that is more dynamic and relational than traditional perspectives used in the past so that previously marginalised voices may be heard. I argue that it is only with a more critical usage of the concept of culture that we can begin to understand the complexity of the subject of children as active agents engaged in the production and management of meaning in their own social lives. The second point pertains to the
Abbebe Kifleyesus

epistemological questions that guide much of this inquiry. More specifically, it identifies the linkages between anthropological knowledge and the subject of children.

Three related themes serve to organise this article. First, the concept of culture is viewed in relation to age/time based culture that encompasses the lives of children. Second, children actively engaged in the production of meaning in their lives are central and pivotal. Third, categories such as childhood and children will be considered with a view to understanding how they have been constituted and maintained. Ethnographic examples, drawn from my own fieldwork with groups of children carried out in the highlands of Eritrea from 1998-2001, will be used to illustrate some of these issues. Organisationally, I begin with a selected overview of the study of children's cultures in the social sciences in general and in anthropology in particular. I go on to evaluate these approaches and suggest some problems that need to be addressed in order to understand the complexity of children's lives, providing details from my own ethnography. The next two sections of the article pay particular attention to methodological and conceptual issues that are important for the study of children's cultures and to some ethnographic reflections pertaining to children’s cultures in the highlands of Eritrea. The article ends with an examination of some of the ways that the categories of children and youth are defined by arbitrary parameters. I suggest how research efforts help to construct and maintain these categories.

---

2 The rethinking of the concept of culture that has taken place in anthropology has made explicit issues to consider when formulating approaches to the study of children's cultures. Current conceptualisations of culture have helped to bring into view previously marginalised voices and have disrupted the relations of power that have sustained anthropological research in the past.
and offer some thoughts on how to empower children's voices in future research.

2. The study of children's cultures in the social sciences

In general, the treatment accorded to the subject of children across the social sciences remains uneven. There has been an increased interest by some international agencies to make explicit the complexity of children's lives and the narrow view that is sometimes held regarding the concept of childhood (Fernea 1995: 6-8). These efforts have resulted in a reconsideration of traditional concepts of childhood in some areas of the social sciences. In turn, many models previously utilised to view children's lives are being reconstructed due to this wide range of critique (Gursoy 1995; Pollock 1983). Among these, psychology has been the main arena for childhood research in the social sciences. Human development and socialisation models have provided the frameworks for many of these studies. These models promote a view that children are part of a process in which social knowledge and competence is imparted to them from adults (James et al. 1990; Reynolds 1995). In turn, children are transformed overtime into mature adults.

This developmental framework in psychology has had far-reaching implications for approaches to the study of childhood

---

3 These studies refer to the ways in which models of a life course are commonly talked about, perceived and conceptualised; second they draw attention to the forms of models through which social spaces of childhood are shaped and experienced by children themselves. And, as a contribution to the burgeoning anthropological literature on childhood, these models are brought together here through a consideration of the ways in which it is appropriate to talk theoretically about children's experience of socialisation in contemporary highland Eritrean society.
Abbebe Kifleyesus

across many disciplines. According to this framework, children are in process of becoming full, rational adults and must move through biologically determined stages to achieve this goal (Light 1986: 113). Children's activities, including their language acquisition and play patterns, for example, serve to mark these developmental stages (James 1993: 65). Piaget's work on child development has had an important impact on studies of cognition and children over the past several decades (Piaget 1950). However, this research continues to uphold the view that children are still culturally incomplete and require a progression through stages in order to attain the completeness attributed to adult members of society. More recent researchers involved in reassessing the work of Piaget are beginning to question this view by focusing their efforts on the importance of children's perspectives, social context and symbolic meanings (Schwartzman 1978; Suransky 1982).

The psychological model of child development had a profound impact on theories of socialisation that developed during the 1950s. Within a structural functionalist paradigm, the ways children learned to participate in society were viewed through their acquisition of social roles, and through the process of socialisation, children were able to acquire knowledge of these roles (Corsaro 1990; Denzin 1977). The socialisation process has traditionally been viewed from both the behaviourist and constructivist perspectives. The former view defines socialisation as children's internalisation of adult skills and knowledge where, through role models and reinforcement, the child is shaped and moulded by surrounding adult cultures and, in most cases, remains primarily passive. The latter perspective stresses the active role of the child where children are viewed as acquiring and constructing knowledge from what they interpret from the surrounding society, and where human learning
transforms an individual through a process that generally occurs in a stage-like fashion rather than according to the accumulative view of the behaviourists (Donaldson 1978; Hockey et al. 1993). It promotes a primarily linear view of the developmental process.

One is able to see at this point that the issue of agency was becoming increasingly important in the models used to conduct research on children. In the work of Schwartz (1976) and James (1986), one finds the emergence of another important factor in the study of children's worlds, namely context. Similarly Hardman (1973) argued that children actively move through stages of child grammars, interpretive procedures and assumptions of the social world. In this way, Hardman's work focuses on social context by looking at children's interpretive abilities and how social actors link general rules to specific situations. While his views may be in line with the developmental perspective of Piaget, Hardman argues that models of adult knowledge and interactive competence should not be imposed upon the child.

For Corsaro (1990) the child's everyday social interactions with adults and peers are the primary focus. In these frameworks, the study of peer interaction in children's worlds remains, however, of less central importance than adult-child interaction (Shami et al. 1995). In interpretive sociologies, the importance of context and the acquisition of meaning by creative social actors emerged as significant features in the 1950s and 1960s (Giddens 1979:15). These approaches allowed children a more active role in the constitution of human society. The constitution of social life through an examination of the

---

4 This paradigm focuses on questions of social construction in examining the role of children as active, meaning-producing individuals.
everyday life of actors fostered interest in the issue of children's agency and childhood as a particular kind of social reality. In turn, a critique of the conceptualisation of childhood promoted by socialisation theory was advanced (Schwartz 1976).

For the study of children's cultures discussed in each of the models presented above, one sees that the issues of context and agency have become increasingly important. Despite this emerging focus, children continue to be viewed as procedures of adult culture. Their lives are seen in relation to the lives of adults. Such research takes the view that children's culture is children's continual, communal attempts to grasp and control a social order first presented to them by adults but one which eventually becomes their own reproduction (James et al. 1990: 48). In all these approaches, as suggested by Fine (1987), although one sees that the main focus is on children themselves, the models continue to render these voices inaudible. In sum, each of the models discussed above focuses predominantly on social learning, but they have been carried out by looking at adult-child interactions with limited examination of children in peer cultures. These are the ways in which childhood knowledge and practices are transformed, whether dialectically or through stages of development, into the knowledge and skills necessary for participation in the adult world (Hockey et al. 1993: 43).

In anthropology, the devalued status of the subject of children as active agents of culture arises out of a paradox. Children appear and disappear according to fluctuations in cycles of anthropological interest. In many of the societies where anthropologists carry out research, children are usually accorded a great deal of importance and concern (Hardman 1973; Schwartzman 1978). The problem remains, however, that anthropologists continue to exclude children by representing
them as appendages to adult society (Pollock 1983). Therefore, even if it would be unfair to argue that children have not been visible in anthropological literature, the problem of their inaudibility remains. In this respect, the study of children as actively engaged in the production of meaning for their own social lives has been overlooked. In addition, anthropologists may have helped to uphold and perpetuate the trivialisation barrier that surrounds the subject; this triviality arises not only from the absence of studies of children in ethnographies, but by other factors including the link between children and women, for example (Fernea 1995; Abu-Lughod 1986).

This association has aided in the continued devaluation and, in turn, absence of knowledge concerning children's lives from the anthropological record. These concerns can even be extended further in order to point out the parallel marginalisation experienced by children. There has been an increased effort over the past decade to focus research on groups usually relegated to peripheral position of importance, yet the study of children and children's culture still remains marginal (Prothro 1961). Second, children continue to be depicted as passive receptors of adult culture (Schlegal 1991). There are very few recent studies that examine the worlds of children wherein they are depicted as active social agents in their own right (James 1993; Suransky 1982). The situation thus points to not only the double marginalisation experienced by children, but forces one to question the kinds of power

---

5 In this context, children are seen as the crucial generational link in the family unit, the key to its continuation, the living persons that tie the present to the past and to the future.
structures that are intertwined with the production of anthropological knowledge.

As noted above, in certain anthropological accounts of the past, children have retained a highly visible position. Except for a few studies, including Schwartzman (1978), Prout (1990), Fernea (1995), however, children's worlds have not been the primary focus of ethnographies. Most of the time, children have been discussed as part of a mother-child or father-child dyad in studies of child-rearing practices, as participants in initiation ceremonies, as members of kinship structures, as part of the schooling process in studies of language acquisition, or in connection with the importance of play in their lives (Hewlett 1992; Jansen 1987). Consequently, children are most often relegated to a secondary position of importance in relation to adult cultures. It is indeed a paradox that this situation persists in anthropology in view of the preoccupation with children in many societies and the impact this has on broader social relations.

In anthropology, interest in aspects of childhood may be traced back to the work of early anthropologists from the culture and personality school including Benedict (1935) and Mead (1928). In both cases, the conventional view of socialisation as a process wherein knowledge and cultural traits are transmitted by adults to children is upheld. Later anthropological interest in age became an important factor in encouraging studies of children as a specific age category. The notion that younger children inhabit a world with distinct social meanings was, for example, the premise for Schwartzman (1978) who developed

---

6 Here I shall show how highland Eritrean children with whom I interacted used specific ways to mark out exclusive identities for themselves.
the idea that there is in childhood a world that is not necessarily pre-rational or at a pre-adult stage. Her research pointed out the necessity to recognise the present of childhood and to understand the importance of children as subjects to be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching. Unfortunately, her ideas have only recently begun to receive some attention by scholars of children's cultures.

The subject of children and questions of agency and structure in children's lives is directly addressed in the works of Pollock (1983) and Fine (1987). The authors trace the development of a new and emerging paradigm for the study of childhood in response to the inadequacy of framework used in the past. The new paradigm that they propose involves the application of discourse theory to demonstrate the notion of childhood as a discursive formation within which different types of children and the notion of childhood are constituted. Their emerging model is an important one because it moves away from development and socialisation models to focus on the activity of children in their everyday lives. The authors outline several features of this emerging paradigm: first is the importance of viewing childhood as a social construction; second, that childhood as a variable of social analysis can never be entirely separated from other variables including gender, ethnicity and class; and third, that childhood and children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right. While the emphasis in their work is on discursively made culture, they nonetheless acknowledge the importance of examining children's activities and cultural production. They

---

7 Informing the way in which I talk about childhood is a particular conceptual paradigm which has emerged from the studies of childhood variously carried out since the 1970s.
want to, however, ensure that there is a theoretical space for understanding the construction of childhood as a social institution that exists beyond the activity of any particular child.

3. Rethinking approaches for studying children's cultures

The development and socialisation literature briefly reviewed above has contributed most substantially to our knowledge of children and their worlds. While many of the arguments made by theorists utilising these models are useful and valid, each directs attention to particular questions and problems, thereby maintaining some biases and difficulties. The psychologically based literature, for example, emphasises the individual child and his or her acquisition of a cognitive map to facilitate his or her eventual membership in adult society (Schwartzman 1978). This focus on the individual may obscure factors important to an analysis of a group. Similarly, the socialisation literature focuses on the notion of the transformation, through various processes, of the child into a competent member of adult culture (Denzin 1977). Each of the models directs attention to the eventual incorporation of the child into the world of the adult. In effect, by focusing on what the child lacks, the models seem to imply that the child is in some ways incomplete (Denzin 1977). He or she is in the process of becoming a full adult member of society. This conceptualisation depicts children as partially cultural. Their contemporaneity with adult cultures is dismissed as well, along with the present of their life.

---

8 This thinking embraces the idea that childhood is a social construction of a particular phase in the life course which changes its form and character across time and space.
experiences. It is a notion that is propelled by a similar logic that deems some cultures of the world, for example, as remnants of a previous time. For children at least, this process reinforces the notion that children's lives are only significant in relation to some future state or in relation to adult cultures (Eisenstadt 1956)\(^9\).

The view of the passivity of the child is particularly incompatible with current conceptualisations of culture in anthropological theory that promote a more dynamic and relational view (James 1993). In addition, the emphasis on passivity erases many aspects of children's lives including complex relationships of power (Suransky 1982). The passive model of the child promotes him as standing idly by awaiting to be filled with adult knowledge. For many adults that have been involved with children, this passivity is decidedly false. Children are actively engaged in the production of their own social worlds. This point was demonstrated very clearly to me during my field research with children in some villages of the highlands of southern Eritrea between 1999 – 2001. I was interested in collecting children's plays that they created for themselves and then passed from children to children. After contacting parents, several of them were convinced that children retained the plays that parents were sometimes familiar with from their own childhoods\(^{10}\).

\(^{9}\)From this it follows that the biology of children's maturing bodies is not the main invariant determinant of their categorical identity but instead is subject to different interpretive frames between and within cultures and historical epochs.

\(^{10}\)In the anthropological studies of play, play is defined as the process that gives shape as well as expression to individual and societal affective and cognitive systems (Schwartzman 1978:330). Schwartzman defined several categories of research on play including: the production of textual and
Apart from the issue of children as active agents of culture, another problem extending from my earlier research has been the question of the temporal dimension of the way in which the category *child* continues to be constructed. As demonstrated in the previous discussion, for the development and socialisation frameworks that depict children in the process of becoming full adults, the *present* of childhood is dismissed. The category *child* is robbed of its immediate status and constructed as something of the past or as configured in a future adult world. There are numerous examples of the ways in which adults are accomplices in placing children *out of time*. To name only one, in my field research in 2000 in the villages of Arraza and Maydoma in south central Eritrea, I began to note the ways in which adults interacted with children in the neighbourhoods.

Many of the discussions I noted that occurred between adults and children centred around the adult asking the question, *what do you want to be when you grow up?* The adults I spoke with thought that the question was an effective way to engage children in order to establish rapport. In rethinking this argument, I could see that the question entirely dismissed the immediacy of children's lives in favour of some future time. While the children's responses were interesting, the question directed attention away from, instead of closer to, their everyday lives. Therefore, the temporal dimensions, along with the passive view of the child, help to perpetuate the continued marginalisation of the subject of children's culture. Children, constructed without a *present*, are not studied in their own right.

contextual ethnographies of children's play including games of order and disorder; relationships between play and other social factors; cross cultural studies of various developmental ideas; and studies of children's verbal play and its relationship to adult/child speech acts.
Accordingly, in order to understand children as active agents of culture, their presence and action in the immediate world must be acknowledged.

One of the ways to facilitate an understanding of the present of children is to look at the ways that children are actively involved in the creation of culture (Fernea 1995). As we have seen in the broad overview of literature on children's culture, the issue of cultural production has not been adequately dealt with in many of the development and socialisation models in the past. As noted, most of the studies explore the ways in which facets of adult culture influence and permeate the lives of children, who have been depicted as reproducers of culture. Very few studies examine the ways in which children are active producers of their own culture (Schwartzman 1978; James 1993). I have found through my own research with children that children at play can be an effective way to gain analytical access to this group.

Children's plays in the highlands of Eritrea have themes and patterns that appear over and over again. Indeed these constructions of culture in the form of performances by children can be an important discourse that can speak powerfully to the social realities of children in varying socio-historical locations. If children's play is thus recognized as an important discourse, especially for those in subordinate positions of power, it should be considered vital to consider for an understanding of children's lives. In a similar hierarchical relationship as the one

11 This view stresses the participatory role which children have in shaping the day-to-day experience and outcomes of their status. With this theoretical orientation it has now become possible to speak of children possessing a culture of childhood.
described above, children's culture is connected conceptually to
women, is the subject of everyday life, is not explicitly tied to
political economy and, as such, retains a devalued status
(Jansen 1987:37). All these production of culture will remain
inaudible unless new possibilities for the study of children's
lives are explored.12

4. Some methodological and conceptual issues for the
study of children's cultures in highland Eritrea

As an ethnographer I was working among a population whose
social structure is sharply stratified. I was coming from a camp
whose cultural identity derives from a notion of maturity and
attributed competence, wielded significant power over children
whose identity derives from a notion of immaturity and
attributed incompetence. There were culturally specified
economic, social and emotional relationships between us that
were named by Tigrinya terms roughly translatable into familiar
English terms. Although the population in question was larger
in number, the relationship of power systematically
disenfranchised them. I endlessly informally talked to children
individually and as a group and was able to elicit important
dimensions of their sense of self and competency by their
relative successes and failures. Moreover, I spent a great deal of
time among children informally interviewing and observing
their free play activities, their punished transgressions and

12 Here I find Giddens' (1984:75) concept of agency very useful in
understanding children as cultural agents. Margaret Mead (1978) was one
of the first to write about generational cultures. Her notion of
configurative culture can in fact be seen as a kind of cultural agency.
Because of some social change, she argues, the parental culture is not
useful for the young generation to take over as it is. This is when members
of the younger generation have to develop their own culture together.
publicly praised achievements. These were grade school children between the ages of six and eleven.

Remarkably, I throughout my stay in the field made scant reference to the economic and emotional relations that dominated my interaction with the children. Yet, I was aware of the particular relationship of power and authority experienced between myself and the children I interviewed given that childhood is a system of inequity and disadvantage. I early on, therefore, recognised that adults and children stand in a particular relation. Such field methods and tools of observation gave insights about the lives, experiences, thoughts, speech and behaviour of children that differ systematically from that of adults. These sorts of relations between children and adults in the rural highlands of Eritrea are directly relevant to culture theory.

Many methodological and conceptual issues important to the study of children's cultures need to be examined if the problems cited in the previous sections are to be effectively addressed using highland Eritrea as a case in point. For example, there are methodological problems particular to the study of children's cultures in highland Eritrea that arise when one asks the question: where is the child's perspective? Only by answering this question can we as researchers begin to move away from the notion that the majority of elements of peer culture originate from children's perceptions of, and reactions to, the adult world in highland Eritrea. This formulation serves once again to construct children's worlds as appendages to adult cultures. This means that children in highland Eritrea are not addressed on their own terms.

Children in highland Eritrea must therefore be methodologically and conceptually freed from the process of
containment that produces them as *other* and in turn continues to marginalise and silence them. Moreover, in Eritrea and elsewhere, it is important to understand the relationship between the ethnographer/researcher and his child consultants. Children here experience much of their contact with adults in subordinate positions of power. I kept this point in mind when I designed the methodology for my own fieldwork. As a result, I made several choices including: a) choice of dress - casual clothing, and b) physical proximity to children - sitting on the floor with the children rather than on a chair above them. Apart from this practical focus, the relationship between the ethnographer/researcher and child consultants points to broader questions of how anthropological knowledge is constructed.

The notion that the fieldworker as participant-observer remains in a culture in order to retain and record information about a particular group of people without including himself in the account, has been contested. He is, in fact, an accomplice in whatever account of the culture is produced in his interaction with the group of people under study (Werner et al. 1987).\(^\text{13}\) Clearly, the position of the field researcher or ethnographer is neither neutral nor insignificant to understand. It is a particularly salient point when one considers how categories such as childhood and child are constituted. I would argue that it is, in part, the relationship between the researcher and consultants that produces these categories in particular situations. For example, early on in my recent research in

\(^{13}\) Such seemingly delicate nuances can only be grasped through participant-observation over a longer period of time. Although the paucity of literature on the subject of children as active agents of culture attests to the continued marginalisation of this subject, participant-observation based interviews pertaining to the relationship between structure and agency and interest in cultural production are beginning to come to the fore in children’s culture studies (James and Prout 1990; James 1993).
highland Eritrea, I became aware that the concept of *childhood* I held was continually challenged by my interaction with my consultants, as well as other adults.

On the other hand, the children responded to my interest in understanding children's culture through their acts in order to show what they thought I wanted to see. For example, when I asked the children in the year 2000 field study to perform a children's play for me, they usually offered *soccer*. At other times, they provided a stereo-typical children's play such as *hide and seek*. They would then wait for my reaction to their choice. In effect, they were responding to what they may have perceived as my interest in finding some kind of authentic childhood. In addition, by playing stereo-typical children's plays for me, they were upholding, rather than subverting, the dominant formulations of the category *child*. They were directly involved in the process of reinforcing the categories that otherwise exert control in their lives. The categories *children* and *childhood* were thus mutually shaped by our interaction.

An additional methodological problem that I as an anthropologist of childhood studies faced is the fact that I at one time or another have experienced some form of childhood myself. It is a feature somewhat unique to this kind of work. The difficulty lies in determining whether one can ever approach the ideal of fieldwork to put these preconceived notions of this time of life aside in order to become a full participant observer (Werner et al. 1987). Therefore, working with an age/time based culture challenges the participant-observation framework in many ways. On the other hand, there are positive aspects of the participant observation method for the study of children's culture in highland Eritrea. As many researchers have noted in their continuous call for *an anthropology of childhood* (Hardman 1973), this methodology
Abbebe Kifleyesus

is particularly suited to working with children. It gives researchers the opportunity to experience at close range aspects of children's worlds, including children's play production, that occur spontaneously and in informal contexts in highland Eritrea.

Moreover, there are also several practical problems of method when working with children's groups in highland Eritrea, and elsewhere I am sure. One important factor is to gain access to groups of children for extended periods of time. However, this proves to be difficult because of restrictions placed on children's time by highland Eritrean parents, or restrictions on adults interacting with children because of concerns of, for example, abuse. When one is able to work with children in highland Eritrea, there are issues of method concerning informal rather than formal techniques, contact time and attention span limitations that need to be considered for this particular research situation. In addition, new techniques can be devised when working with children who may not be accustomed to the formality of interviews. One of the ways that I have found to be productive for my research here in highland Eritrea is the use of a video camera. After instructing the children on how to use the camera, I allowed them to take control of the images and sounds they wished to record. This kind of approach allowed the children the freedom to express themselves outside the limitations of a question and answer format.

In considering the methodological issues above, the question *where is the child's voice?* was crucial and central in my research here in highland Eritrea. However, the usefulness of this kind of inquiry diminishes if the related question, *What is a child?* is overlooked. The point that needs to be understood for the study of children's culture in highland Eritrea is that the
Tigrinya terms used are ubiquitous and that their referents are various. For example, various terms are scattered throughout the literature that sometimes fall under the umbrella Tigrinya term for *children* (*qwâl'u*). These include words such as *adolescents, youth, teenagers* and *young adults*. The boundaries between them in Tigrinya seem to be placed arbitrarily. Discrepancies occur when, for example, people above the age of 13 are categorized as *children* while at other times they are called *youth* (*mân'әsәyat*). It is the arbitrary nature of the constitution of the Tigrinya categories that becomes difficult. Age is one example of an important criterion that I used in my understanding of how the Tigrinya categories of *children* and *youth* are defined. Yet it is a parameter that is arbitrarily placed. Moreover, the view that Tigrinya constructs the category *child* by age is insufficient and reduces the complexity of the problem. Age should be a parameter considered not separately, but along with other categories, including class, gender and power. Lastly, Tigrinya adults are often unaware of the control *children* exert in their worlds within formalised spaces structured by adults. Until more work is carried out which examines the spaces of *childhood* from children's perspectives in highland Eritrea an answer to the question of the production of children's culture cannot be effectively argued in this part of the world.

5. Some ethnographic reflections of children’s cultures in highland Eritrea

In the highlands of Eritrea, children are adept at acquiring adult culture and at creating their own cultures. Such cultures are

---

14 I haven't included here the Tigrinya equivalents until more clarification and confirmation is acquired through further research.
independent of and distinct from those of youth or adolescents, an age that by definition is at the borders between childhood and the adults with whom they live. This is accomplished through conceptual skills that significantly constrain and mould not only their own cultural productions but also those of adults. In this respect, children in the highlands of Eritrea, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa I am sure, are not just vehicles into which culture is poured; instead they themselves do produce culture in the form of, for example, games and plays. These are routine cultural forms that often do not have clear parallel in adult activities but provide information about children’s cognitive, cultural and social skills useful for survival in the rural highlands. Such engagements are relevant to adult activities because they show children are enculturated to adult norms and standards, and that they display elaborate and culturally specific ways of making meaning and modes of behaviour that are manifestly well developed in this region of Eritrea.

Although children may not fully take part in adult events, they by early adolescence are adept participants in the cultural traditions of the highlands. Highland folk traditions in Eritrea therefore recognise and comment on age-dependent transgressions differently. For example, children’s errors, from a cultural perspective, provoke limited or no condemnation while errors in cultural performance committed by post adolescents are generally considered as more serious and arouse direct criticism, punishment, or other sanctions. This is because shortly after adolescence a significant degree of cultural competency is expected. But I am convinced that it is during childhood that the overwhelming bulk of these achievements are reached.

In this region of Eritrea, children are closely associated with women and their traditional spheres of influence. As a result
they suffered the same systematic exclusion as their mothers. The most commonly evoked image of children is therefore that of adults-in-the making. Indeed as Bloch (1998:36) asserts children are appendages to adult society. But this perspective does not in principle preclude children from participating in adult society. For example, children in this particular region of Eritrea meaningfully take active part in various rites of passage and socialisation practices peculiar to children but that involve also adults. Children and adults are thus ‘cultural confections’ to cite Super et al. (1980:57).

People in the highlands of Eritrea have some beliefs about what children are and what should be done with them since they are considered socially and culturally immature. This means that children are always engaged in the search for adulthood. The underlying image of it is that children are already radically distinct from and unequal to the adults around them. They are thus located in transition to cultural competence rather than as having mastery of it. As a consequence, discussion about children is typically transformed into talk about ‘future’ adults and the ways they will organise the environment in which they as adults grow and acquire cultural competence appropriate to the highland society in which they live. In a way, this refraction of childhood through an adult lens focuses on the adult end-state and adult influence on achieving it and thus casts children’s activities as ancillary or subordinate.

Theoretically, this perspective conceptualises children and their activities as functional correlates to adult society and adult goals (Christensen 2000:45). This is nowhere more visible than in the slogan of the Second International Conference on Early Childhood Development held in Asmara in October 2002. ‘māşa’i natnayu’ (the ‘future is ours’) which reflects children’s activities as contributing to adult outcomes and dispositions
achieved by and large through adult interventions in children’s lives. This obstructs the appreciation of the contribution children make to the acquisition of cultural sensibilities but credits adults for its teaching and transmission in the highlands of Eritrea. Accordingly, people feel that adults create the cultural world of the highlands into which children are inducted. Even if children in this region of the country live in the cultural spheres of the adults, they create and maintain cultural environments in relation to their lives with other children. These children’s social practices, network of relationships, and systems of meaning encompass elaborated highland cultural environments which are not only distinct from but also independent of the adult cultural surroundings within which they are embedded. Yet there are several children’s cultural activities that are fully matched in Eritrean highland adult society.

6. Conclusion

Many of the studies referred to in this article contain information relevant to important theoretical discussions concerning children. Still few topics have been theorised anthropologically. One such exception, following current trends in child studies, is the theoretical tenet that children are also agents and not passive recipients of information, that they actively take part in what they see, hear and experience and make their own decisions about how to act. This has resulted in studies where researchers listen to children and observe them, either alone or in interaction with various others. The child focused research has thus yielded more information on the content of dominant discourses concerning children and childhood.
The rethinking of the concept of culture that has taken place in anthropology has considered explicit issues when formulating approaches to the study of children's culture. Current conceptualisations of culture have helped to bring into view previously marginalised voices and have disrupted the maintenance of the subject/object dichotomy and the relations of power that have sustained anthropological research in the past. The search for the exotic culture has been challenged in order to see that studies in a researcher's own backyard are deemed more viable and legitimate forms of research. Each of these efforts has had positive effects for the study of children's worlds.

Studies that in the future seek to empower the voices of children, would need to consider the arbitrary ways parameters are used in the constitution and in the cultural and historically specific nature of the categories of children. To gain an understanding of childhood it is, therefore, paramount to ask questions such as, How in the past, and how in the present does the child see himself as a child? As a miniature adult to what extent have adult constructions of reality misrepresented the historical child and to what extent do they continue to misrepresent the child's experience of being in the world?

Indeed research on children and childhood focuses on immature human beings, or the biologically early years of human life. Children are perpetually being born and as such exist all over the world. Thus, from a biological point of view, children and childhood is a human universal. On the other hand, it is well known that the ways in which human beings interpret and understand childhood, or the various ideas they have of what it is to be a child and how a child should be treated, vary cross-culturally. In this respect, the early years of human beings, or the way childhood is made meaningful in different societies, is
socially and culturally constructed. This means that the social and cultural aspects of children and childhood are, in this perspective, particular and specific for each culture.

In this connection, we can mention that so far the approaches to the study of children and children's culture in highland Eritrea demonstrated that the notion of children actively engaged in the production of culture has received little serious scholarly attention. One of the reasons for the persistence of this situation in Eritrea as well as elsewhere is that they have been contained in discourses that guarantee their passivity. In order to reposition the notion of agency for the studies of children as active social actors, a dynamic concept of culture must be employed so that research about children in highland Eritrea can focus on their lives in the present and on their activity as producers of contemporary culture rather than continue to be cast as the future (‘māša’i natnayu’). Moreover, they can no longer be seen as only partially cultural.

For future studies of children's culture in highland Eritrea, we, as anthropologists, may question whether or not to treat the subjects of children and youth separately or together. The answer is a complex one. As mentioned earlier, the distinction between these categories is made according to a largely arbitrary notion of age, along with other variables including notions of power and autonomy. This means that anthropologists should be aware that their efforts to focus on one group or the other may again push the subject to the margins. Ultimately, one must keep in mind that the lines between children and youth, at least in highland Eritrea, are most often arbitrarily placed, and that research must not homogenise differences within the categories that are created. The creation of categories may be necessary to carry out certain kinds of research; marginalising and silencing voices through
the research process are not. Accordingly, the question that becomes more important to, in highland Eritrea, consider is not whether children and youth should be treated together or separately, but rather how are anthropologists involved in the production and articulation of these categories as separate entities in light of how they are experienced by highland Eritrean children and youth in their everyday lives?

Finally, the study of children is theoretically crucial for anthropology because it is premised on a process that children do better than almost all others, namely, acquire cultural knowledge. Still, a sustained, coherent and theoretically influential programme of child-focused research has not yet emerged. I have in this article tried to demonstrate the theoretical relevance that an understanding of children’s cultural knowledge affords in rural highland Eritrea. I show that the simple pattern of elders instructing novices may be obverted by the idea that children shape adult behaviour and belief. Concern should therefore focus on both the representations of the worlds of children and the researchers that create them in rural highland Eritrea.

References


Abbebe Kifleyesus


Abbebe Kifleyesus


Aloes of Eritrea: The need for their conservation

Ghebrehiwet Medhanie

Abstract

Eritrea has nine species of Aloe, out of which two are local endemics, five are regional endemics and two are wide spread species. In this study, ecological and morphological data were collected both in field and cultivation. Ecological studies show that the two endemic species, Aloe schoelleri and A. neosteudneri, have restricted distribution and very vulnerable habitats. According to The World Conservation Union (IUCN) criteria, they are assigned as ‘Critically Endangered’ species and require special attention for their conservation. The five regional endemic species include A. adigratana, A. camperi, A. elegans, A. eumassawana, and A. percrassa. Data on two of these species, A. adigratana and A. eumassawana, are inadequate, and therefore, they are assigned as ‘Data Deficient’ species. The species A. percrassa, A. trichosanta and A. macrocarpa are assigned as ‘Vulnerable’ species. They are known to have restricted distribution within Eritrea and any kind of habitat change can result in local exterpitation of the species. The remaining two regional endemic species, A. camperi and A. elegans, are abundant in many parts of Eritrea, and therefore, are not threatened at present. However, they are widely used in traditional medicine and other local uses and thus require attention to avoid over-exploitation.

1. Introduction

Aloe plants are classified under the genus Aloe and the family Aloaceae. All Aloe plants have inflorescences which are raceme, tubular flowers and usually succulent leaves. Many species of Aloe are prized for their horticultural value and the danger of over-collection have placed several species in the list of Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species or CITES (West 1992). Some species are also valued for the healing properties found in their leaf tissue and are grown commercially on a large scale for derivatives used in
medicinal and cosmetic products. The best known is *A. vera*, used since pre biblical times around the Mediterranean Sea area and now naturalized in many parts of the world. The sap from *Aloe* leaf can be used to treat wounds, burns and eczema (Carter 1994). In Eritrea *Aloe* species are also reported to have medicinal value as anti-emetic and for the treatment of malaria, abdominal pain, and wounds (Shushan 1995).

The basic aim of conservation is to prevent species from becoming extinct either regionally or globally. Species can be classified according to their vulnerability to extinction. On a global scale, IUCN (2001) provides rigorous definitions known as ‘IUCN Red list criteria’ which attempt to classify species according to likelihood of extinction within a given period. Each species is classified into one of the categories that are defined below in Table 1.

Table 1: IUCN categories and definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extinct</td>
<td>A taxon is extinct when there is no doubt that the last individual has died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically endangered</td>
<td>A taxon is critically endangered when it is facing high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, more than 50% probability of extinction in 10 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endangered</td>
<td>A taxon is endangered when it is not critical but is facing high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, more than 20% chance of extinction in 20 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td>A taxon is vulnerable when it is not critical or endangered but is facing high risk of extinction in the wild in the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
medium-term future, more than 10% chance of extinction in 100 years.

**Least concern**  A taxon is of least concern when it has been evaluated and does not qualify critical, endangered, vulnerable or data deficient.

**Data deficient**  A taxon is data deficient when there is inadequate information to make a direct, or indirect, assessment of its risk of extinction based on its distribution and/or population status.

This paper discusses gaps of information on the taxonomic description and ecology of the nine species known to grow in Eritrea and to determine their conservation status according to the IUCN criteria. Special attention is given to the two local endemic species, *A. schoelleri* and *A. neostedneri*, which are known to grow in very restricted localities.

### 2. Study methods

The study is mainly based on field observations and examinations of garden cultivated plants. Field trips were made in October 2006 to Gheleb, in Zoba Anseba, December 2006 to Kohaito and Seled (near the town of Segenaiti), and January 2007 to Ghinda and Hirgigo (near Massawa). During the field trips some morphological and ecological data were recorded and plantlets were collected for garden cultivation. All species, except for *Aloe adigratana*, were grown in the gardens of the University of Asmara and used for further observations. Most
of the description and distribution data of all species was obtained from literature.

Floral morphological data were recorded for *A. eumassawana* on the field as it was flowering in that period. *A. schoelleri* and *A. neosteudneri* were not flowering during the field trip, and therefore, phenological studies were done from plants grown in the gardens at the University of Asmara.¹

3. Results

In Eritrea, Aloe species generally grow on the highlands extending to some extent to the escarpments. Four species, *Aloe adigratana*, *A. camperi*, *A. elegans*, and *A. percrassa*, are known to grow in Eritrea and Ethiopia (see Table 2). Two of those species, *A. camperi* and *A. elegans*, are more common and grow in large numbers in the highlands of Eritrea while the rest have restricted distribution. There are two Aloe species that are endemic to Eritrea: *A. schoelleri*, known to grow only on Kohaito plateau (14°: 52’:301” N, 039°: 25’: 57” E), near Adi Keyih in Zoba Debub, at an altitude of 2600 meters, and *A. neosteudneri*, known to grow only on Mt. Saber (15°: 48’: 43” N, 038°: 47’:51” E), near Gheleb in Zoba Anseba. The specie *A. eumassawana* is the only Aloe reported to grow near the coast in the eastern lowlands. However, from our observation, it is restricted to graveyards in Hirgigo, 15 km. south of Massawa. Recently, the existence of *A. eumassawana* in Djibouti has been

¹ Cultivating plants in botanical garden or green house for experimental purposes is a common practice in Botany. For example, if one is unable to observe a flower of a plant in the field, one can collect seeds and grow them in the garden to obtain flower and to record morphological characters of the flower.
reported, and was observed to grow in its natural habitat (McCoy 2007).

Table 2: List of *Aloe* species recorded from Eritrea and their distribution in North East Africa (Eri = Eritrea, Eth = Ethiopia, Sud = Sudan, Som = Somalia, Dji = Djibouti, Ken = Kenya; + present, _ absent, * local endemic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Eri</th>
<th>Eth</th>
<th>Sud</th>
<th>Som</th>
<th>Dji</th>
<th>Ken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>A. adigratna</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. camperi</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. elegans</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. eumassawana</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. macrocarpa</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. percrassa</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. schoelleri</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. neosteudneri</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A. trichosanta</em></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.1 Local endemic Aloes

There are two local endemic *Aloe* species in Eritrea, *A. neosteudneri* and *A. schoelleri* (see Table 2). Both species grow in areas of high altitudes above 2500 meters vegetated with *Juniperus procera*. *A. neosteudneri* is reported from the summits of Mt. Saber, also known as Mt. Endertai, near Geleb and *A. schoelleri* is reported from Kohaito plateau near Adi Keyih (Fig. 1).
3.1.1 *Aloe neosteudneri*

Plants of *Aloe neosteudneri* from Eritrea were considered as con-specific with plants collected from Simien Mountains in Ethiopia and they were treated by Schweinfurth (1894) under *Aloe steudneri*. In his description of *A. steudneri*, Schweinfurth used two different specimens, one of them collected by Steudner from Ethiopia and the other collected by Prof. Penzig from Eritrea. The specimens from Eritrea were collected from the peaks of Mt. Saber, near Geleb in Zoba Anseba (Reynolds 1966). Considering the distance and the natural barriers that exist between the two localities and by presenting additional evidences, Lavranos and MacCoy (2007) treated the plants from Eritrea as a separate species, *A. neosteudneri*. So far, *A. neosteudneri* is known to grow only in one place in Eritrea, Mt. Saber. The plants were observed to grow on a very steep slope facing north under the shade of *Olea* and *Juniperus* trees. The natural vegetation in the area is interspersed by an alien invasive species *Opuntia ficus-indica*\(^2\) (Fig. 2A). If the *Opuntia*...
encroachment continues, as is the case right now, the population of *A. neosteudneri* in the area may be wiped out in the near future (Ghebrehiwet and Dioli 2006)\(^3\).

**DESCRIPTION:** *Aloe neosteudneri* plants (Fig. 2A) are solitary with short decumbent stem. Leaves are numerous, up to 45 per rosette, 50-60 cm long, 13 cm broad at the base and slightly recurved. The leaves are not spotted and possess marginal teeth 7-12 per 10 cm. Inflorescence is 50-60 cm long, composed of 2-5 branched panicles. Racemes are cylindrical and 11-35 cm long. Pedicels are 8-15 mm long. Perianth has cylindrical shape and it is 35–40 mm long. The colour of perianth varies from pale to orange red. The outer tepals are free to base. The *A. neosteudneri* grown in the gardens of the University of Asmara was observed to flower during January- March.

**3.1.2 Aloe schoelleri**

*A. schoelleri* is the other species that is endemic to Eritrea. It has a very restricted distribution, known to appear only in one place, the Kohaito plateau, near Adi Keyih (*See* Fig. 1).

---

\(^3\) The present distribution of *Opuntia* plants in the eastern escarpment and elsewhere in Eritrea is attained at the expense of the natural vegetation, e.g., Arberobu, Nefasit, Seled, Segeneity, etc. In a similar way, if the natural vegetation in Geleb or Mt. Seber is overwhelmed by *Opuntia*, as in Areberobu, there is the danger that many indigenous species including *Aloe neosteudneri* might be wiped out from the area.
This is a windy high altitude area of about 2600 meters, supporting vegetation dominated by *Juniperus procera*, *Cadia purpurea* and *Becium grandflorum* as well as three other aloe species: *A. camperi*, *A. elegans* and *A. percrassa*. At the time of the field visit, *A. schoelleri* was seen to grow almost exclusively on cliff edges over sandy stones and among rock crevices (Fig. 2B). This may be due to anthropogenic influence as most of the plateau is an agricultural settlement area. The number and size of villages on the plateau are increasing from time to time as a result of conditions created after the country’s independence. This, of course, results in increased stress on the vegetation and thus endangering several of the local species including *A. schoelleri*.

**DESCRIPTION:** *Aloe schoelleri* plants (Fig. 2B) are solitary or appear in small groups with prostrate stem 30-40 cm long. Leaves are dense 25-35 per rosette, spreading triangularly 40-52 cm long, 9-14 cm broad at the base, very fleshy grey-green and slightly canaliculated towards tip in dry conditions, tender green and not canaliculated when watered. Margins are cartilaginous uniformly reddish with few minute brown/reddish teeth 5-8 cm apart. Inflorescence is solitary, 50-80 cm high. Racemes are conical, very densely flowered, 30-45 cm long.
Pedicel is 4-7 mm long. Perianth has cylindrical trigonous shape, 28–30 mm long. The colour of the perianth is pale yellow with greenish tip. The outer tepals are free for 15 mm. The flowering time is during March to April.

3.2 Regional endemic Aloes

There are five Aloe species that are known to be regional endemics. Four of the species are known to grow in Eritrea and the northern parts of Ethiopia. These are A. adigratana, A. elegans, A. camperi and A. percrassa. One species, A. eumassawana, grows in Eritrea and Djibouti. The known geographic distribution of the above five species in Eritrea is shown Fig. 3.

3.2.1 Aloe adigratana

This is a regional endemic with a restricted distribution in Eritrea, south of Senafe (Fig. 3) and in Tigrai, Ethiopia. The description of the species has to be based on literature, as study cannot be currently conducted due to difficulties arising from the prevailing border conflict with Ethiopia. In Eritrea, it is recorded for about 20 km northwards from the border with Ethiopia at the elevation of 2100-2600 meters (Reynolds 1966).

---

4 Endemism is usually related to political boundaries. The distribution of a ‘local endemic’ is restricted to the boundaries of a country and therefore we talk of endemic species of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, etc. If the distribution of a species crosses into the boundaries of two or three countries, it is then referred to as regional endemic.
DESCRIPTION: *Aloe adigratana* plants are shrubby with erect or decumbent stems up to 1-2 meters long and 12 cm thick. Leaves are crowded, 40-60 cm long, deeply canaliculated. The margin of leaf is red brown with 4-5 spines per 10 cm. Inflorescence is 100 cm log composed of 3-5 branched panicle. Racemes are densely flowered and 12-22 cm long. Pedicels are 14-20 mm long. Perianth has subclavate shape and it is 25-27 mm long. The colour of perianth is orange or yellow. The outer tepals of perianth are free for 13-16 mm. *A. adigratana* flowers during the months of April to May (Sebsebe and Gilbert 1997).

3.2.2 *Aloe camperi*

*A. camperi* occurs in considerable numbers in many parts of Eritrea, from Nakfa in the north to the Ethiopian borders in the south. It is found in all the Zobas except Southern Red Sea region (Fig. 3). In Zoba Gash Barka, its distribution is limited to
the western escarpment. It is abundant on rocky slopes and sandy alluvial plains between altitudes 750 – 2700 meters. Outside of Eritrea, *A. camperi* is found in Tigrai and Wello regions of Ethiopia.

**DESCRIPTION:** *Aloe camperi* plants (Fig. 4A) are shrubby with erect or decumbent stem 0.5-1 meter long, branching from base forming dense crowd. Leaves are 12-16 per rosette, 50-60 cm long, recurved and forming open rosette. The margin of leaves is brownish red with 6-7 spines per 10 cm. Inflorescence is 70-100 cm long composed of 2-6 branched panicle. Racemes are cylindrical and 6-14 cm long. Pedicels are 12-18 mm long. Perianth is 18-22 mm long with clavate shape. The colour of perianth is yellow, orange or scarlet. The outer tepals of perianth are free for 7-8 mm. *A. camperi* flowers during the months of December-February.

Fig. 4: A: *Aloe camperi* near Nefasit, 20 km east of Asmara; B: *A. elegans* at Ala, 17 km NE of Dekemhare.
3.2.3 *Aloe elegans*

*A. elegans* is only known from the highlands of Eritrea and northern parts of Ethiopia (Reynold 1966). It occurs in considerable numbers over a wide area in Zoba Maekel, Anseba and Debub (Fig. 4). It is abundant around Asmara and stretches northwards up to Keren; southwards, it is found all the way to Adi Quala and Senafe. East of Asmara, the species is abundant in the escarpment of Arberobu, Nefasit and Mt. Bizen as well as in the valleys of Adi Rosso and in the Ala plains.

DESCRIPTION: *Aloe elegans* plants (Fig. 4B) are usually solitary, sometimes forming small groups of 2-3 rosettes. Stem is absent or rarely developing to a decumbent stem up to 30 cm long. Leaves are 16-20 per rosette, up to 60 cm long, and usually incurved. The leaf margin is brownish-red with marginal spines 4-7 per 10 cm. Inflorescence is up to 100 cm long, consisting of 3-11 branched panicles. Racemes are cylindrical, 5-15 cm long. Pedicels are 10-20 mm long. Perianth is 21-26 cm long, with clavate shape and colour varies from yellow to orange or scarlet. The outer tepals of perianth are free for 7-13 mm. *A. elegans* flowers during the months of November to January.

3.2.4 *Aloe eumassawana*

In Eritrea, so far, *Aloe eumassawana* has been collected from only one spot and that is, from a graveyard in Hirgigo, 15 km south of Massawa (Fig. 3). Reynolds (1966) has treated these plants to be conspecific with plants from Tanzania and described them under the name *A. massawana*. Carter et al. (1996) has treated these two populations as separate species, describing the plant that grows in Eritrea as *A. eumassawana*. 
Although the plant was wrongly reported to grow on coastal bush land with *Euphorbia cactus*, the plant does not actually exist naturally outside of the graveyard. It was confirmed during the field trips that there is no naturally growing *Aloe* plant that can be found growing along the coasts. For the first time, McCoy (2007) has discovered natural population of *A. eumassawana* growing in the Gulf of Tajura in the Republic of Djibouti.

DESCRIPTION: *Aloe eumassawana* plants (Fig. 5A) are stemless, suckering to form large clusters. Leaves are erect, 14-18 per rosette, and the tips are slightly incurved shallowly, canaliculated with marginal teeth 6-7 per 10 cm, reddish-brown at the tip. Inflorescence is erect, 120-125 cm high, and consists of 1-3 branches. Racemes are cylindrical to conical in shape and 25-40 cm long. Pedicels are 4.5-7 mm long. Perianth is 20-28 cm long, with cylindrical-trigonous shape, and pale scarlet or orange colour. The outer tepals of perianth are free for 9-12 mm. *A. eumassawana* flowers during the months of December and January.

Fig. 5: A: *Aloe eumassawana* at Hirgigo, 15 km south of Massawa; B: *A. percrassa* at Adi Ke, 15 km south of Asmara.
3.2.5 *Aloe percrassa*

*A. percrassa* is a regional endemic found only in Eritrea and northern parts of Ethiopia. It grows in sparsely vegetated rocky slopes above 2100 meters. In Eritrea *A. percrassa* is found in areas around Adi Keyih and Senafe (Fig. 3). It is abundant in the Kohaito plateau at an altitude of 2600 meters. Recently a small population was also discovered in Adi Ke, 15 km south of Asmara. The fact that its distribution in Eritrea is limited to three places with small pockets of populations makes it possible that the species is threatened due to changes in the habitat.

**DESCRIPTION:** *Aloe percrassa* plants (Fig. 5B) are suckering from base to form small groups. The plants are mostly stemless, but sometimes can possess erect or decumbent stem. Leaves are crowded 30-40 per rosette, 40-55 cm long, green often flashed red. Leaf margins are with whitish to pinkish cartilaginous edge and 6-16 spines per 10 cm. Inflorescence is 60-80 cm high consisting of 5-12 branched panicles. Racemes are cylindrical to conical in shape and 6.5-25 cm long. Pedicels are 11-17 mm long. Perianth is 17-23 mm long with cylindrical shape, and usually orange colour. The outer tepals of perianth are free for 5-7 mm. *A. percrassa* flowers during the months of March to May.

3.3 **Wide spread Aloes**

These are species of aloe with relatively wider distribution, known to grow in several countries outside of Eritrea. Two of these are *A. macrocarpa* and *A. trichosantha*. Although they are known to grown in several countries, the two species have currently narrow distribution within Eritrea (Fig. 6).
3.3.1 Aloe macrocarpa

Though Reynolds (1966) has indicated that A. macrocarpa is found almost throughout Eritrea, these days, it has become very rare and very difficult to find. It is found in isolated, very small populations and very restricted places around Keren, and Adi Quala (Fig. 6). Its status in Eritrea is very vulnerable. Outside Eritrea, A. macrocarpa is widely distributed in many parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, west wards to Sudan, Nigeria, Burkinafaso and Mali (Sebsebe and Gilbert 1997).

DESCRIPTION: Aloe macrocarpa plants (Fig. 7A) are stemless occurring singly or forming small groups. Leaves are 16-20 per rosette, 20-35 cm long and 6-7 cm broad, usually with numerous pale spots. The leaf margin is pale brown armed with deltoid teeth 12-24 per 10 cm. Inflorescence is 80-100 cm tall.
and consists of 3-5 branched panicles. Racemes are laxly flowered, 15-20 cm long. Pedicels are 12-15 mm long. Perianth is 19-30 cm long and it is characterized by its distinct globose basal swelling. The outer petals of perianth are free for 5-6 mm. Flowering time for *Aloe macrocarpa* is February to March.

Fig. 7: A: *Aloe macrocarpa* at Ruba Anseba, 16 km south of Keren; B: *A. trichosantha* near Ghinda, 45 km east of Asmara.
3.3.2 *Aloe trichosantha*

In Eritrea the distribution of *A. trichosantha* is restricted to the eastern escarpment. It is found on the slopes of Nefasit and Ghinda. It extends south wards to the Ala plains, northeast of Dekemhare and the Seled valley near Segenaiti (Fig. 6). On the slopes of Nefasit, many plants of *A. trichosantha*, growing side by side with *A. camperi*, were observed to be selectively uprooted and destroyed by baboons. Probably the baboons are using the stems as a source of food during dry seasons. The restricted distribution, coupled with the selective destruction caused by baboons and other anthropogenic factors, can endanger the existence of the species on the eastern escarpment. Outside Eritrea, *A. trichosantha* is recorded in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya (Reynolds 1966).

**DESCRIPTION:** *Aloe trichosantha* plants (Fig 6B) are stemless, solitary or suckering to form groups. Leaves are 15-20 per rosette, 25-70 cm long and 10 cm broad at the base, slightly canaliculated. The leaf margin is armed with pungent reddish-brown deltoid teeth, 4-12 per 10 cm. Inflorescence is up to 2 meters high composed of 1-3 branched panicles. Racemes are cylindrical to conical in shape, 40-70 cm long. Pedicels are 2.5-8 mm long, minutely pubescent. Perianth is 20-30 mm long, cylindrical-trigonous in shape, curved slightly upwards towards the tip, pale to bright pink with short white indumentum. The outer tepals of perianth are free for 6-9 mm. The flowering time for *Aloe trichosantha* is during February to April.

4. **Conclusion and recommendations**

Assessment of conservation status of a taxon is an important first step in planning conservation and sustainable use activities.
On the basis of World Conservation Union (IUCN) criteria, the conservation status of *Aloe* species in Eritrea can be assigned as follows:

i) On the basis of IUCN criteria ‘B1a’ and ‘b(iii)’ (see appendix), *Aloe neostaudneri* and *Aloe schoelleri* are likely to be assigned as ‘Critically Endangered’ species. Both species have very restricted area of distribution and they are threatened as result of habitat destruction caused by agricultural development and invasion of *Opuntia*. The species can be protected by establishing enclosures\(^5\) in the respective localities. The Kohaito plateau, in addition to its archaeological importance, can be used for ecotourism by publicizing the presence of endemic species and unique vegetation.

ii) On the basis of IUCN criteria ‘B1a’ (see appendix), *Aloe percrassa*, *A. trichosantha* and *A. macrocarpa* are likely to be assigned as locally ‘Vulnerable’ species. All of them have restricted distribution within Eritrea and any kind of habitat change can result in local exterrigation of the species. Further study is required to understand factors that influence propagation and population growth of each species.

iii) At present there is no adequate information for *Aloe adigratana* and *A. eumassawana* and therefore both of them can be assigned under the IUCN category ‘Data Deficient’ species. *A. eumassawana* is so far reported from graveyards in Hirgigo and further population study

---

\(^5\) Enclosure is the simplest type of conservation that is practiced in many villages in Eritrea. Any plant that grows within the enclosure will be protected directly or indirectly if the cutting of trees or shrubs is restricted by regulations of a village. Establishing Botanical garden to conserve species requires money and scientific knowledge.
is required in its natural habitat. Information on its abundance is also lacking for A. adigratana.

iv) Aloe elegans and A. camperi are locally wide spread and abundant and can be assigned under the IUCN category ‘Least Concern’ species. Though wide spread and not threatened at present, the two species are widely used in traditional medicine and other local uses and thus require attention to avoid overexploitation.

References


Appendix

**IUCN categories and criteria used in the study**

1. Critically endangered: criteria used ‘B1a’ and ‘b(iii).

   A taxon is critically endangered when the best available evidence indicates that it meets any of the following criteria (A to E), and it is therefore considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

   A. Reduction in population size.

   B. Geographic range in the form of either B1 (extent of occurrence) or B2 (area of occupancy) or both:

   1. Extent of occurrence estimated to be less than 100 km², and estimates indicating at least two a-c:

      (a) Severely fragmented or known to exist at only a single location.
(b) Continuing decline, observed, inferred or projected in any of the following: (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) area of occupancy, (iii) quality of habitat, (iv) number of location, (v) number of mature individuals.

(c) Extreme fluctuation occurrence, occupancy, habitat or number of individuals.

C. Population size estimated to number fewer than 250 mature individuals or continuing decline at least 25% within three years or one generation.

D. Population size estimated to number fewer than 50 mature individuals.

E. Quantitative analysis showing the probability of extinction in the wild is at least 50% within 10 years or three generations.

2. Vulnerable: criteria used ‘B1a’.

A taxon is vulnerable when the best available evidence indicates that it meets any of the following criteria (A to E), and it is therefore considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

A. Reduction in population size.

B. Geographic range in the form of either B1 (extent of occurrence) or B2 (area of occupancy) or both:

1. Extent of occurrence estimated to be less than 20,000 km$^2$, and estimates indicating at least two a-c:

   (a) Severely fragmented or known to exist in not more than 10 locations.

   (b) Continuing decline, observed, inferred or projected in extent of occurrence, occupancy, habitat or number of individuals.
(c) Extreme fluctuation occurrence, occupancy, habitat or number of individuals.

C. Population size estimated to number fewer than 10,000 mature individuals or continuing decline at least 10% within ten years or three generation.

D. Population size very small or restricted area of occupancy (typically less than 20 Km$^2$).

E. Quantitative analysis showing the probability of extinction in the wild is at least 10% within 100 years.
Book Review


*Kab Rix’ ከቕንቲ*, a memoir written in Tigrinya, breaks new ground in the annals of Eritrean literature not only for the style it adopts but also for its treatment of the independence struggle through personal experience. Starting from the title, roughly translated as ‘a handful of grain from the granary’, the author acknowledges that his book is a modest attempt to narrate the vast history of the Eritrean independence struggle. Memoirs are rare in Eritrea’s history of literary works, which can be traced back to 70 years ago when እዳወ ጂንታ (*Ḥadä Zanta*) (‘a story of a conscript’), by Ghebreyesus Hailu was first published. *Kab Rix’* has already drawn criticism for the personal stance the author adopted in the book in describing his experiences as a member of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF).

Tekie Beyene, a writer, a journalist and a freedom fighter with the EPLF, has also served as head of the then Eritrean Relief Association. After independence, he headed the Eritrean Investment Centre and the National Bank of Eritrea. He has written for, and served in the editorial board of, እሆwyät, a Tigrinya monthly magazine. His major literary contribution came in the form of a Tigrinya translation of the philosophical treatise *Sofia*. The book sold a record of 1000 copies in the first five days of its publication. *Kab Rix’* is the first original book-length work by the author.

After three weeks of its publication, *Kab Rix’* was subjected to strong criticism for its “unconventional” personal account of the author’s long standing involvement with Eritrea’s *liberation*
movement. A writer in Ḥadas 'Erǝtra (2009) criticized the author for ‘dwelling on the personal by ignoring the communal culture of the EPLF’. Tekie seems to have anticipated this, as he, in the preface, revealed that it was his plan to go against this tradition. He stated: “I have tried to deliberately go against the wisdom of avoiding the use of the personal ‘I’ in the struggle and the society. However, in the book I have also tried to show that the ‘I’ is in fact part of the ‘we’.” Readers can sense a hint of discomfort the author feels as he embraces the subjective stance. But he is forceful in pointing out the threat the tradition poses: “[T]he history of Eritrea faces the danger of trivialization due to this uneasiness to treat it from personal angles.” The absence of personal accounts in narrating the history of Eritrean revolution has been noted by Alemseged Tesfay, a well known writer and historian. Tesfay in an interview in 2006 with S'ädal Tigrinya magazine, noted the importance of personal accounts of former revolutionaries in enriching the works of historians interested in the liberation movement.

*Kab Rix*’ covers two decades (end of 1950 to early 1980) of the author’s experiences in the resistance. The six-part book, although the author maintains that it details his personal political life, is also an account of the political phases the country was undergoing. The fate of the author was the fate of many Eritreans: innocent youth were confronted with terror and intimidation from the Ethiopian government which pushed many to support the independence movement and eventually join the resistance. This can be clearly read from the pages of

*Kab Rix*, and clearly supports the author’s claim in the preface that the personal experiences are in fact subsumed within the collective ones.
In the first chapter, the author narrates his and five other students’ role in the 1960 student riots. The organizers were young students who were disillusioned by Ethiopia’s political domination exercised under the federal arrangement. The students’ response was to organize mass protests in Asmara and other towns. The young students, who were barely 20, except for their leader Tikue Yihdego, planned to organize protests in every corner of the country. However, except for the ones in Asmara, their plans elsewhere were not successful. In Asmara, they had already made secret contacts with many students and when the time came they were surprised to see many students joined by many more from the general public who simply seized the opportunity to express their frustration with the Ethiopian domination. This event would make a lasting impression on the author throughout his life.

After the protest, the organizers, including the author, were arrested and put in detention for six months. Once in jail, the organizers came to realize the extent and significance of their role in a riot that shock the entire city of Asmara. Other students on the outside continued to demand their release by protesting in front of the offices of the police. This section of the book clearly shows what topics the young people like the author used to debate about and paints the socio-political situation of the 1950-60s in Eritrea. The pages of the book clearly show the innocence of many Eritreans, the mischief and secret dealings of Ethiopia, and the feelings of siege inside Asmara.

The author faced many difficulties after the successful Asmara protests he helped organize. Because of constant police surveillance and harassment from the security service, he was forced to move to a school in Debrezeyt (Central Ethiopia).
After a relatively calm year finishing his high school there, he had to move to Addis Ababa to join the University. But even there, the security service and police continued following him even to the hotel where he was staying. The author became restless. He then decided to go back to Asmara where family and relatives would be easily informed if anything was to happen to him. On the trip back to Asmara, he saw police and members of the security service board the same bus. The Ethiopians hoped their constant surveillance of the author would lead them to the main leaders, as they thought the author and his student friends were not acting alone.

The instability of the 1960s had affected many young Eritreans. Ethiopia increased its dominance in the federal arrangement and it became clear that its intention was to annex Eritrea. As part of this plan, Eritrea’s economy was deliberately decimated and unemployment became rampant. The frustration was evident in the ‘traditional beer’ houses, bars and nightclubs where many young students spent their days and nights. This was coupled with strict surveillance by the security forces that instigated fear and terror. After his stay in Ethiopia, the author came back to this difficult situation in Eritrea. He tried to get a job. But due to his prior involvement with student protests he was turned down in many places. The author finally secured a position with Egypt Air.

The socio-political situation in the country deteriorated. The Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) continued to secretly organize its cells. One of the influential leaders of the national movement, Ato Woldeab Woldemariam, tried to broadcast radio programmes from Cairo. Meanwhile, armed resistance started in Barka in 1961. The ELM started to wane for lack of coordinated leadership. Uncertainty grew in the face of
continued Ethiopian harassment and economic hardships. In 1963, General Tedla Ugubit, who sided with Ethiopia and played a part in harassing many, was said to have committed suicide. The federation was formally abolished. All these combined created a frightening climate of uncertainty in the country.

In such distressing national circumstances, the author took his annual leave from Egypt Air and toured Egypt and Italy, a tour he called ‘Honeymoon’. The description of this tour is also a relief to the reader as it gives a break from the sometimes very gloomy narrations of events in the previous chapters.

In 1972, the author went back to secret political activity after some years of self-alienation from the movement due to the continued harassment he faced. He was secretly enlisted, through an agent called Tarzan, to the ranks of clandestine urban cells of the Popular Forces, later to become the EPLF. His main tasks were to distribute revolutionary texts, collect monthly monetary contributions from members and recruit additional members.

His new job as head of the Keren Branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia gave him a stable job in an unstable political situation. In 1974, the author faced pressure from the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the other major independence movement at the time. Its agents wanted him to secretly hand them the money at the bank and flee with them to the field. As he was already a member of the EPLF, the author found it difficult to comply with the ELF request. Readers are kept in suspense as they read how the author tried to eventually dodge the request.
After the overthrow of Emperor Haileselassie in Ethiopia and the advances of the liberation forces in Eritrea, the new rulers of Ethiopia started to put additional surveillance on the author and other members of the mass organizations of the EPLF. The Ethiopians suspected that the author might find it easier to join the rebels from his banking post in Keren and later in 1975 in Asmara. They didn’t waste time to transfer him and many of his bank colleagues to Addis Ababa. Soon, he found himself struggling to secure annual leave so that he could come back to Asmara. Through suspenseful dramatization, the author succeeds in conveying the difficulties he faced and shows the true character of the new leaders of Ethiopia.

During his stay in Addis Ababa, the author gradually rose to higher levels of leadership in the secretive EPLF mass organizations located within the city. To cover his clandestine activities, he befriended Ethiopian officials and actively participated in meetings organized by the officials. This put Tekie in bad reputation among many unsuspecting Eritreans. The author secretly collected money and recruited and organized members. This didn’t last long. He was forced to flee Addis Ababa in 1980 when the Ethiopians penetrated the secret cells and took some members to prison. The author skilfully renders the events of this ill-fated saga a fictional quality; he writes so deftly causing the reader to sometimes wonder whether this is a masterpiece of fiction or a depiction of real events. In such writing style, the author narrates the story of his journey from Addis Ababa to the Eritrean mountains where he joined the freedom fighters. The author’s account is also enhanced by the occasional humour.

The final part of the book recounts the experiences of the new freedom fighter Tekie, assigned to Ala in the eastern
escarpment, one of the EPLF strongholds at the time. He met with the leaders of the urban cells of EPLF and they told him how the enemy managed to infiltrate the cells and dismantle the secret organizations. Things started to fall apart as around 120 members were jailed and many others were killed. After his departure, the author’s family faced prison and torture. Against all these challenges, the author, as he solemnly states at the end of his book, started the life of a freedom fighter in the valleys of Ala.

The author shows his superior writing and story telling skills in his first original work. His style of writing made the book an easy read. It is difficult to put away the book once you open it. In some parts of the book, the author makes the reader easily identify with the author’s thoughts, and at times, readers may feel that the sentences and words are narrated to them in person. In addition to the writer’s narration skills, the point of view he adopts also contributes to the readability of the book. It is indeed a readable personal account of the yet unexplored history of Eritrea’s independence struggle. It is more than ‘a-handful-of-grain,’ a significant contribution to the historical study of the independence movement, and a challenge to those freedom fighters who have yet to raise their pens and write.

Although a number of witty anecdotes and other humorous accounts bring smiles to the reader’s face, the secretive activities the author describes naturally engender fear and suspense. We read that many young people faced daily terror, imprisonment and torture for years. Still, despite the many harrowing tales of terror and oppression, the reader never fails to sense the author’s and his fellow comrades’ steely conviction that they will eventually succeed in bringing the light of freedom to the troubled land.
The author’s acknowledged urge to engage in personal accounts, without forgetting the communal experience, i.e., his wish to dwell on the personal “I” as subsumed in the collective “we”, has meant covering many of the participants of the secret missions the author and his colleagues were involved in. This urge has led to the inclusion of too many ‘characters’ in some of the stories related in the pages and has dragged the narration to some extent. Although to a limited scale, this has also negatively affected the focus of the book as some of the details could have easily been left out.

As it is usually the case in writing a book, further research would have made Kab Rix’ more complete. In addition, the author could have easily made further use of written sources and other types of secondary data that would have given the book more depth.

It is common to read works on the political history of Eritrea which are commonly written from the impersonal stance. Many may find books written using such a style as dry and boring to read. Kab Rix’ has managed to break this barrier as the author managed to present the political upheavals in Eritrea during the 1960s and 70s through a readable and personalized writing style that borders on fiction writing. In this book, through personalized narration style, the author has skilfully handled an issue commonly reserved to few writers on politics. Kab Rix’ represents serious political issues written in fictional style and this makes the book not only a groundbreaking work in literature in the country but a must read piece on the history of the revolution in Eritrea.

Abraham Tesfalul