ALAQA TAYE GABRA MARIAM (1861–1924) *)

ALEMÉ ESHETÉ **)}

Alaqa Taye Gabra Mariam was a native of Kamkam Qaroda, Yifag, in Bagemeder. He was born on the 21st Magabit 1853 E.C. (March 1861) during the reign of Tewodros. His mother died while he was a child and his father had left for Shoa. It was thus that Taye left his native village for Tigre where his uncle lived. But upon his arrival in Tigre he learnt that his uncle had left for Bombay, India. Taye, therefore, decided to travel to the Red Sea Coast and from there leave for Bombay or for Jerusalem. He arrived in Monkullu about 1880, at the age of twenty, and thus came in contact with the Swedish Mission at Monkullu which was run by Lundahl. But he was not employed by the Mission in translation and teaching work until 1886. In the 1890’s Alaqa Taye was largely working on his book, ከሚካ ኪሸው (Matshafa Sawasew) or Grammar Book which was published in Monkulloo in 1897 1).

In 1898, Alaqa Taye was sent on an evangelical mission to Qaroda, his native village in Bagemeder, where his teaching seems to have incited opposition against him. It is not clear what his relation was with the then Governor of Bagemeder, Ras Mangasha Atikem, but we know that on one occasion he was accused, probably by the Orthodox clergy, and brought before the court of the Governor. A religious debate took place between the two parties in which Alaqa Taye won the case 4). Ras

[*] Per la trascrizione dei termini etiopici di questo articolo l’A. si attiene alle forme e adattamenti d’uso propri dei contesti odierini di lingua inglese di carattere divulgativo. - N.d.D.]

[**] In più esatta trascrizione: Alämīé Esātījé. - N.d.D.]

1) The Matshafa Sawasew is a grammar of Ge’ez explained in Amharic and containing a Ge’ez vocabulary with a translation in Amharic. According to Elsie Winqvist (Med Livet Som Insats, Stockholm, 1944, p. 90), Taye was not the original writer of this book which he found in one of the traditional libraries of Ethiopia. According to Elsie Winqvist, Taye was working on the translation of the book into Amharic in the 1890’s.

4) I have not been able to find the book of Alaqa Taye translated into Swedish, En teologisk Strid infor Ras Mangascha (Stockholm, E. P. S., 1900, 48 pages), which treats precisely the arguments of the Alaqa in this debate.
Mangasha Atikem, who may also have seen the Alaqa's book, Matshafa Sawasew, was apparently impressed by Taye's capacity and recommended him and sent him to Emperor Menelik at Addis Ababa. The Alaqa went to Shoa where he met the Emperor to whom he presented his book, Matshafa Sawasew. Menelik did not, however, keep Alaqa Taye at his court for very long, although he too seems to have formed a favourable opinion of the Alaqa. The Emperor sent Alaqa Taye back to Bagemeder with a sort of "carte blanche" which was intended to protect him from undue persecution.

Menelik did not forget Alaqa Taye, however and when in 1905 the German Government, through Rosen, requested the Emperor to send an Ethiopian scholar to teach Ge'ez and Amharic at the School of Oriental Studies in Berlin, it was Taye that he recommended for the post. Menelik's main interest in this was the possibility of recovering some of the rare Ethiopian books taken out from Ethiopia to Germany, as the following letter of the Emperor shows:

"The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menelik, King of Kings of Ethiopia.

Let it reach Alaqa Taye. How did you pass your time? I am well, thanks be to God. The men who were sent by the German Government and who are going back to their country by Massawa are now coming by [the route of] Gojam. But they have told me that there are many ancient books of our country that went from [were taken from] Ethiopia, and said to me: 'Let a clever man who knows them go and see'. As you are accustomed to the culture of that country, when they [the Ger-
man envoys] reach where 1) you are let it be that you go together with them.

Addis Ababa, 9th of Magabit 1897". [Seal of Emperor Menelik]

When this letter arrived Alaqa Taye had already been told the news by the then governor of Bagemeder, Ras Gugsa Wale, husband of Waizaro Zawditu Menelik. Alaqa Taye, therefore, left Begemeder for the coast, stopping at Tsazaga, where he met his co-evangelists of the Swedish Mission and in Balasa where Elsie Winqvist gave him a few rudimentary lessons in the German language. Alaqa Taye left for Germany on the 23rd of May 1905.

We now know that Taye kept a journal of his travels and stay in Germany, which we have been able to consult 2). He arrived at Suez on the 26th of May, and at Naples on the 30th of the same month. In Naples, Alaqa Taye spent his time in the company of “Yosef Somali”, and Tasfa, two Ethiopians. From Naples, Alaqa Taye left for Marseilles where he arrived on the 2nd of June. His impression of what he saw in Marseilles shocked the evangelist: 3)

He arrived at Marseilles for Lisbon where he arrived on June 6. From Lisbon, Alaqa Taye travelled to Holland (where he arrived on the 9th of June) and then to Hamburg, where he arrived on the 13th of the same month. On June 14th, Alaqa Taye was finally in Berlin where he was received by a certain Schulyer who took him around the city. Alaqa

1) sc. Debra Tabor.

2) I am grateful for this to Dr. Aren who has a photo-copy of the journal and to Qes Badima who keeps the original of it. The journal is a small note book with dates for 1905. The Alaqa was not, however, regular and several dates have no entries. It would seem that, at a later date, Taye had noted down different things on the empty pages. The journal does not give as much information as one would expect on Taye’s travel and stay in Germany. There is practically nothing on his employment there and we are not told if he ever taught Ge’ez and Amharic at the School of Oriental Studies in Berlin.
A letter of Menelik to Alaqa Taye (from Tadesse’s Introduction to Ye-Ityopia Hizeb Tarik, p. 15; for Tadesse’s Introduction see p. 30 footnote 1, here)
Taye was highly impressed by the fine buildings, statues and fountains of the city. He also visited museums and portrait galleries. In the days that followed the Ethiopian visitor continued his tour of the town including a visit to the University of Berlin where he consulted very old and rare books in Ge'ez, taken from Ethiopia. He also went to a theatre on September 15th and describes at length the magnificence of the theatre and the impression that it made upon him.

Unfortunately nothing is said in Taye’s journal of the task that had taken him to Germany; the teaching of Ethiopics. The journal stops on December 31st 1905. But it is known that he brought back with him for Emperor Menelik some 130 Ethiopian books that had been taken to Germany ¹).

Upon his return to Ethiopia, Alaqä Taye was given the work of preparing the biography of Menelik, while living in Ifag where the Emperor gave him a district to govern. But Alaqä Taye’s religious opponents were active and he was soon accused at the court of Ras Walda-Georgis, then Governor of Bagemeder, of professing the religion of the “Tsara Mariam” or “Enemies of Mary”, i.e. Protestants, and his district was taken away from him. A letter from the Governor, Ras Walda Georgis, read: ²)

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His principal accuser was Dejazmach Mashasha Worqe ³). Upon


²) That is: If you persist in this teaching we are sure to quarrel.

³) It is interesting to note that upon reading Alaqä Taye’s journal, Mashasha Worqe appears as his great friend. In fact Taye reproduces in the journal a copy of a letter, dated January 31st 1905, welcoming Mashasha back to Ethiopia from his travel to Europe, in which was included the following poem:

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hzazaw ifaz 1 hizif d5i s08oy 1
9emawb s08 1 hizif dh58aw 1
hizif d5i s08oy 1 hizif d5i s08oy 1
zh58aw s08oy 1 h58aw d58aw 1
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2
Taye's denial of the accusation, Mashasha asked Taye to kiss the image of the Virgin Mary, which the Alaga refused to do stating that he did not worship images, as the Bible forbade Christians to do so. At this, there was great commotion in court, and the Orthodox Christians were so offended that some of them are reported to have drawn their swords and pistols against him ¹). Alaga Taye was then sent to Abuna Matewos, in Addis Ababa, for judgement; and subsequently imprisoned. As it is well known, Menelik was at this time seriously ill and the administration of the empire as well as the power of decision was in the hands of Empress Taitu. And Taitu was the head of the traditional Orthodox Christian nobility opposed to all proponents of foreign religions. Persecution of Ethiopians converted to foreign religions was at its height. It would, therefore, seem that the decision to send Alaga Taye to prison was rather that of Taitu and Abuna Matewos than of Menelik who, relatively liberal in matters of religion, had shown himself the protector of Taye, in the past ²).

²) Alaga Taye did in fact consider Menelik as his protector and was deeply affected when the Emperor was finally rendered helpless by his sickness. Taye, like so many others, suspected the possible poisoning of the Emperor. The Alaga also believed that the famous dead cat found one
In any case, Alaqa Taye was sent to prison, but that did not put an end to his evangelical work for he continued preaching to the prisoners. The Alaqa did not regain unrestricted freedom until 1911, that is, after the fall of Taitu and during the regency of Ras Tasamma Nadaw. Taye composed the following poem while in prison:

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£h<Jh Mi-Pinn 1
Pi fflfl fl-> ftft ft
I h9° Ah.
flfc 119° 1
A?A h9°
/Fl*
* XHL ■
137x449</dYT.+
iah £A'-J
234x452*
311x551
73x416
morning on the throne of Menelik was put there by enemies of the Emperor. The following poems depicting these events are said to have been composed by Alaqa Taye.

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"Sabisa [a white bird] and Qura [a crow] which fly on wings,
While living in peace [comfort] in the house of Gaddé [a bird, also meaning a generous person]
They plotted saying: "Let us kill him",
Not thinking of his love, not fearing God,
But the generous Lord uncovered the plot by his deed".
(Sabisa and Qura refer to white and black doctors of Menelik, while Gaddé refers to the Emperor himself).
The following is another poem also by Alaqa Taye on the same event:

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"That they placed a cat in Menelik's bed,
It is to eat a rat, [or] lung and liver".
"If the wicked person, in vain, tries to do evil,
Menelik the lion is not afraid of a cat,
For his love is with God".
"They debate with me supporting each other, 
In vain, for they will not win the case, as they do not have God 
Because I entered prison, I am very happy, [with them. 
For God has been thanked because of me, 
It is a good occasion to preach the Gospel. 
If they say 'He is a heretic!' what do I care, 
Human praise is worthless, 
Only You be with me for my soul and flesh, 
I believe in you, do not forsake me my Lord. 
Leave alone an iron chain, let them tie me to a log, 
That will only be adding fire to gunpowder, 
So that it will burn high and produce much fire, 
And reveal publicly what was hidden. 
I will not worship images but only God! 
My fatigue was not in vain, [I am compensated] for my service, 
[Instead of] Gemja Suri [silk trousers, given as reward to the best liq 
of the church] an iron chain, and a prison as my governorate. 

My fatigue was not in vain, here is my decoration, 
[Instead of ] Gemja Suri, an iron chain, [and instead of a] bitawa 
[a bracelet decoration given to a patriot], handcuffs".

There is no indication that Alqa Taye suffered further persecution after the fall of Taitu. It could, therefore, be said that he passed a relatively peaceful time during the reign of Iyassu, and probably more so during the reign of Zawditu and Ras Tafari. Ras Tafari was particularly liberal in his religious policies and encouraged enlightened Ethiopians, whatever their religion, to serve him in the government. It is in fact said that Alqa Taye was employed by Tafari as a political adviser). And we know that the Alqa was also interested in politics, and had some notions of European forms of government 2).

Alqa Taye was a prolific writer, and it must have been during this time of relative peace that he wrote most of his books; but only one or two of these have been published, while the rest are still in manuscript form.

We have not been able to find copies of two books, “The Image of Jesus”, (Monkullo, 1894) and “Alqa Taye’s Journal of Cederqvist, Swedish Missionary in Addis Ababa; notes communicated to me by Dr. Aren.

2) In one page of Alqa Taye’s journal the following forms of government are defined by Taye himself:

- "Constitution" — [a country] ruled by a Council.
- "Monarchy" — [a country] ruled by the will of the King.
- "Anarchy" — [a doctrine] advocating the equality of the rich and the poor.
- "Socialist" — [a doctrine] advocating the abolition of the king [privileged classes] so that every one will work for himself and live in peace.
- "Propaganda [Fide]" — [a doctrine] advocating the supremacy of the Pope.
- "Free-Mason" — [a doctrine] advocating that everyone should be free to worship his own God by Whom he will be saved, and saying that the God of the other person is also my God’.


"Ethiopian History" or "History of the People of Ethiopia" was first published in Asmara in 1920 E.C. The book was documented from several Ethiopian and European sources, including works in German, which language Alaqa Taye must have learnt during his stay in Germany. The book referred to by Blatten-Geta Hiruy, who wrote that "Alaqa Taye was ordered by Menelik to prepare a complete history of Ethiopia with reference to all sources: Greek, Arab, German and French" 1) is probably this one. Taye's "History of the Ethiopian People" appears to be only part of a bigger book still left in manuscript form, which treated first the history of the people of the world, then of Ethiopia and finally the history of the kings of Ethiopia 2).

"Ethiopian History" literally meaning a "dictionary" (unpublished), is a book where Alaqa Taye argues for religious liberty and refutes several practices adhered to by the Orthodox Church, including the worship of saints. This book would have naturally aroused a still more vigourous opposition against the writer it had been published during his life-time (397 pages, big size).

"Ethiopian History" or "Remedy for the Soul" (182 pages) is a book (still unpublished) containing prayers and advice of a religious and moral character. Some chapters also refute elements of the Orthodox doctrine. It is also in this book that Alaqa Taye includes his Kebra Dengel, a chapter in "Honour of the Virgin Mary", to show to his adversaries that refusal to worship the Mother of Christ does not make him a "Tsara Mariam" or enemy of Mary. The Kebra Dengel covers some 18 pages. Alaqa Taye wrote on the subject, so that, as he put it:

\[ \text{Ehemyo}\,\text{Ehzo}\,\text{Ehzo}\,\text{Ehzo}\,\text{Ehzo}\,\text{Ehzo}\,\text{Ehzo} \]


2) Manuscript in the possession of Qes Badima. There seems to be a controversy as to who is the author of a book entitled: "History of Ethiopia", or "History of the Ethiopian Kings". The book given to the press by Blatta Hiruy was only half-printed when the Italians occupied Ethiopia in 1935 and interrupted its completion. Relatives and friends of Alaqa Taye claim that this book was written by Alaqa Taye. We have seen a type-script of the book attributed to Hiruy. But without studying the manuscript attributed to Alaqa Taye, it is very difficult to give an opinion on the matter.
"[So that] the devil might be frightened and my enemies ashamed, for my name is seen [or Taye] everywhere".

In this Ge'ez poem, Mary is praised and honoured essentially because She is the Mother of Christ who has saved the world. But nowhere does the Alaqa appear as venerating Mary in Her own quality.

The following is an extract chosen at random:

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Ark of Noah, You Mary, Virgin and Blessed,
Just as we were saved by it from the waters of the flood and from [death, Because thou were the cause of salvation to all the creatures, On account of the fact that from Thou was born the Word of the [Father, the Life, Let Him save us by His Cross and give us health by baptism"
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Whatever may be said to the contrary, Alaqa Taye had gradually become a Protestant. In fact it is reported that in the second decade of this century he preached at the Protestant Church of Makana Yesus 1) a number of times to large congregations 2). And even today extracts of the teachings of Alaqa Taye are reproduced by the Protestant evangelists, as a recent copy of .{Y}:

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Yameserach Demtse, organ of the Protestant Church, with an extract of Alaqa Taye's teachings, shows. But becoming a Protestant is one thing and being a good Ethiopian is another, and Alaqa Taye could be considered a true nationalist. In a letter which he sent home while in Germany, Alaqa Taye wrote:
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After seeing European civilization, I am burning with envy for my country".
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He also was, what we might today call, anti-imperialist, as the following poem attributed to him proves:

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1) sc. in Addis Ababa.
2) CEDERQVIST, unpublished Journal, op. cit.
"With a tiny piece of grain, one could trap a bird,  
Or even a lion, or any unwary beast,  
[Therefore] beware my country men of destructive food.  
In order to give the people worthwhile advice, that comes from my  
I dare to speak out to-day thus in public".  

Relatively little is known about the family life of Alaqa Taye. In 1889, while in Monkullo he was going to get married to a girl called Tirunesh, on the 26th of February. Unfortunately, his fiancée died four days before the wedding on the 24th of the same month 1). He was then married to a lady called Tsehayitu, who died several years later 2). His last wife was Waizaro Tirunash, daughter of John Parkyns; she was earlier married to the late Ato Engidashat Schimper, son of the German botanist. Their marriage lasted only six months, when Alaqa Taye passed away. The Alaqa had no children of his own 3). Alaqa Taye died on the 15th of Nahase 1916 E.C. (August 1924). Even after his death his religious adversaries were not softened and refused to see him buried at the Orthodox Church of Selassie (the Trinity) 4). An order from the Empress Zawditu, authorising the burial had no effect. Alaqa Kinfe noted in his journal 5):  "On the 15th of Nahase died one of the principal supporters of the Protestant doctrine: Alaqa Taye. His dead body was brought to Selassie but the clergy refused to have him buried in that church for his belief was not their's. Even to an order from the Empress they cruelly said: 'no!'. They took his dead body by car to Gulale, the burial place for the Catholics".

1) Hammar, op. cit., p. 68.  
2) Information obtained from Waizaro Dasta Engdashat Schimper, daughter of Alaqa Taye's last wife, Waizaro Tirunash John.  
3) Balambaras Mangistu Taye, is not actually the son of Taye, but of a sister of the Alaqa.  
4) sc. in Addis Ababa.  
Alaqa Taye’s sister (?) Waizaro Laqech Amneh composed the following poem upon her brother’s death:

“I will weep for you, sitting and standing,
I am not ashamed when I say this repeatedly,
My brother is not afraid when one witnesses for the truth.
Qebait and Tsega stayed in hiding,
As for Tawahdo we have seen [how weak is] its foundation”.

Alaqa Taye was a scholar, but a Protestant scholar and like most Ethiopians who accepted or associated themselves with a foreign religion and missionaries, he was persecuted for several years. Writing on the condition of such Ethiopians, Gabra Heywat Baykadagn noted 4):

1) Two Sects of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
2) Tewahdo, Karra, or Walde Qib, is the Sect of the Coptic Orthodox Church that represents the state religion.
3) Awda Nagast, cit.
who came to Abyssinia, want to help their country, they are pushed aside, branded as Catholics, Protestants, heretics and foreign spies, and live in want accused constantly. We can mention many names of those who suffer thus. But the following two names must certainly be mentioned: Kantiba Gabru and Alaqa Taye. During the three years that I was in Addis Ababa, I have not met anyone who loves his country as much as these two people do. But this disposition of theirs has not been appreciated up to now; it is very sad. When one sees their lot, one despairs, for one is bound to say, “the Ethiopian Government is not grateful to its friends”.

P.S. — I. Concerning the Ethiopian Books taken to Germany, on which the Emperor Menelik wanted him to report Alaqa Taye sent two letters to the Emperor with a list of the books which he was able to find 1).

List of Books in Letter of 3rd Pagumé 1898 (September 1905):

1. እሱመር (Afewarg)
2. ዮርሱ (Qerlos)
3. ይምባት እሱመ (Haimanote Abew)
4. እንከር (Sinka)
5. ኣር እሱመ (Zena Ayehud)
6. ኣር እሱመ (Zena Abew)
7. ከር ኡም (Kebre Negest)
8. ከር ኡም (Tarike Negest)
9. ይክ እር ዲክ ካክ (History of Atse Zera-Yaqob)
10. ይክ እር ዲክ (History of Atse Minas)
11. ይክ እር ዲክ (History of Atse Fasil)
12. ይክ እር ዲክ ካክ (History of Tsadiku Yohannes)
13. ይክ እር ዲክ (History of Adyam Seged)
14. ይክ እር ዲክ (History of Atse Bakaffa)
15. ይክ እር ዲክ ካክ ካክ (History of Atse Tewodros)
16. ይክ እር ዲክ (Metshafe Abba Bulla)
17. ኣር እሱመ (Zena Iskinder)

1) HAILU KEBEDE, Ye–Alaqa Taye Gebre Maryam Ye–Hiyuwt Tarik, B.A. Thesis in Ethiopian language, Haile Sellassie I University, Addis Ababa, 1963 E.C.
18. ለ እርሳ ከ. . . . . . . . . . . . . . (Zena Sorkis)
19. ከትን ከርሳ ዳቀ ቘው- (Hateta Zera-Yaqob)
20. ከትን ወላ ከው- (Hateta Wolde-Heywat)
21. መ𐭉 እርሳ (Metshafe Berhan)
22. ከት (Henok)
23. እራ (Kufale)
24. የሆ እርሳ (Terfe Ermeyas)
25. ከት (Barok)
26. ውን ከሳ (Didsqelya)
27. የሆ ዓን ዳ ቘው (Tirguame Wengel)
28. የሆ ዓን ዳ ቘ- (Tirguame Ebrawyan)
29. የሆ ከ ዳ ቘ- (Tirguame Qelesmis)
30. የሆ ከ ዳ ቘ- (Tirguame Sinefriret)
31. ከት ከ (Kidane Zenegeh)
32. መርከር ከ (Metshafe Genet)
33. ከት ከ (Semon Ze'amad)
34. የሆ ከ ዳ ቘ- (Dirsane Tsemotewos)
35. ከት ከ (Fitha Negest)
36. ከት ከ (Wedase Amlak)
37. መርከር ከ (Mestabequ'e)
38. ከት (Arganon)
39. መርከር ከ (Metshafe Mestir)
40. የሆ ከ ከ (Siltane Ze-Der which tells that Queen Elene gave a piece of land to Abyssinian monks in Jerusalem).
41. ከት (Yaqob Elbaradi)
42. ሊርግ ከ ከ (a such of the history of Barla'am)
43. ከት ከ ከ (Section 41 from Fisalgos)
44. ከት (Hawi)
45. ከት (Mar Vishaq)
46. የሆ ከ (Filksiyos)
47. የሆ ከ (Aragawi Manfasawi)
48. የሆ ከ (Matshefa Bahirye)
49. የሆ ከ (Metsehafe T'aqsebo Misle Fewis Menfesawi)
50. የሆ ከ (Zena Abba Benyamin)
51. የሆ ከ (Feleski Wegris Tebib)
52. የሆ ከ (Metsehafe Felasfa)
53. የሆ ከ (Tsewene Nefes)
Additional List of Books in Letter of Genbot 1899 (May 1907):

55. Gedle Tekle Haimanot, published in English
56. Gedle Meba Tsion with Gedle Gebre Kristos with picture
57. Gedle Hawariyat
58. Metsehafe Eskinder
59. Zena Beher Betsu'an
60. (The Four Gospels)
61. Gedle Hawariyat printed in Rome

Manuscripts & Printed Books in Paris

62. Sinksar of Sené
63. Gedle Sema'etat
64. Gedle Qedus Fassilides
65. Gedle Yoštos
66. Gedle Abadir
67. Gedle Fiqtor
68. Gedle Susineyos
69. Ye-Qedusan Melke
70. History of Atse Sertse Dengel
71. Zena Galla

But it is not known how many, if any, of these books, Alaqa Taye was able to bring back to Ethiopia.

II. Concerning Alaqa Taye's relations with Lej Iyassu, the following poem attributed to Alaqa Taye, suggests that the Alaqa held not a very high opinion of the young monarch. Cf. Hailu Kebede, op. cit.:
"Beware (my) country of your baby king,
And of the Mekuanent (nobility) who get drunk early in the morning,
Who torment you by their extravagance and drunkenness,
There is no hope for you to recover, (my country)!
"

III. Finally, the following letter which Alaqa Taye sent from Europe to Emperor Menelik in May 1907 shows much more clearly the nationalist feelings of the writer:

"The whole world is created by God, who is Impartial. He has not created a complete heart (mind) for one people and an incomplete heart (mind) for another people... To one who asks why are the Europeans, the Asians, and some of the African people skilled while we, Abyssinians... do not progress in spiritual and secular wisdom, the reply is a short one. First, it is because the people (of Abyssinia) are not educated and have not heard enough of the words of the Gospel; it is because there is no true knowledge and no true love and modesty. Secondly, it is because in our country people with some knowledge are insulted, despised and badly treated, instead of being respected; (as a result) such people have chosen to live lazily without working. The types of skill (for which one) is insulted instead of being thanked for (are the following):

Those learned in books are called kochoro 1)-picking Dabtaras. Those who have learnt how to write are called magicians and sorcerers; he who is a silver-smith or gold-smith is called anteregna; if iron-smith, he is called getqaq or buda (an evil eyed person); if carpenter, he is called anati or piercer of wood; if he works on hide, he is called prey-eating faqi; if he digs, if he clears land, he is called Kancha Mechi, wood-cutter, and digger; if he farms with oxen, he is called dekkko 2)-wearing farmer; if he is a mason, he is called stone-piercer and mud-mixer. By thus giving names and insulting all types of work, skilled work is disappearing gradually. Therefore, if Your Majesty would think about this problem and stop such insults by an Awaj, so that all people engaged in skilled work may be respected, if you make all people send their children to school, if you could attract foreign educators in different skills to come and teach, if you could import a printing machine from abroad so that all useful books will be printed and distributed to the people, if you could

1) Dried enjera broken into small pieces, kept in traditional Ethiopian houses in order to preserve the quality of the enjera for long.
2) A kind of over-coat made out of hide.
replace the foreign currency, bearing foreign pictures, now in circulation, by one that will bear the picture of Janhoy, your independent government will be self-sufficient and complete” 1).

Alaqa Taye wrote this letter in Genbot 1899 (May 1907). And about this time (in January 1908) Menelik passed an Awaj declaring that all skilled work should be respected and that no one should be insulted on account of his work (cf. MAHTEMÈ SELASSIE, Zekre Neger) 2).


2 ALAQA TAYE, op. cit., p. 20 and footnote 15 (by Dr. Tadesse Tamrat).