University Museums and the Promotion of Conservation Policies on the Pre-Revolutionary Campus of Addis Ababa (1950-1974)

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AUTHOR’S NOTE


1 This paper aims at showing that the project of a “conservatory Ethiopia”, both in the area of traditions and of wildlife, strongly relied on foreign scholars based in Ethiopia before the Revolution, and that museums were seen by them as strong tools to reach the Ethiopian public – and leaders. In this regard, culture and nature belonged to different individual and institutional initiatives and processes. Nevertheless, they followed parallel paths and seem to have inspired each other during the whole period.

2 The first institution of higher education Ethiopia, the Addis Ababa University College, was created in 1950. This public college was directed by a Canadian Jesuit, Lucien Matte, who carried the recruitment of the teaching staff in the name of the Ethiopian imperial government. When the Addis Ababa University College was included in the newly founded Haile Selassie I University, in 1961, 50% of the teaching and administrative staff of the Ethiopian university was foreign (Balsvik, 1985: 28-29). Most of these expatriates came from North America and Europe. Disappointed by the general content of the official curriculum, a part of these foreign staff members progressively...
developed extramural non-teaching activities, taking the opportunity to expand their knowledge of the country. Most of them found themselves on a brand new terrain, and hence specialized in Ethiopia during their stay. Research and fieldwork became usual, and scholars from the humanities or natural sciences started reference collections – of artefacts, of specimens – aimed at establishing inventories. Following these initiatives, university museums were created.

In the Ethiopian capital city, it is still possible to visit the two university museums that came out of these activities: the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, created in 1963 on the campus of social sciences, and the Natural History Museum, created in 1964 on the Science Faculty campus – but probably really opened to the public only at the beginning of the 1970s (Kassa Wolde Mariam, 1963; Natural History Museum, n.d.). The Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies exhibits ethnographic artefacts and ancient Christian art from Ethiopia. The Natural History Museum consists in a zoological gallery with stuffed specimens. Both museum projects were initiated by foreign staff members of the university working for the Ethiopian government. The museums aimed first at being showcases for research undertaken at the university, but they both finally ended with another mission: developing the idea of “heritage” and promoting conservation policy in Ethiopia. With the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution and the collapse of the monarchy, these foreign staff members left the country and the university, where they were systematically replaced by Ethiopian scholars. University collections and museums remained. The Revolution froze the Natural History Museum in its infancy, while the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, after being reorganized twice, still constitutes one of the main cultural institutions of Addis Ababa.

The notion of “national heritage” underwent important changes during the second reign of Haile Selassie, who came back from exile in 1941 after the Italian occupation (1936-1941). These changes are part of the institutional reforms that characterized this period (Clapham, 1969: 21-27, 36-44; Bahru Zewde, 2002: 178-179, 201-215). Besides the higher education system, the National Library and the National Museum were created. A Department of Antiquities was instituted to supervise the Ethiopian Archaeological Institute – a French-led expert mission working for the Ethiopian government, which opened its own museum until the latter was incorporated into the National Museum (Anfray, 1963: 15-16). In the 1960s, growing international pressure on wildlife conservation led to the creation of the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organization, and the decision to create national parks was enacted in 1965 (Blanc, 2015: 22-23). In all these domains, the Ethiopian government followed the advice and initiatives taken by foreign experts, especially from international organizations. On the wildlife side, a very influential character was Leslie H. Brown. A British expert from the World Wildlife Fund working for the Ethiopian government in relation with UNESCO to establish an environmental conservation policy program, he collaborated on a long-term basis with the Ethiopian university – between 1961 and 1963 through the East African Natural Society, and in 1971 as a visiting lecturer at Haile Selassie I University (Brown, 1973: ii). Brown can be recognized as the “father” of Ethiopian national parks. Because he was both a scholar and a conservation expert, Brown reflects the ambivalent position of the foreign staff members of the pre-revolutionary Ethiopian university. They initiated the first Ethiopia-generated research, and they imported, at the same time, natural and cultural conservation policies and tools. University museums were part of this since they were intended to “educate” Ethiopians in the making of heritage.
Both the natural history and the ethnographic collections of Addis Ababa University find their origins in the activity of Stanislaw Chojnacki, the librarian of the Addis Ababa University College. A polish emigrant, Chojnacki had no relation with Ethiopia before taking up his position (Chojnacki, 2010: 1-2). In 1951, he strongly supported the creation of a student association, the Ethnological Society, dedicated to the collection and study of Ethiopian traditions. Its members were among the first university graduates of Ethiopia, and they got key positions afterwards, especially in the university (Pankhurst A., 2002a: xiv-xxiii). The association lasted until 1963, Chojnacki being its advisor until 1958 (when Georges Savard, a professional anthropologist, took over the position). The Ethnological Society published 11 issues of a journal, the Addis Ababa University College Ethnological Society Bulletin, from 1953 to 1961, the first social science periodical published in Ethiopia. Articles reflect the activity of the society, and especially the collective and individual field trips undertaken by its members (Pankhurst A., 2002b). Little by little, the Bulletin started an ethnographic inventory of the Ethiopia of the 1950s.

Starting in 1952, Chojnacki initiated a parallel project: the construction of a museum at the Addis Ababa University College. Until 1963, the museum was established inside the college library building, and attracted the attention of Ethiopian authorities to the point that official diplomatic delegations (including Charles de Gaulle’s visit in 1953) were often taken to view the gallery while visiting the college (Chojnacki, 1990: 30). The museum collection was at that time composed of ethnographic artefacts and preserved specimens of animals, comprising both gifts from the university staff and students and objects collected by Chojnacki himself during his trips in the countryside. In 1955, the remaining elements of a zoological and ethnographic collection created by the Italian colonial authorities for a natural history museum project were included in the museum collection (Patrizi, 1940; News and Views, 1962: 11; Chojnacki, 1990: 30). But Chojnacki was also himself a specimen collector. In 1961, he was part of a Yugoslavian naturalist expedition to the Eritrean coast (News and Views, 1961a). Among his colleagues, Chojnacki was known and is still recalled as a butterfly collector (Ethiopia Observer, 1958: 199-200; Chojnacki, 2010: 20). His butterfly collection can still be seen in the Natural History Museum of the Science Faculty of Addis Ababa University.

Since the early 1950s, there may have been concurrent projects (the facts are unclear) regarding natural history collections on the campus. Members of the Science Faculty seem to have asked the university authorities for the creation of a zoological exhibition as soon as 1952 (Largen, 1969: 38). After the creation of a proper natural history museum in 1964, the foreign staff of the Science Faculty may have rejected Chojnacki’s initial project which was non-scientific in essence. Indeed, Chojnacki’s gallery looked very similar to the mixed collections of animals and objects realized by 19th-century travelers in Ethiopia, such as Eduard Rüppell, for which Chojnacki expressed much admiration (Chojnacki, 1961: 86-87).

In 1960, the Ethnological Society published an Information Bulletin that settled the aim of the association, as well as its relation with Chojnacki’s museum project. The aim of the society was then “to preserve and, if needed, to revive traits of Ethiopian culture that
have a lasting value”. It asserted that “modernization [...] if is to be really successful, [...] should not be forced from the outside but implanted in the good soil of Ethiopian culture and firmly rooted in it” (Ethnological Society, 1960: 3). In this *Information Bulletin*, the Society defined its role in promoting the “preservation” of “Ethiopian culture”. A committee was created to help Chojnacki in building his museum, thus binding the association, the museum and the making of its collection.

The Society, as well as Chojnacki himself, never fully explained the aims and scope of the museum while they were working at it. In 1988, in the context of the 25th anniversary of the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Chojnacki described his initial project in these words:

> It was a pleasure to see visitors at the UCAA Library and Museum watching, enchanted, a display of animal heads as well as fully stuffed specimens, including birds, the collection of which was greatly expanded, and in between, pottery, weapons and shields, baskets, agricultural implements and other objects, all shown in a bric-à-brac fashion, but giving an impression of the variety and richness of Ethiopia's environment and craft (Chojnacki, 1990: 30).

This might have meant that the goal of the first Ethiopian university museum was to provide a comprehensive view of “traditional Ethiopia”, and that in this “traditional” (and rural) Ethiopia, humans and animals lived together as part of a whole. But it is also very plausible that Chojnacki's personal project was first driven by the esthetic of the combination of artefacts and animals.

The development of modern research facilities and the influential “hard” sciences

Was Chojnacki’s initial project out of phase in the late 1950s? Starting in the second half of the 1950s, the Addis Ababa University College experienced some institutional changes, partly as an effect of the extra-curricular and progressively recognized scientific activities of its foreign staff members. Specialized research departments in the fields of earth science and biology were created.

From 1957 to 1959, a Geophysical Observatory was installed on the campus with the support of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (Science Faculty, 1980: 137-138). The observatory was part of a worldwide network of such institutions, and contributed to the global observation of tectonic movements. Its foreign staff was part of the Science faculty. A mineral study collection could have been created during this period of emulation (Science Faculty, 1980: 81).

On the biological side, the fore-front of scientific research lay in the fields of botany and forestry. The development of these fields came from the individual project of another foreign staff member, Herbert F. Mooney. A forestry expert from the British colonial government in India and the Middle East, Mooney undertook fieldwork in Ethiopia in the 1950s, and published a first vernacular glossary of Ethiopian plants in 1956 (Mooney, 1956). This was done in the same year he started to work at the Addis Ababa University College to develop a forestry department and a National Herbarium. The National Herbarium officially opened in 1959 and was based on Mooney’s personal specimen collection (Horticultural Society, 1978-1979). This institution, like the Geophysical Observatory, was involved in international cooperation, for example with the Kew Botanical Garden, in England, which provided identification for specimens and
training for the Ethiopian staff (Mooney, 1963: vi). When Mooney retired in 1961, the botanical collection was briefly transferred to Chojnacki, but only in order to await the return of a trained Ethiopian staff member from the United Kingdom (News and Views, 1961b).

During his five years of service at the Addis Ababa University College, Mooney developed his thesis about the need for a “rational” forestry management in Ethiopia based on European models. This had to be done, he wrote, in order “to save the remaining forests of this country from destruction, in spite of the devastation of past centuries and to build up a valuable heritage for future generations” (Mooney, 1959: 5-6). Although this was seriously challenged in the by historical research (McCann, 1995: 31-38; McCann, 1997; Crumney, 1998; Gascon 1998), Mooney’s views about traditionally destructive Ethiopian practices regarding forests have been very influential, and still are today (Nyssen et al., 2015: §3, 8). This thesis was echoed in 1961 in a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Huffnagel, 1961: 395, 405-406).

At this point, “forests” and Ethiopian traditional culture seem to be contradictory “heritages”. Mooney argued that the forest had to be protected from the “bad practices” of “traditional” people. The Ethnological Society, by contrast, defined the conservation of traditional ways as its priority. Despite this contradiction, the environmental conservation issue raised by Mooney seems to have convinced the future staff of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. From the late 1950s to the 1960s, the topic of deforestation appeared frequently in the pages of the *Ethiopia Observer*, an English-language magazine run by the Pankhursts – a family of English scholars and intellectuals, strong supporters of Ethiopia during the Italian-Ethiopian war (1936-1941), and settled in Ethiopia since 1956. Most of the contributors to this publication belonged to the foreign staff of the college and, starting from 1961, the university. The magazine advertised the activities of the Ethnological Society and Chojnacki’s museum project (EthObsUnivCollege, 1958: 199-200, 217-220), and equally gave space to Mooney who got the opportunity to discuss his research on the flora of Ethiopia (Mooney, 1961). Chojnacki revealed himself as sympathetic to the issue of deforestation in Ethiopia. In the first issue of the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, the journal of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, he adopted the arguments of Mooney in an article entitled “Forests and Forestry Problem as Seen by Some Travellers in Ethiopia” (Chojnacki, 1963). The *Ethiopia Observer*’s chief editor Richard Pankhurst discussed the topic in the pages of *Ethiopia Observer* the same year (Pankhurst R., 1963). Chojnacki, as an active member of the Ethiopian Horticultural Society, published another article on this matter in a 1975 issue of the society’s bulletin (Chojnacki, 1975).

After the departure of Mooney, the National Herbarium continued to develop under the direction of new foreign staff (Mesfin Tadesse, 1979: 1). The collection included 6,000 specimens in 1968 (Science Faculty, 1980: 28), and the institution carried on after the Revolution and the replacement of the foreign staff by Ethiopian nationals. After 1974, the National Herbarium kept working through international connections, such as Uppsala University (Sweden), and participated in the creation of the first Ethiopian flora encyclopedia in the 1980s and 1990s. It has to be noted that, while the aims of the Ethnological Society were far from achieved at the beginning of the 1960s, Mooney’s thesis received full acknowledgement from the academic institution. The conservation policy defined by the forestry specialist was undoubtedly closer to the ideal of
modernization promoted by the Ethiopian monarchy than was the preservation of "traditional" culture. The humanities had to adapt themselves to the modernization of academic institutions. The creation of the Institute for Ethiopian Studies in 1963 can be seen as an answer from scholars of the human sciences to the development of strong international research institutions in the Science Faculty.

Chojnacki takes the lead in the Ethiopian cultural heritage policy (1963-1974)

In 1963, the Addis Ababa University College was replaced by the Haile Selassie I University. In the transformation process of the Ethiopian higher education institutions, the creation of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, including an ethnographic museum, was suggested by the last director of the old Addis Ababa University College, the Israeli historian Zvi Yabetz (Pankhurst R. & R., 2013: 107). The process of creating the Natural History Museum, attached to the Science Faculty, was initiated in 1964. The two institutions seem to have followed parallel paths: collections were first constituted as study materials, and progressively became tools to develop a pedagogical discourse about conservation and to advocate for a stronger Ethiopian national policy in this regard – which meant laws and actions to protect cultural artefacts as well as fauna and flora. This role eventually legitimated both museums in the eyes of the Ethiopian authorities.

De facto, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies institutionalized the objectives of the former Ethnological Society. The curator of the new museum, Stanislaw Chojnacki (who moved from the library of the former Addis Ababa University College to the institute at its foundation), declared in 1969 that the role of the institute was to “promote the study of Ethiopian culture” (Tereffe Asrat, 1969: 15). The institute was organized into three departments: research library, ethnographic museum, and publications (Kassa Wolde Mariam, 1963). The publication department started to publish its international journal, the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, in 1963. The British historian Richard Pankhurst was the director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies until 1974 and his replacement by a transitional – and Ethiopian – committee. The clearly defined missions of the institute naturally led to the specialization of its museum, which was now dedicated entirely to the ethnography of Ethiopian peoples. Zoological collections were left to the Science Faculty – a situation that Chojnacki openly regretted twenty-five years later:

The first step was to divide the UCAA collections, the zoological part remaining in the Science Faculty at Arat Kilo Campus. The Danish professor entrusted with setting up the Natural History Museum, insisted on signing an official act of separation. This was duly performed, but the procedure somehow exhausted his energy. All the stuffed animals, as well as the collection of insects I donated to the UC, were packed into one room, and waited there for years to be displayed (Chojnacki, 1980: 32-33).

Despite this loss, the museum was undoubtedly favored by these institutional and localization changes. First, the new Institute of Ethiopian Studies was lodged in a former palace of Haile Selassie, ceded to the University in 1961. This new setting made the ethnographic museum a must-see for official visits, especially of foreign representatives, whose number was increasing with the creation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 (fig. 1). The museum did not benefit from direct support by the Emperor, at least during its first years, but Chojnacki was aware of the Emperor’s
interest in its potential: for foreign, and notably African, leaders visiting the Ethiopian capital, the museum showcased Ethiopian culture (Chojnacki, 2010: 35-36). The collection grew significantly during the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, and welcomed an important donation by the Ministry of Agriculture (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, n.d.) besides numerous gifts from Ethiopians. Starting from the middle of the 1960s, acquisitions reflected the will to achieve legitimacy on two fronts, both in anthropological research and in heritage conservation. The museum worked with foreign anthropologists who were “opening up” new fields in Ethiopia, such as David Turton, Ivo Strecker and Loren Bliese, who participated in the collection of objects from underrepresented cultural groups from the Omo valley and the Afar (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, n.d., vol. 1). The contributions of these agro-pastoralists groups, whose material cultures looked very different from those of the highland agrarian peoples, deeply influenced the new display (fig. 2). The anthropological exhibition was organized around a central “masterpiece”, an Afar tent with elements of a nomadic camp (Chojnacki, 2010: 55). The museum fundamentally tended to reflect the diversity of Ethiopian peoples and environments, although Chojnacki felt that Ethiopia was much more characterized by a certain unity in terms of material culture – a unity he defined by its simplicity (Chojnacki, 1965). He insisted on the educational and conservatory role of his institution (Chojnacki, 1965; Tereffe Asrat, 1969: 16).

Fig. 1. A visit of Queen Sofia of Greece, Queen of Spain, at the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies

FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF GIRMA FISSEHA.
This conservatory dimension was developed during the second half of the 1960s, when Chojnacki adopted a new acquisition policy towards Ethiopian Christian antiquities. This time, the action was coordinated with members of the imperial family (and especially Princess Ruth Desta), and it mobilized a network of Ethiopian social elites and expatriates who came together in the Society of Friends of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (Chojnacki, 2007). The aim of this mobilization was to prevent Ethiopian antiquities from being illegally exported, in a context of a growing demand for Ethiopian art on the international art market (Tereffe Asrat, 1969). Financial donations collected through the society allowed the institute to buy up artefacts from Ethiopian antiquarians. This action gave the museum a prestigious collection wrapped in a strong political message. Indeed, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies assumed an unprecedented public role in salvaging a part of Ethiopian cultural heritage which was seen as having a particular significance in the eyes of the predominantly Christian political and social elite. The institute took over this role from the Department of Antiquities of the Ethiopian government, thus revealing the latter’s inefficiency in terms of legal and practical control over the trade in Ethiopian antiquities. Indeed, in a way it overshadowed the Ethiopian Church itself, which was seen as partly responsible for the dramatic rise of this illegal trade (Chojnacki, 2007; Chojnacki, 2010: 56-57). On October 25th 1968, the Emperor himself approved the action of the Society of Friends by inaugurating the first exhibition of Ethiopian Christian antiquities at the institute (Chojnacki, 2010: 62).
The Natural History Museum: A project linked to the development of national parks (1964-1974)

On the natural science side, the process of building a strong institution promoting natural (and mostly zoological) heritage appears, at first, more chaotic. The Natural History Museum was created as a full-fledged department of the Science Faculty in 1964. It was first directed by a Danish entomologist, Jørgen Birket-Smith, and, starting from 1968, by two zoologists, Emil K. Urban (ornithologist) and M. J. Largen (who published several articles on mammals and amphibians) (Largen, 1969; Natural History Museum, n.d.). They worked together to establish inventories of Ethiopian fauna, and the exhibition was designed to reflect their work. The 1964 project was ambitious. The Natural Herbarium was expected to be included in the Natural History Museum, and other extensions, such as a zoo, an aquarium and a botanical garden, were planned. But none of these sub-projects materialized. The collection which was displayed first in the main Science Faculty building, relied strongly on Chojnacki’s initial work. Between 1966 and 1967, the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation funded the construction of a provisional metal building on the science campus at Arat Kilo (Largen, 1969: 40). The museum targeted primarily a student audience, and seems not to have served for official visits – unlike the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

Starting in the second half of the 1960s, the museum benefited from the activities of its directors who aimed at collecting more specimens in order to enlarge the collection. For example, in 1967, sixty staff members of the Science Faculty collected amphibians in Addis Ababa and its surrounding areas, thus initiating the first collection of Ethiopian amphibians, which was studied in Chicago before being sent back (Urban, 1967). This international connection gave the institution a certain legitimacy in the field of the study of Ethiopian fauna. But the institution remained limited by its infrastructure, until it moved back into the Science Faculty building, where a proper gallery was finally opened at the end of the 1960s. In 1969, Largen published his intentions, as director of the museum, in the first issue of the journal Walia, published by a newly created public institution, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organization. In this article, the director bound his own museum to the current development of a strong policy regarding the conservation of Ethiopian fauna through the creation of national parks, realized during the second half of the 1960s. Largen intended to make his museum part of this policy, through its role as the main pedagogical tool in this regard (Largen, 1969: 40). Since the museum had to be attractive enough to attract wider attention, Largen commissioned an artist for the realization of dioramas representing the various Ethiopian environments, following the pattern of natural history museums in Europe and America (Largen, 1969: 40) (fig. 3 and 4).

The display of the Natural History Museum has been kept as it was since the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution. It looks like a conventional zoological gallery, including sections presenting in a separate way each major zoological group: marine and land invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds – although some beautiful stuffed specimens seem to have been placed where they are now for esthetic reasons. The museum also includes an introductory room that explicitly lays out the objectives of the museum: raising awareness on issues related to wildlife conservation, and especially endangered animal species.
Fig. 3. The bird section of the Natural History Museum

Fig. 4. The introductory room of the Natural History Museum
The textual contents of this room seem to have been directly derived from Leslie H. Brown's work – mentioned above. As an invited lecturer at the Science Faculty of Haile Selassie I University in 1971, Brown was a collaborator of Largen. Brown's talks were published at the university press in 1973 under the title: *Conservation for Survival. Ethiopia's Choice*. This book includes a preface by Kassa Wolde Mariam, the Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture who patronized Brown's work. At the beginning of the 1970s, Brown's book, Largen's publication, the display of the Natural History Museum and Kassa Wolde Mariam jointly constituted the Ethiopian wildlife conservation policy. It is interesting to note that, in the meantime, the Ministry of Agriculture supported the development of the IES Museum through important donations. The two conservation policies – of wildlife and of “traditional” material culture – seemed to go hand in hand, as pointed out by Brown in 1966, in the journal *Nature and Resources* published by UNESCO, where he presented the plan supported by UNESCO to enhance the natural heritage conservation policy in Ethiopia. In conclusion, he wrote:

> More important still, perhaps, the attack on the wildlife conservation situation may have far-reaching effects in educating the public to greater appreciation of the need for a widely based conservation policy in Ethiopia, including forests, scenery, habitats for animals, plants, and man – and historical and religious monuments, with all of which Ethiopia is so richly endowed (Brown, 1966: 9).

The Natural History Museum thus constituted an accompanying instrument for governmental measures related to the creation and reinforcement of the Ethiopian national parks. It can be said that the Natural History Museum found its “usefulness” in “educating the public” – and the Ethiopian elites – about conservation issues, thus following the lead of the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

Interestingly, nothing of this kind seems to have been achieved with regard to flora, although the idea was undoubtedly in the air. M.G. Gilbert, the director of the National Herbarium who succeeded H.F. Mooney after his departure, wrote two articles between 1973 and 1974 that aimed at emphasizing the role of his institution in a conservation policy devoted to plants (Gilbert, 1973-1974; Gilbert, 1974). Gilbert contrasted the popularity of the *Walia ibex* – which became the symbol of Ethiopian endangered species in the 1960s – and the lack of knowledge about threatened plant species. In making this point, Gilbert highlighted the lack of a tool comparable to the Natural History Museum for issues concerning plant conservation. The National Herbarium was – and still is – a research institution without a showcase. Gilbert was undoubtedly particularly well aware of the prevailing necessity to link fundamental research institutions to the conservation policies promoted by UNESCO, and aware that this link could give him the possibility of a more direct dialogue with Ethiopian authorities. The idea of connecting the National Herbarium to public outreach survived the Revolution and the departure of the foreign staff, and in 1976-1977, Getachew Aweke, an Ethiopian botanist, suggested – without success – the creation of a public botanical garden (including an arboretum and greenhouses) after a long study leave at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands (Getachew Aweke, 1976-1977).

**Conclusion**

During the years preceding the Revolution, both of the university museums of Addis Ababa, at the time clearly separated in terms of specialization, remained associated in...
the promotion of a stronger Ethiopian conservation policy devoted to nature as well as culture. Initiated by foreign individuals with various agendas, these institutions found their way in the Ethiopian intellectual landscape by conveying a common political message, inspired by worldwide concerns about endangered animals as well as disappearing cultural productions. They accompanied and sometimes anticipated the growing interest of the Ethiopian government in these questions. The two museums justified their existence through this pedagogical mission, following the same procedure and goals. In 1969, Largen, the director of the Natural History Museum, defined three objectives for his institution: the establishment of reference collections, the promotion of publications on Ethiopian wild fauna, and the development of the educational role of the museum towards a wider audience including students, grade-schoolers and non-school attenders (Largen, 1969: 41-44). In 1973, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies defined itself in terms of the collection and study of Ethiopian material culture, but still saw as its main objective the widening of its audience (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1973). At the beginning of the 1970s, Chojnacki discussed the role of his museum and singled out the younger generation as its main targeted audience, insisting on the importance of transmission (Chojnacki, 1971: 7-9).

In the 1960s and 1970s, international institutions such as UNESCO strongly supported the conservation policy of the Ethiopian government; but this support was realized locally by the apparently isolated but ultimately convergent initiatives of foreign scholars established on the Addis Ababa campus. These scholars, trained abroad, came to speak the “language of heritage” and interacted at least indirectly with the Ethiopian government and, sometimes, anticipated it. Their museums represented the first steps towards a heavier investment by the Ethiopian authorities in the international heritage sector, which was symbolized by the inclusion of the Lalibela churches and the Simien Mountains National Park in the UNESCO world heritage list in 1978 – after the Revolution. In this post-revolutionary context, foreign experts were no longer dominant in the Ethiopian academia, but they maintained a strong influence through the international institutions.

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