Building up Ethiopian heritage institutions

For centuries knowledge of Ethiopian history was produced at royal courts and in religious institutions, both of which have contributed to laying the foundations of a modern, essentialist tradition of national historiography. Written accounts of political events in the Aksumite kingdom date back to the seventh century BC and include factual as well as entirely celebratory stories. The supposed genesis of Ethiopian history from a civilising mission of the Semitic Arabian kingdom of the Sabaeans around 1000 BC is the grand narrative conveyed by this mainstream historiography. By the beginning of the twentieth century it would come to dominate the self-perception of Ethiopians as well as the world’s image of the country. Thus, Ethiopian historiography of the early twentieth century was in large parts based on and continuing this imperial tradition. Many of the historical writings that appeared during this period were centred around “celebrating the agents, values, and institutions of the Solomonid imperial order”.

Western Ethiopian Studies and the rise of academic and state historiography in Ethiopia

In the late nineteenth century, a growing number of archaeological, paleontological, anthropological and, more generally, scientific expeditions travelled to Ethiopia, often with the support of European colonial empires eager to explore new territories for colonial expansion by gathering information about the isolated and protectionist empire. These expeditions often served as starting points for a broader production of Western knowledge about Ethiopia, since, for the first time, information about Ethiopia was available to an audience that transcended scholarly circles. The early twentieth century saw the establishment of Ethiopian Studies as an academic discipline in many Western countries. The focus of this nascent discipline was on linguistics and theology or a combination of both as much of the research centred around the comparative study of early

286 de Lorenzi, Guardians of the Tradition, 13.
287 Such as the Deutsche Aksum Expedition, Asfa-Wossen Asserate, “Äthiopien vor 100 Jahren”, in Im Kaiserlichen Auftrag: Die Deutsche Aksum-Expedition 1906 unter Enno Littmann, ed. Steffen Wenig, vol. 2: Altertumskundliche Untersuchungen der DAE in Tigray/Äthiopien (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2011), 29–34.
Christian manuscripts.²⁸⁸ Many Western scholars were intrigued by the existence of an enclave of early Christian tradition on the African continent, while also drawing on the classical trope of Ethiopia as the faraway land of early European historiography, which has found its classical expression in the writings of Homer and Herodotus, who had already reported on a powerful, wealthy and impressive empire. According to this historiography, from the origins of this Nubian kingdom the Ethiopian Empire developed, first, into the Aksumite empire and then into the Abyssinian kingdom of medieval times, while at the same time resisting the rise of Islam in the surrounding area. All of this came to be viewed as the continuous story of the Ethiopian Empire from ancient times to the present, with particular emphasis placed on the Christian undercurrent in Ethiopian history. The legendary origin of Aksum was attributed to the story of the Queen of Saba, King Solomon of Israel, and their son, Menelik I, who stole the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to found Ethiopian Christianity and lend its name to the Solomid Dynasty. Among Europeans the “Prester John” myth was repeatedly associated with Ethiopia from the fourteenth century onward. According to this legend, an idealised version of unspoiled Christian tradition had miraculously been preserved in a remote African location.²⁸⁹ Places, events and traditions deemed historically relevant by Ethiopian elites did not differ much from those cherished by Western scholars but, rather, seemed to confirm their preconceived ideas.²⁹⁰ Western research interests from the seventeenth century elaborated an “orientalist-semiticist” paradigm, which not only reflected the Great Tradition of the Ethiopian empire but argued for racial and ethnic origins of Ethiopia in the Middle East.²⁹¹ This genealogy, in the eyes of Ethiopianist scholars, explained the supremacy of Ethiopian Christian culture internally, towards other population groups, and externally, towards Black African people.²⁹² Western Ethiopian Studies actualised and complemented the Aksumite paradigm of Ethiopian Orthodox ecclesiastical scholarship, that tied Ethiopian history to

²⁸⁸ For an overview see the contributions in Rainer Voigt, ed., Die äthiopischen Studien im 20. Jahrhundert: Akten der internationalen äthiopischen Tagung Berlin 22. bis 24. Juli 2000 / Ethiopian Studies in the 20th century (Aachen: Shaker, 2003); Maria Rait and Vladimir Vigand, “Genesis of the Ethiopian Studies and Its Future Trends”, in Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto, 12–17 December 1997, ed. Katsuyoshi Fukui, Eisei Kurimoto, and Masayoshi Shigeta, vol. 1, 3 vols (Kyoto: Shokado Book Sellers, 2008), 242–46.

²⁸⁹ Levine, Greater Ethiopia, 6–8, 15–19.

²⁹⁰ Teshale Tibebo, The Making of Modern Ethiopia, xvii.

²⁹¹ Teshale Tibebo, xii.

²⁹² Edward Ullendorff, The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 32; Teshale Tibebo, The Making of Modern Ethiopia, 76.
the dominating trajectories of biblical mythology, a tradition of scripture and relative geographical isolation of the highland communities. Closely connected to this grand narrative was the proclaimed exceptionalism of Ethiopian historical development, which had resulted in the emergence of what Westerners and Ethiopian elites considered Africa's only advanced civilisation.

Emperor Menelik II, whose reign spanned the period between 1889 and 1913, already had a very clear-cut vision of the Ethiopian Empire as a modern nation state, and followed a “politics of ruins” as part of his overall plan. He sought to complement the official and vernacular historicist writings of Ethiopian intellectuals with the material reality of historical monuments and sites reminiscent of the Christian empire. To this end he commissioned systematic research into church ruins. Such research extended in particular over those territories, which were the core of the renewed imperial expansion, but had a predominantly Islamic population. In some places, ruins were excavated and revived as places of faith, often accompanied by the building of a new church near the remains of an old one. In other places remnants of royal buildings were excavated and then connected to existing churches or monasteries in the vicinity. Bertrand Hirsch and François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar have provided an in-depth analysis of these and other policies implemented by Menelik II. They have also demonstrated parallels between his vision and the European model of creating national identities which emerged during the nineteenth century. Nationalist cultural politics fused language, folkloristic traditions, architecture and the conservation of antiquities into a collective patrimony and a national identity, which were conceptualised in reference to a constructed communal past of all citizens. An important trait of this shared past was its relation to a concrete historical population, such as the Celts, the Hellenic people, the Romans – or, in the Ethiopian case, the Aksumites.

Contrary to the European nations, however, Ethiopia was lacking the “ideological apparatus” of press, universal expositions and the communities and networks of collectors and invested bourgeoisie. At this point, the national project in Ethiopia and several European imperial projects crossed paths in their shared interest in locating early traces of civilisation, whiteness and Christianity in

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293 There are also racist implications regarding the idea of a “Semitic” Culture. See Tibebu's overview: Teshale Tibebu, The Making of Modern Ethiopia, xvi, xx.
294 Bertrand Hirsch and François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar, “Aksum après Aksum. Royauté, archéologie et herméneutique chrétienne de Ménélik II (r. 1865–1913) à Zä'rab Yä'qob (r. 1434–1468)”, Annales d’Éthiopie 17, no. 1 (2001): 60, https://doi.org/10.3406/ethio.2001.991.
295 Ibid., 60 – 63.
296 Ibid, 64.
Ethiopia. In 1906, Menelik II requested the help of a German archaeological expedition to Aksum, which resulted in the first large-scale excavations of ancient monuments in Ethiopia. In connection with the historiographical sources from earlier periods, archaeologists focused on exploring the monumental remains of these ancient and medieval empires. From a Western viewpoint, the increase of archaeological research in Ethiopia equalled a “discovery of the Christian Ethiopia”. From an Ethiopian viewpoint, these research collaborations continued a tradition of diplomatic relations initiated by Ethiopians with European imperial powers, turning European expectations of a legendary Christian kingdom in Africa to their own advantage. For centuries, Ethiopians had managed to realise their interest in technological exchange by contributing to the creation of an “Ethiopianist library” in Europe.

Many Europeans who travelled to Ethiopia undertook studies about the Ethiopian wildlife and natural history in the broader sense, covering everything from animal and plant species, via geology and geomorphological formations, to the exploration of natural resources. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many researchers practised a generalist approach to studying and collecting, guided by personal interests and chance encounters just as much as by specialised scientific research questions. From the twentieth century on, a number of US-American and European Museum and exhibition projects expanded their systematic natural history collections. During 1926–27 Field-Museum-Chicago Daily News Abyssinian Expedition collected animal and plant specimens, among them 1000 bird skins alone, following the latest scientific practices, including observation, preparation and painting and zoological and botanical categorisations. In the context of the French ethnographic Dakar-Djibouti Mission, which traversed northern and central Ethiopia between 1932 and 1933, animal specimens were collected to be exhibited in museums in France. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Western production of knowledge on Ethiopia was established more firmly in the institutional landscape of European academia, while the community of scholars grew constantly. After the Italian occupation of Ethiopia had ended in 1941, the activities of European, American and Japanese researchers began to increase and expand beyond linguistics and theology, traditionally the core areas of Ethiopian Studies in the West.

297 Derricourt, Inventing Africa, 105.
298 Jean Leclant, Découverte de l’Éthiopie chrétienne (Paris: Archeologia, 1975).
299 Salvadore, “Knowledge”, 4.
300 Thomas Guindeuil, “Nature, culture, même combat? Sciences et conservation sur le campus d’Addis-Abeba (1950–1974)”, Études rurales 197, no. 1 (2016): 129, https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.10679.
paleo-anthropological studies identified promising territories with an abundance of pre-historic fossils to be explored in the Ethiopian part of the East African Rift Valley, where some of the earliest remains of human life on Earth could be found. From the 1950s on, ethnographers and anthropologists started to study the cultures and societies of “ethnic units” or “tribes”, in particular in Southern Ethiopia. This is one of the reasons why, in the following decades, a broad institutional framework for conservation of both nature and culture was put into place. In addition to the archaeological sites from the classical and medieval periods, natural and prehistoric sites now became part of the established national heritage. These new research interests went well with Ethiopia’s international political representation, in which the emphasis on Ethiopia’s exceptionalism as Africa’s oldest empire played a crucial role.

**Establishing cultural and natural governance in Ethiopia through heritage institutions**

The history of the Ethiopian natural and cultural heritage institutions illustrates the need for a strategic integration of foreign expertise and knowledge production into the nascent institutional landscape of the modern Ethiopian state and the important role UNESCO played in this process. In the context of strategic state transformation under Haile Selassie I towards a bureaucratic, constitutional monarchy, new institutions were established for many areas of government responsibility. Between 1943 and 1966, fourteen new state ministries were installed. They were soon to be complemented by a large number of specialised agencies for intersectoral concerns which required more technical expertise, such as highways, aviation, electricity or tourism. The cultural and natural heritage-related institutions that were created during this time should be analysed not only as parts of the transformation of government, but also as part of a more encompassing cultural governance system. Thomas Schmitt has analysed how the gradual institutionalisation of conservation of cultural heritage in the Algerian M’zab Valley, and the global institution UNESCO (and eventually the World Heritage programme) have structured political change at the local

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301 Levine, *Greater Ethiopia*, 19; Gascon and Pourtier, *La Grande Éthiopie*, 14.
302 Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, xlix, 1; Delphine Lecoutre, “L’Éthiopie et l’Afrique”, in *L’Éthiopie contemporaine*, ed. Gérard Prunier (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 160–66.
303 Christopher S. Clapham, Siegfried Pausewang, and Paulos Milkias, “Government”, in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 865–66; Bahru Zewde, *A History*, 201–9; Teshale Tibeju, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, 120–24.
level. Building on this, a similar analytical approach is useful to gain a better understanding of the genesis of Ethiopian heritage sites. In addition to this interdependence, or in Schmitt’s words “dialectic”, of global-local, in Ethiopia the national level has to be included as another level of analysis.\(^{304}\) Studying the actors and mechanisms beyond national state institutions makes the wider societal and political regulation of cultural and natural heritage visible. For this cultural and natural governance in Ethiopia, a key element was to institutionalise knowledge production as a state domain in the educational, scientific and cultural sectors and to bring in technical expertise from Western countries. Tracing the construction of Ethiopian national heritage as part of this institutionalisation over several decades until the 1970s allows us to observe how foreign researchers, an emerging Ethiopian elite, a growing bureaucratic apparatus and UNESCO all contributed to install heritage-making as a state domain, to define which historical remains and natural sites were considered national heritage, and which weren’t.

The research expeditions of the nineteenth century also marked a starting point for a project of political and technological modernisation in Ethiopian history, as international technical cooperation projects took place in relation to these expeditions. In order to obtain the imperial permission for expeditions of this kind, intensive diplomatic efforts were necessary. Since the Ethiopian imperial government was interested in technical cooperation of any kind, European states sent high-ranking experts to evaluate the possible economic potential and establish a positive relationship with the Ethiopian imperial government.\(^{305}\) European researchers, missionaries and civil servants worked as consultants for the imperial government and served in diplomatic missions for their respective countries of origin. As part of these diplomatic exchanges, support for the creation of state cultural institutions was negotiated, meaning that the first national museum and other cultural institutions had been established in the context of diplomatic strategies and with the help of foreign expertise from around 1900 on.

Existing religious and cultural traditions of conserving and declaring heritage were contested and claimed as an imperial state affair during the government of Emperor Menelik II, whose policies were motivated by his dual attempt to consolidate imperial power while also creating a modern nation state. The national archive was founded in 1908, together with a ministerial system as an el-

\(^{304}\) Schmitt, Cultural Governance, 56–57, 95–97.

\(^{305}\) For example the Swiss engineer Alfred Ilg: Elisabeth Biasio, Prunk und Pracht am Hofe Menileks: Alfred Ilgs Äthiopien um 1900 / Majesty and Magnificence at the Court of Menilek (Zürich: Verlag NZZ, 2004), 80–87.
lement of the imperial government, and later merged with the government library whose establishment goes back to the Italian occupation government. The first diplomatic collaboration engaged upon by the Ethiopian imperial government was with the French Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Between 1922 and 1926, the French Capuchin François Bernardin Azais negotiated, on behalf of the French government, an agreement between the two states in which the French side was granted permission for archaeological excavations in the empire in exchange for setting up an Ethiopian national museum and establishing a system of classification and collection of objects at the imperial court. These negotiations took place in 1930, under the aegis of Ras Tafari, the future Emperor Haile Selassie I. Ras Tafari had a close-knit relationship with the French Capuchins, some of whom had served as his private teachers. The museum never took shape in its intended form, as the Italian invasion and the following years of occupation forced the emperor into exile where he remained until 1941. While the Italian government had created some cultural institutions and also undertaken some restoration works in Gondar, it had also removed a number of valuable antiquities from the country, the most notable being a large stela from Aksum (also known as the Aksum Obelisk). The restitution of cultural heritage items was part of the 1947 peace treaty Italy signed between Ethiopia and a number of other states, but the economic situation of Ethiopia and lack of adequate state institutions made it difficult to realise the restitution, which would only take place many decades later, in 2005.

The National Library and Archives (NALE), founded in 1944, were among the first cultural governance institutions created by Haile Selassie I in the framework of his nation-building politics. It comprised archival functions, a museum and an archaeological section. During the 1950s and 1960s, several more museums and research institutions were created: the ethnological museum and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) were established together with the first Ethiopian university, Haile Selassie I University, later renamed Addis Ababa University. The National Museum, the Natural History Museum in Addis Ababa and the Archaeological Museum and Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Asmara (Eritrea) also arose from these cultural institutionalisation politics. In parallel to the creation of cul-

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306 Solomon Gebreyes Beyene, *A History of Cultural Heritage Management in Ethiopia (1944–1974): Aspects of Cultural Heritage Management in Ethiopia* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010), 18–21.
307 Amélie Chekroun, “Un Archéologue Capucin En Éthiopie (1922–1936): François Bernardin Azaïs”, *Afriques*, January 27, 2011, 5–6, http://journals.openedition.org/afriques/785.
308 Richard Pankhurst, “Ethiopia, the Aksum Obelisk, and the Return of Africa’s Cultural Heritage”, *African Affairs* 98, no. 391 (1999): 229–39.
tural institutions in charge of antiquities, legislation was introduced in 1966 and complemented by two executive orders in 1966 and 1974, to provide a legal definition of antiquities and a legal ground to executively safeguard antiquities and prevent illicit trade. To increase capacities for monitoring and handling antiquities, the French-Ethiopian cooperation initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century was further advanced in 1952 with the foundation, through a bilateral agreement, of the “Institut éthiopien d’études et de recherches”. The “Institut”, although financed largely by the French government and hosted by the National Archives, was to be part of the Ethiopian government and its newly formed archaeological section. The “Institut” was officially entrusted to establish a collaboration of French and Ethiopian archaeologists, paleo-anthropologists, art historians and historians. However, the majority of researchers remained French for many years. The “Institut”’s activities covered all areas of research as well as the collection and exhibition of monuments and artefacts. Its foundation marked a starting point of the first systematic effort to survey Ethiopian archaeological sites.³⁰⁹

On the Ethiopian side, this research programme was part of a newly emerging school of Ethiopian state historiography, which aimed to write Ethiopian history into the Western, Eurocentric world history. The leading argument of this world history was that Western civilisation had been shaped by the antagonism of its superior philosophical ideals and its failed historical realities. Ethiopia, on the other hand, was considered unequalled in terms of “moral civilization”,³¹⁰ but in dire need of modernization to become an internationally recognized nation-state, for which it depended on the study of Western civilisation and the support of Western nations. Kebbede Mikael, the author of *Ethiopia and Western Civilisation*, the seminal book on new Ethiopian world history, would serve as the first director of the “Institut”’s archaeological section and co-editor, alongside the French archaeologist Jean Leclant, of the “Institut”’s academic journal, the *Annales d’Ethiopie*.³¹¹ The museums, the university and research institutes were modelled after European institutions and directed and staffed by a large number of expatriate academics from Europe and the USA and by the first, small, cohort of Ethiopian scholars trained in Western universities. Giovanni de Lorenzi understands the 1950s as a watershed moment in Ethiopian Studies, for it was then that Ethiopian scholars began to combine their Western training

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³⁰⁹ Kebede Mikael and Jean Leclant, “La section d’archéologie (1952–1955)”, *Annales d’Éthiopie* 1 (1955): 1–10.
³¹⁰ de Lorenzi, *Guardians of the Tradition*, 115.
³¹¹ Ibid., 114–15.
with their intimate knowledge of Ethiopian languages and cultures to implement new methods and research frameworks, thereby “indigenising” Ethiopian Studies.³¹²

The evolution of the governance over natural resources is more fragmented, and also less documented to date. The environmental, wildlife and natural protection in Ethiopia concerned several branches of government and stretched over several institutions. More recently, scholars have suggested that the century-old tradition of church forests can be considered the origin of natural conservation institutions in Ethiopia. The groves and communities in the direct periphery of Ethiopian Orthodox churches were considered sacred ground, which brought Menelik II to pass comprehensive regulations of forest use when Ethiopia faced a firewood shortage at the beginning of the twentieth century.³¹³ While the first regulations concerning the protection of wildlife and hunting regulations, especially for big game, date back to 1909, wildlife reserves were delineated for the first time during the Italian occupation in 1930, and more elaborate game regulations were defined subsequently by Haile Selassie I in 1944. These regulations would eventually include a selection of endangered species that were excluded from game hunting.³¹⁴ In their designation and implementation, these controlled hunting areas resembled those of the neighbouring British colonies, indicating that the idea to install protected natural zones as part of the national project was conceived of during Haile Selassie’s time in British exile from 1936 to 1941.³¹⁵ In 1966, the first three proposed areas for national parks were established in the Awash Valley about 200 kilometres east of Addis Ababa, the Simien Mountains in north-eastern Ethiopia and the Bale Mountains, 250 kilometres south of Addis Ababa.³¹⁶

From the 1960s onwards, a range of government institutions which were concerned with natural conservation were founded, including the Ministry of Agriculture, the Game Department and the Forestry Authority. Ethiopia had been in sight of the network of former colonial African Wildlife researchers-turned-inter-

³¹² Ibid., 118–19.
³¹³ Izabela Orlowska and Peter Klepeis, “Ethiopian Church Forests: A Socio-Religious Conservation Model under Change”, Journal of Eastern African Studies 12, no. 4 (2018): 674, 677, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2018.1519659; interview with Hans Hurni, May 12, 2015, Berne (CH).
³¹⁴ Jesse Hillman, “Ethiopia: Compendium of Wildlife Conservation Information, Vol. 2”, 1993, 11–13, EWCO library; Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”, 3.
³¹⁵ Guillaume Blanc, Une histoire environnementale de la nation: regards croisés sur les parcs nationaux du Canada, d’Éthiopie et de France (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015), 180.
³¹⁶ Ministry of Agriculture Planning Committee, Third Five-Year Development Plan (Addis Ababa, 1967), 5.
national-conservation-advocates who sought to rescue and protect the African wildlife from poaching, farming and potential industrialisation. When one of their members, Julian Huxley, became the first DG of UNESCO, he was able to leverage his position to shape the environmental agenda of international organisations and to direct funds towards conservation work. Organised through the IUCN and the FAO, in a number of preparatory missions and conferences, experts visited African governments, among them the Ethiopian, and explained in detail which areas and species were threatened the most in their eyes. They also outlined regulations for environmental protection. As a consequence of this, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation (EWCO) was established in 1964. It would eventually become the most important institution in terms of Ethiopian natural heritage. As with the archaeological institute, the EWCO was formally established as a part of a ministry, in this case the ministry of agriculture, but was directed and later supported by foreign experts, who outnum-bered their Ethiopian colleagues. Foreign experts were not only vital in running the EWCO but also as head managers or wardens of national parks. A primary responsibility for the experts in these positions was monitoring and mapping wildlife, as well as the systematic documentation according to the standards and guidelines of the international organisations, such as IUCN and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). These organisations would often act as sponsors for experts to undertake these tasks. From 1965 to 1971, John Blower, a former British Colonial Senior Park Warden and wildlife advisor from Kenya, served as a Wildlife Conservation Advisor and Senior Game Warden and the first head of EWCO. In line with his training, prior expertise, and the prevailing spirit of the international natural conservation organisations at that time, Blower promoted a concept of wildlife protection that revealed a traditional colonial understanding. He focused on the establishment of national parks and game reserves

317 Anna-Katharina Wöbse, “Framing the Heritage of Mankind: National Parks on the International Agenda”, in Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective, ed. Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 148.
318 Riney, T., and P. Hill. “FAO/IUCN African Special Project – Interim Report on Ethiopia”. Rome: FAO, 1963.
319 Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”, 8; today the institution is called Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA).
320 Hillman, “Compendium of Wildlife Conservation”, 11–14.
321 Interview with Hans Hurni, May 12, 2015, Berne (CH); Hillman, 13; Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”, 7–9.
in order to disable interference from their indigenous inhabitants.³²² He undertook extensive surveys to build up the database necessary for zoning and other conservation measures and where necessary commissioned a number of biologists for survey work such as his fellow countryman Melvin Bolton, who spent over five years visiting most of Ethiopia to conduct preliminary ecological surveys to identify new game reserves and remaining wildlife resources.³²³

**Foreign research interests and the creation of Ethiopian heritage institutions**

Together with the establishment of modern state institutions for culture, heritage and heritage-making were institutionalised in museums, research and conservation institutes. Both Ethiopian and foreign scholars and experts who participated in this process shared an understanding of heritage-related knowledge production and the role they assigned to state institutions. In a way, the institutionalisation and evolving heritage governance which occurred in Ethiopia since the 1950s shows many parallels to the development Anne Eriksen has studied for Norway between the mid-eighteenth and the late twentieth centuries. In focusing on the discursive practices surrounding the changing relevance of historical remains in society and politics, she describes the gradual, not always linear shift from antiquities to heritage over a period of one hundred and fifty years. Of particular importance, she explains, were changing regimes of historicity. When in the nineteenth century the assumption of history as a process of change became more widely accepted, specialised academic disciplines were established on this premise, all intended to bring empirical evidence for development and progress. Monuments, natural icons such as certain sites or species and objects, arranged and displayed in museums served as metonymies of national history.³²⁴ Bearing in mind the composition of the academic landscape in Ethiopia in the 1950s, which comprised US and European scholars and a select few national elites, the heritage discourse and the role of heritage institutions were shaped by a shared understanding of world history and Ethiopia’s place in it. Centred around the campus of the Addis Ababa University College / Haile Selassie I University, an academic community united by a general interest in Ethiopian heritage

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³²² Guillaume Blanc, “Violence et incohérence en milieu naturel: une histoire du parc éthiopien du Semên”, *Études rurales* 197, no. 1 (2016): 149–52, https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.10691; see also ch. 4.4.

³²³ Melvin Bolton, *Ethiopian Wildlands* (London: Collins and Harvill, 1976), 18.

³²⁴ Anne Eriksen, *From Antiquities to Heritage: Transformations of Cultural Memory* (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 24–25.
began to emerge in 1952 when Stanislaw Chojnacki, the librarian of the AAUC, started collecting ethnographic objects and zoological specimens, in a curiosity-cabinet kind of way, with the intention to establish a museum for Ethiopian tradition and culture.\textsuperscript{325} Chojnacki was not alone in his opinion that the academic community lacked institutions, organisations and structures and out of the scholarly community grew a vibrant scene of associations, societies, journals and magazines, some of which would have a short lifespan, although others are still in print, such as the \textit{Journal of Ethiopian Studies}, issued by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. It is important to keep in mind that the academics who organised and met through these fora would all go on to become key figures in Ethiopian academia and other government institutions. Foreigners who were admitted into these circles would contribute a great deal to the international reputation of the Ethiopian academia. For example, one of the most important periodicals up to 1974, the \textit{Ethiopia Observer}, was edited by the British historian Richard Pankhurst, who served as the first director of the IES. The \textit{Ethiopia Observer} was published and distributed both in the United Kingdom and in Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{326}

Upon opening the university proper in 1963, many of these more personally motivated practices of collecting and preserving within the different academic disciplines coalesced into a more clearly shaped effort to create separate museums dedicated to particular aspects of national heritage, both cultural and natural. The collections became gradually more systematic. They had two aims, first to educate the public about the need for conservation, and, second, to showcase the Ethiopian nation to official visitors. In 1963, together with the IES, the Ethnographic Museum was opened in the premises of the IES, with a research library. To underline the central role of museums in the national project, the IES and its museum were housed in a former imperial palace. The archaeological museum was installed in a newly erected building, near the NALE compound, which was inaugurated for the crown jubilee in 1955.\textsuperscript{327} In 1964, the Natural History Museum was founded. It finally opened in 1969, in a new building of the faculty of sciences.\textsuperscript{328} The exhibition in the museum was installed by Leslie Brown, a member of the New York Zoological Society, who had served as an advisor to several

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{325} Guindeuil, “Nature, culture, même combat? “, 128–29.
  \item \textsuperscript{326} Ibid., 132.
  \item \textsuperscript{327} Kebede Geleta Terefe, “The Evolution of Archaeological Research and Research Monitoring Institute in Ethiopia: The Case of the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCCH)” (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2008); Kebede Mikael and Leclant, “La section d’archéologie (1952–1955)”.
  \item \textsuperscript{328} Guindeuil, “Nature, culture, même combat?”, 141.
\end{itemize}
African countries for IUCN and UNESCO in the 1960s and 1970s. His case might serve to illustrate the close-knit nature of the heritage-making community in Ethiopia during that time. He acted as an advisor for EWCO in 1964 and 1965, taught at the university in Addis Ababa and developed teaching material for future university courses, most notably *Conservation for survival – Ethiopia’s choice*.329

The compound effect of UNESCO’s involvement

Despite this vibrant intellectual life in Addis Ababa, however, many of the heritage-related measures did not meet the requirements for official heritage responsibilities. Establishing the first national parks and protected natural zones initially amounted to little more than a formality, as the government did not have the means to execute the plans it had signed up to – at least this is what the first generation of foreign consultants and observers expressed in the concluding recommendations of their reports.330 As was the case with the cultural heritage institutions, an ongoing shortage of resources also impaired natural conservation. Equipment and infrastructure, whether it was cars, guns, roads, radio communication, were lacking. A shortage of staff meant that many posts such as guards, rangers and district managers were left unoccupied. Trained personnel, skilled management staff, financial and technical equipment were insufficient or non-existent and consequently these institutions lacked the necessary bureaucratic efficiency to achieve the desired impact. The NALE and all institutions that were created in the following decades had in common that foreign experts remained in charge of a large part of the activities.331 Similarly, the legislation remained ineffective as it suffered from a lack of executive means and further detailed regulations and definitions.332 At times, the national skills shortage was particularly negative for the cultural institutions. A recurrent theme in the correspondence between the UNESCO field office and headquarters was consultants complaining about having to recruit from a small pool of trained nationals deemed sufficiently loyal to the government. This meant that, below upper management level, filling positions in the heritage institutions was particularly

329 Leslie H. Brown, *Conservation for Survival – Ethiopia’s Choice* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, 1973).
330 Brown; Grimwood, “Conservation of Natural Resources”; Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”.
331 Ibid.; Kebede Geleta Terefe, “Evolution”, 30 – 36.
332 Eugeniusz Gasiorowski, “Legislation for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Ethiopia – (Mission) [Serial No. FMR/CC/CH/81/119]” (Paris: UNESCO, 1981), 2.
difficult and enjoyed a lower priority than the perpetuation of an official heritage portfolio. In addition, training national heritage expertise on a larger scale was virtually impossible – the first archaeology courses at Haile Selassie I University were introduced in the 1970s. The nearest opportunity to train wildlife rangers was at the Mweka College in Tanzania, but the number of Ethiopians trained there was nowhere near sufficient to provide for the vast territories established as protected natural zones. In short, for a number of reasons, from the beginning on, all of the Ethiopian heritage institutions were dependent on international experts to operate properly as well as to further develop.

The 1960s and 1970s were comprised of a highly active, dense series of international engagements that would form a vital contribution to the Ethiopian national heritage-making process. In addition to bilateral efforts, the creation of heritage institutions was notably accelerated through UNESCO’s involvement. Obtaining external financial aid was a key working principle of the museums, the NALE, CRCCH and EWCO, as not enough substantial national funding for them was available, and UNESCO and the UNDP, as well as the IUCN, were, during the 1960s and 1970s, the most important donors. This was not necessarily because of the rather modest amounts of money that were directed towards Ethiopian heritage institutions, a far more important reason being that UNESCO was in a much better position to recruit international experts. The activities of UNESCO did not stop at concrete restoration projects, such as the one in Lalibela, but went far beyond. Heritage-related activities included the full range of UNESCO’s possible means of assistance, such as the award of fellowships and provision of technical equipment. Consultants commissioned by UNESCO also developed detailed recommendations for the creation of a full-bodied institutional infrastructure to enable state-led conservation, including draft legislation for the protection of antiquities and the demarcation of protected natural zones, measures the Ethiopian government had struggled to implement.

In the archives of UNESCO, twenty-four mission reports document the numerous and intense activities that took place between 1965 and 1985. The increase in international activity and available funds turned to the advantage of those embryonic Ethiopian institutions concerned with natural and cultural her-

333 Training in Mweka was only for assistant and ranger level, not managerial level; fellowship applications and training programme in: UNESCO 069:7(100) A 218; Hillman, “Compendium of Wildlife Conservation”, 8.
334 UNDP/ETH/74/014, Terminal Report; a lot of the correspondence between the respective departments at UNESCO, the UNDP Resident Representative in Addis Ababa and the Chief Technical Advisor of the ETH/74/014 Project regarded the specifics and possibilities of the requests that Ethiopia could fruitfully file, in: UNESCO 069:72 (36) A 136.
itage conservation and effectively delivered a substantial contribution towards
the establishment of Ethiopian national heritage, as often through a UNESCO
project some theoretical planning could be put into practice. For wildlife and
natural conservation, in 1963, 1965 and 1971, successive UNESCO missions led
by Julian Huxley, Ian Grimwood, Leslie Brown and John Blower respectively evaluated and developed “tools of conservation”\(^{335}\) for the Ethiopian government. These “tools” pertained to the different realms of legislation and administration, management and research, information and education, tourist industry and finance. Interestingly, not all of UNESCO’s experts came to the same conclusions: thus, in 1963 Huxley et al. recommended the establishment of a conservation board. Their recommendation was duly implemented soon after the publication of the report. However, Ian Grimwood and Leslie Brown found the same board to be insufficient both in scope and authority.\(^{336}\) They suggested improvements in a newly developed three-year plan for conservation, but also took matters into their own hands and carried out field expeditions to select regions where they had identified the need for better protection and urged the board to appoint a senior game warden. Leslie Brown also stated his educational and publication activities at the university and his collaboration with the ETO (to produce tourism booklets) in the report, stressing the importance of “stimulating interest in wild life [sic] on the part of the public”.\(^{337}\) Apparently, John Blower, who would be appointed as the senior game warden shortly after the mission’s recommendation, was invited to Addis Ababa by Brown during this, to discuss his future appointment. After his appointment as senior game warden ended in 1969, Blower was hired by the newly established EWCO, which was funded through the UN Technical Assistance Programme. For six months his post was that of a “Unesco Expert on Wildlife and Conservation”\(^{338}\) As such he had to give an overview of problems, progress and further recommendations. In his eyes, his efforts and encouraging first measures, which he lists in detail in the report he submitted at the end of this consultancy, were still unlikely to achieve full success, mainly because of a lack of control, management and legislation. In addition to explaining a number of site-specific conservation measures, based on his surveying, his recommendations reiterated and specified the need for an institutional restructuring of the existing wildlife department and stronger government policy (including a draft proclamation).

\(^{335}\) Huxley et al., “The Conservation of Nature”, 29.
\(^{336}\) Ibid., 32; Brown, “Conservation of Nature”, 2; Grimwood, “Conservation of Natural Resources”, 1–2.
\(^{337}\) Brown, “Conservation of Nature”, 2.
\(^{338}\) Blower, “Wildlife Conservation”, iii.
As described above the institutional development of the cultural heritage institutions, namely the NALE, the archaeological section and the “Institut”, was well underway by the time UNESCO was involved, for the first time, in the conservation of the Lalibela churches. Still, external assistance was needed to build the existing, smaller institutions up to a fully functioning capacity, as they were not yet able to carry more than concrete restoration and conservation works namely administration and general staff and facility management, policy recommendations, public relations, and fiscal operations. Most importantly, however, the archaeologists and historians of the existing institutions wished to establish closer collaboration with UNESCO, ICOMOS and other international organisations. Through UNESCO’s help, they were able to invite the ICOMOS member and renowned US American Art Historian Richard Howland, who developed a three-year masterplan to achieve these goals. Despite his recommendations, in the following years the priority was given to the restoration of sites and monuments for tourism development, rather than the institutional advancement. In 1968, 1970 and 1971, three missions altogether were dedicated to identifying those historical sites with the most appeal and accessibility, mapping out a “Historic Route” and more detailed planning of restoration (including budgets, experts required etc.). The bulk of this planning was done by the Italian conservator Sandro Angelini, who estimated a total cost of over USD 1.7 million over the course of three years, shared between the UNDP and the Ethiopian Government. The plan was too costly and too ambitious in scope to be carried out, but it formed the basis of a renewed request for UNESCO’s assistance from the Ethiopian government in 1972, which resulted in a more feasible programme, developed by G.S. Burrows in 1974. A long time in the making, these subsequent missions converged into the seven-year UNDP project ETH/74/014, which streamlined restoration and conservation works as well as the administrative improvements.

Along with the heritage administration, the new Ethiopian National Museum, the successor institution to the archaeological museum, was also built up with the help of foreign experts provided through the UNESCO technical assistance programme over the course of several years, beginning in 1974. More or less every step taken towards establishing the Ethiopian National Museum followed the framework of an expert mission from UNESCO. In 1974, P.A. Cole-

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339 Howland, “Recommendations”.
340 Angelini, “The Historic Route”; Angelini and Mougin, “Proposals for the Development”; Gaidoni, “Cultural Tourism”.
341 Flemming Aalund, “Preserving Ethiopia’s Cultural Heritage”, ICOMOS Information 2 (1986): 5–6.
King first reported about a broader strategy on the development of museums and set up a catalogue of exhibits at the IES, and in 1977 B.B. Lal spent one month restoring selected pieces for the New National Museum. In his report he expressed his annoyance about the piecemeal approach to constructing the museum over several years and through many small missions and initiatives. Building up conservation laboratories, including equipment and a specialised library, formed a continuous part of the museum project. For a short while it was even planned to install a regional centre for conservation and to train conservators for the whole East African region.

More importantly, in 1976 a new institution uniting all cultural heritage functions under one roof was established. Initially an expansion of the “Institut”, the new “Centre for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage” (CRCCH) was systematically built up from 1977 on when the UNDP project ETH/74/014 provided opportunities to request funds and expertise. In 1979 the CRCCH was installed as a separate department of the Ministry of Culture to elaborate and fully nationalise responsibilities for heritage-making and administration. It had an organisational structure containing independent departments for inventory and monitoring, research, conservation and permissions, all of which would have been previously handled within just one office. Through the Cultural Heritage division of UNESCO, several consultants were hired, who contributed to the expansion and organisational development of the CRCCH. Consequently, while the director and the administrative staff of the CRCCH would always be Ethiopian, still the expertise and many key actors involved in knowledge production were largely of Western provenance.

Contrary to the ruptures and violence occurring in the higher echelons of the political system after the revolution of 1974, daily operations continued at the heritage institutions. Many of the Ethiopian and foreign staff hired through the international organisations remained in their positions, such as Teshome Ashine, Director of the EWCO, or Berhanu Abebe, the director of the CRCCH for several years after its establishment, who was among those historians who

342 B.B. Lal, “Restoration of Works of Art in the Ethiopian National Museum – (Mission) 25 September – 25 November 1976 [Serial No. FMR/CC/CH/77/140]” (Paris: UNESCO, 1977).
343 Harold J. Plenderleith and Louis Jacques Rollet-Andriane, “Regional Centre for Conservation of Cultural Property: East Africa – (Mission) November 1974 [Serial No. 3190/RMO.RD/CLP]” (Paris: UNESCO, 1975).
344 Kebede Geleta Terefe, “Evolution”, 59 – 60; since 2000 the name of the institution is Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH).
had received their training abroad during the imperial government.\footnote{Interview with Hans Hurni, May 12, 2015, Berne (CH); de Lorenzi, Guardians of the Tradition, 117.} In particular through the UNDP project ETH/74/014, several more important steps in terms of institutionalisation happened. In 1981, a state of the art legislation for cultural heritage and national heritage inventory were created during two missions.\footnote{Gasiorowski, “Legislation for the Safeguarding”; D.P. Abotomey, “Creation of a Cultural Heritage Inventory System” (Paris: UNESCO, 1981).}

The archaeological and natural research on the other hand was significantly restrained during the 1980s. One reason was the aftermath of the sensational finds of the oldest known humanoid paleontological remains in the Lower Valley of the Omo and the abundant findings in the Lower Valley of the Awash. These two sites, which were otherwise remote and difficult to access, had received World Heritage recognition and had drawn focus of numerous foreign research teams to the sites. From an early point, the excavation fields in the Omo and the Awash Valley were contested terrain since more sensational finds were expected. After the discovery of Lucy in November 1974, the increased international attention made it more and more difficult for the government to maintain the mainly bureaucratic control they had successfully held over the processes.\footnote{Interview with Jean-Renaud Boisserie, May 16, 2016, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Donald Johanson and Maitland A. Edey, Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind (London: Granada, 1982); Niall Finneran, “Lucy to Lalibela: Heritage and Identity in Ethiopia in the Twenty-First Century”, International Journal of Heritage Studies 19, no. 1 (2013): 41–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2011.633540.}

Part of the controlling mechanism was demanding a strict procedure of only temporary export of findings and making renewed permits conditional on the return of the exported objects. Every expedition party worked under the supervision and within the strict permission framework of the CRCCH, while being funded exclusively by foreign institutions, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the Musée de l’homme in Paris. However, the administration and the conservation and research infrastructure in Ethiopia was overwhelmed with the requirements that came with the sensational findings—laboratories, museums, storage facilities and trained staff. Fierce competition among the researchers only added to the difficulties. Another reason was that the major natural and cultural heritage sites were located in the north of Ethiopia, where insurgent military forces of the TPLF had begun to create unrest, premeditating the Ethiopian Civil War that would last until 1991. Many regions were
under restricted access, and restoration works and archaeological excavations had to be put on hold for several years. Eventually the government decided to halt all research and stopped handing out permits altogether. In an attempt to remain in control, the Ethiopian government announced a complete ban on palaeontological excavations between 1981 and 1991. With the Ethiopian heritage institutions forming part of emerging international networks of conservation and heritage experts, in Ethiopia two complementary sides of the discourse of safeguarding heritage would come to dominate the institutional development: that of safeguarding the heritage of the past from modernity, emphasising the key role of heritage in the construction of identity through (national) belonging, and that of protecting it from illicit trade, emphasising the notion of heritage as property, national or international. The global heritage discourse at the level of UNESCO and other international organisations and the national heritage discourse in Ethiopia aligned temporally during those years, indicating that heritage was a more globally encompassing process. Conceptually, the shift from antiquities to monuments which was premeditated by intellectual discourse since the late nineteenth century resulted in a discovery of the past, localising it in constructions and objects, which had to be preserved as links to earlier periods. In comparison to the Norwegian examples mentioned earlier, it is possible to trace how the older notion of objects and sites as part of a project of universal knowledge databases changed in Ethiopia over the course of little more than twenty years. New museums emerged, curating objects and monuments along an historical trajectory and as part of the national project, charging the objects and sites with a sense of belonging, creating a direct relationship from past to present and feeding into the construction of national identity. At this moment, select natural sites and animal species, such as the Simien mountain range and its endemic Walia Ibex and Semien Fox, were also transformed into national icons and their images were featured on stamps and in tourist guidebooks. The writing of particular sites and emblematic objects into this national identity became important as a new “technology of governmentality” as part of the modernisation project in Ethiopia.

Thomas Guindeuil has described how in the 1960s the imperial family started to acquire religious objects for the ethnographic museum, mobilising the

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348 Roger Lewin, “Ethiopia Halts Prehistory Research”, *Horn of Africa* 5, no. 4 (1982): 51–55.
349 Guindeuil, “Nature, culture, même combat?”, 135–36.
350 Eriksen, *From Antiquities to Heritage*, 97.
351 Ibid., 100–101.
352 Ibid., 105.
353 Ibid., 137.
money of the more affluent international circles of Addis Ababa for more extensive acquisitions over the following years. These acquisitions were largely done through antique-dealers in Addis Ababa, who received stolen or illegally sold objects of church treasuries. During this time, with reference to Christian roots of Ethiopia, the term heritage became more widespread, serving to justify the acquisition as a joint effort of foreigners and of those in power.\textsuperscript{354} In the official language as well as in the UNESCO-Ethiopian correspondences and those among experts, the terms antiquities, monuments and heritage (or patrimoine in French) were used in parallel and somewhat interchangeable. The first reports on wildlife conservation, especially the mission of Huxley et al., make rather ample use of the term, referring both to natural and cultural items. Sandro Angelini’s 1971 report contains a section on an “inventory of the cultural heritage”, consisting of one for monuments and one for art objects, but he also refers to the “Ministry of State for Antiquities”\textsuperscript{355} and uses the term antiquities several times in a more general meaning when referring to historical sites. A more frequent and eventually dominant use of the term heritage can be observed in the written documentation and correspondence related to the UNDP project ETH/74/014, while in the final project report the term antiquities is not used at all. With the establishment of the CRCCH, heritage is officially installed in the title of the institution, even when in some government proclamations a residual use of the term antiquities can be observed for another few years.\textsuperscript{356} Within the projects and institutions for wildlife and nature, the reporting and the correspondence have a more technical or scientific tone and the term heritage does not appear often in the writings, unless in direct reference to the World Heritage status of the Simien National Park.

The “boom years” – making Ethiopian heritage World Heritage

With the institutional history of heritage-making in Ethiopia and the information contained in the UNESCO reports in mind, it is easy to understand why Ethiopia was able to respond productively when the invitation was circulated in 1978 for applications to the World Heritage List. The Ethiopian government had reached its peak institutional capacity for heritage-making by that time, after two decades of intensive international assistance that included a build-up of institu-

\textsuperscript{354} Guindeuil, “Nature, culture, même combat?”, 136.
\textsuperscript{355} Which did not exist, perhaps a careless oversight in a report written retrospectively and not while still residing in Ethiopia?
\textsuperscript{356} Aleme Eshete, The Cultural Situation, 37.
tions as well as specific sites. Personal and professional networks had formed over the period, and international heritage experts were able to act as brokers, helping to connect the remotely located Ethiopian heritage sites with the central government and the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The UNESCO reports, over time, had fostered a compilation of selected sites into a circuit that eventually resembled the first cluster of heritage sites included in the World Heritage List. These sites not only complied with the UNESCO-sent Western experts’ notion of what was considered “outstanding” but also demonstrated what was considered to be Ethiopia’s most valuable history at the time from the government’s viewpoint, namely the ancient monuments of northern Ethiopia.

The success of all Ethiopian requests to any of the international organisations for technical and financial assistance was essentially based upon a well-running system and a network of experts in place, with connections and channels already established. And the field of conservation activities was no exception to this fact. The impact of these decade-long efforts to build up the institutional heritage-making capacities in Ethiopia showed considerable results during the 1970s. Because many international experts were already involved in relevant conservation activities in both the natural and cultural fields within Ethiopia (with UNESCO providing the most prominent platform for them), Ethiopian national heritage was registered and recorded by Western standards. The extensive documentation that existed, a prerequisite for the positive evaluation of the World Heritage nomination through ICOMOS, had been created for the main Ethiopian heritage sites either in the context of the research of the “Institut”, through prior UNESCO expert missions, or the WWF specialists working in the Simien Mountains. Through the experts and consultants present in the country, in 1978 Ethiopia was able to submit nominations that could smoothly pass evaluation by ICOMOS and IUCN according to their scientific standards, while only having national resources at its disposal that represented the bare necessities of heritage-making infrastructure. Because of the ongoing project ETH/74/014, institutional capacities were in place to attend to the newly ratified World Heritage Convention. In fact, in the context of the extent of the project ETH/74/014, the World Heritage Nominations appear like a side effect of a large-scale plan to establish proper institutionalised national heritage conservation.

After the commencement of the project ETH/74/14 for the “Presentation and Preservation of selected sites”, the associated expert and the architect restorer of the project carried out extensive and detailed documentation and prepared information on management plans for individual sites as well as the national inventory. These management plans and the project activities presented important practical stepping-stones for the nomination of selected sites as World Heri-
The preparation of Ethiopian heritage sites for inclusion in the World Heritage programme was foreseen as a part of the project from the beginning, and the experts employed for the project “took active part in draft completion of the nomination forms.”

The historian Berhanu Abebe, who served as director of the CRCCH during that time, was well-versed in international collaboration in the field of heritage-making and historic research, and immediately understood the relevance of the invitation to submit nominations to the World Heritage programme in increasing potential support from the international community for the conservation of Ethiopian heritage. In addition to the support received from the ETH/74/014 project team, Berhanu Abebe turned to UNESCO’s Division of Cultural Heritage, requesting a “Consultant for the Preparation of the Drawing-up a World Heritage List”:

In conformity with the World National and Cultural Heritage Convention I should like to request a Consultant for a four weeks [sic] stay in Ethiopia to assist our Department in drawing-up a list of outstanding sites and monuments to be presented for inclusion in the World Heritage List. We consider this request being a logical consequence of the Ethiopian Government’s ratification of the mentioned convention and we give the request activity high priority. At the same time we want to emphasize the support which the visit of the Consultant could give to our newly created Inventory Department as well as to the preparation for the implementation of the resolution 19/126.

As a result, the Iranian archaeologist Firouz Bagherzadeh, of the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, who had completed similar assistance in several other countries, was sent to Ethiopia and assisted with the preparation of the World Heritage nominations. The nomination list the Ethiopian government submitted to the fourth session of the World Heritage Committee in 1978 (which was the first one to decide on sites to be included on the World Heritage List) was the most extensive in comparison (eleven sites, the next highest number was Tunisia with four sites) and is a testimony of the vivid heritage-making activity in Ethiopia at the time. The nomination dossiers for the Simien National Park, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, the Fasil Ghebbi Castle in Gondar

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357 Job description from 23.3.1978, UNESCO 069:72 (63) UNDP, pt. vii.
358 Note from Erik Olsen to Berhanu Abebe, 8.9.1978, in: UNESCO 069:72 (63) UNDP pt. vii.
359 Letter from Berhanu Abebe to Percy Stulz, no date, in: UNESCO 069:72 (100) A 218.
360 Cable from Percy Stulz to Firouz Bagerzadeh, March 1978, in: UNESCO 069:72 (100) A 218.
361 UNESCO, Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, List of nominations to the World Heritage List and of requests for co-operation received from States Parties, 31.5.1978, WHC CC.78/CONF.010/07.
and the historical remains of ancient Aksum contained a wealth of material. Drawing on the existing scholarly literature and ongoing ecological and archaeological research and conservation works, it was easy enough to support the nomination with photographs, plans, maps, drawings and other relevant information, commonly referred to as “documentation” by UNESCO and ICOMOS. The Simien National Park and the Lalibela Stone Churches were accepted in the first round, and according to the Swiss Geographer Hans Hurni, who was employed by the EWCO throughout the 1970s, a management plan had been drafted in a last minute effort to ensure a World Heritage application of the park. \(^{362}\) Included in the documentation for the Simien National Park was also tourism promotion material, such as the “Safari Ethiopia” brochure. For Lalibela, a management plan, including a topographic map of the church-area and an inventory, was submitted, as well as a number of international press clippings.\(^{363}\)

As the conservation activities under ETH/74/014 were highly selective, only a few sites were eventually progressed far enough in the heritage-making process so as to qualify for the World Heritage nomination. For several of the sites submitted, the documentation was not deemed sufficient enough for the application to be considered according to the IUCN and ICOMOS evaluation and they were declined World Heritage status. Of Melka-Kontoure, Yeha, Bale Mountain National Park and the Abijatta Shala Lake National Park as well as the Eritrean sites of Adulis and Matara the following was noted: “All these nominations were deferred by the World Heritage Committee due to the absence of the necessary documentation, requests by the Advisory Bodies for more thorough site evaluations, as well as the submission of a tentative list of properties which Ethiopia intended to nominate. Furthermore, neither of the two natural sites, Bale Mountain National Park and Abijatta Shala Lakes National Park, were yet legally defined and protected under Ethiopian legislation.”\(^{364}\) For these sites, ICOMOS requested more detailed documentation and reviewed the revised nominations as sufficient in the following year (Gondar) and two years after (Aksum, Tiya, Omo and Awash). In the end, seven World Heritage sites were inscribed for Ethiopia by 1980, in the middle of a strenuous fifteen-year period of civil war, border conflicts and “Red Terror”.

\(^{362}\) Interview with Hans Hurni, May 12, 2015, Berne (CH).
\(^{363}\) WHC CLT Nom 10, 11, 12.
\(^{364}\) Peter Stott and Flora van Regteren Altena, “Report of a Mission to Ethiopia to Conduct a Workshop on Management Plans for World Heritage Sites and to Examine the Current Status of World Heritage Sites in Ethiopia, 17–25 September 2004” (UNESCO, October 22, 2004), CLT/WHC/NOM 10.
None of the archives that hold relevant files for the Ethiopian World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, ARCCH, ICOMOS Documentation Centre) kept records such as accompanying correspondence that would allow access to the original submission from supporting documents after the 1978 session of the World Heritage Committee. The documentation material was either conservation or research related or of technical or scholarly nature. In the nomination file for Tiya, a separate page was added, listing “organisations which hold documents about Ethiopia” in Paris, together with a handwritten note listing the most relevant francophone periodicals. Given that the review of all nomination dossiers took place in the ICOMOS office in Paris, it is possible that the archaeologists, following the request to provide more documentation, thought it possible that the reviewer would be familiar with the Christian heritage sites, but not with the sites from the megalithic period. While the first mentioning of the Stelae fields of the Sodd region in Southern Ethiopia as a noteworthy archaeological site came in 1905, archaeological surveying and excavations did not start until 1974. Much like the Eritrean heritage sites, these southern heritage sites had enjoyed a much lower priority in the tourism development planning and consequently in the large-scale conservation projects and programming which took place during the UNDP project ETH/74/014.

With little to no touristic destination value, no monuments and no scenery declared to be iconic, the Lower Valley of the Omo and the Awash had not been part of any international conservation or development efforts either. Their nomination, at this time, owed largely to the scientific relevance, which was obvious within the experts’ community, even if “Lucy’s” discovery was still a few months away when the submissions were due to be sent to Paris. The nomination files included a rudimentary photographic documentation of the landscape and some excavation works and otherwise simply referred to the unique and rare quality of the sites as rich conservatories of over five million years of human and animal evolution, and its international renown among palaeontologists. For the bibliography section, the statement “It is numerous” (Omo) and “It is abundant” (Awash) seemed to suffice. When ICOMOS reviewer Léon Pressouyre wrote the proper justification statements for the sites early in 1980, he added the discovery of humanoid fossils to the criteria for inscription.\textsuperscript{365}

The UNESCO missions and their ramifications in the Ethiopian administration elucidate a clear causality between the “heritage boost” for institutional heritage-making through UNESCO and the “heritage boom” through the increase in

\textsuperscript{365} ICOMOS Senior Programme Specialist Gwenaëlle Bourdin explained this to me in an interview I conducted on May 26, 2015.
archaeological and paleontological research work going on during the 1960s and 70s in general, and the consequent “boom years” of Ethiopian heritage-making in the period from 1972 to 1978. Ethiopia had a key role in conservation and development projects of UNESCO. The history of the organisations which would eventually serve as advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee, IUCN and ICOMOS has more than some points of connection with the making of Ethiopian national heritage as World Heritage. As one of the first countries to respond to UNESCO’s programme activities in heritage and wildlife conservation in the 1960s, Ethiopia was the target location for several of the first missions and projects for cultural and natural heritage conservation.