

Foreigners Ever Active In Developing Ethiopia

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ADDIS ABABA—Practically everything constructive that has been achieved in Ethiopia is the work of foreigners.

The dominant tribe, the Amharas, are soldiers. The most numerous tribe, the Gallas, are peasants and nomads. The Gurages are humble servants. The Shankallas are slaves. It is almost exclusively Greeks, Armenians and Indians who have managed the business, industry and finance of the land.

I recently moved from one hotel here in Addis Ababa to another and had to have three heavy suitcases transported a mile. Gurage men were summoned by the hotel porter, who simply went onto the porch and shouted, "G'raggy, g'raggy, g'raggy." All day long the city echoes with

that cry. Of the 10 men who immediately responded, we picked out three and asked them how much they wanted for the job. "Well, your baggage is pretty heavy," they said, "and we can't carry it way up there for less than 8 cents (American)."

Tribal Divisions

My mule boy is a Moslem Galla. A majority of the interpreters who serve the journalists here are Amharas. The short-legged black boy who does the scrubbing in our hotel for meager food and 60 cents a month in cash, is a Shankalla. The owner of the hotel is a grand Amhara chief, known as a Ras or Prince. He gets his wealth by collecting a heavy toll on what other exceedingly poor people produce. The only rich natives acquire their wealth in that way. The fairly well-to-do are state officials. All wealth creators are foreigners or the poorest natives.

Until recently the Ethiopians have been soldiers, chiefs, nomads, peasants of the most primitive sort, small outdoor merchants and slaves. The only kind of house they could build was a tiny hut of upright slats plastered over with mud and capped with a straw roof. Their clothes were hides or togas, their hair ointment butter, their razors splinters of glass and their combs jagged pieces of horn.

They have long known how to weave pretty colored baskets, pound out silver ear spoons for extracting wax, and fashion little iron and silver crosses for the priests. These objects have constituted Ethiopian art. For making anything more complicated or of a higher order foreigners have been necessary.

Foreign Activities

If you are in need of money you will probably go to an East Indian broker. If you want distraction you will go to a French movie house.

You will get your new shoes made or your old ones repaired at an Armenian shop. A Greek will make your new suit and provide you with a felt hat. He will also cut your hair and shave you, unless you are exceedingly humble, and then an Indian will do it.

A German, of course, runs the delicatessen. Two of the biggest state monopolies are in the hands of Armenians. An Indian, Mohammed Ali, owns by far the largest commercial enterprise in the land. The French built and manage the railroad.

If it were not for the Armenians, Greeks and Indians, Ethiopia would be very much more primitive than it is.

It is interesting to note that Jews do not thrive here. They cannot meet Armenian, Greek and Indian competition.

Of these three chief foreign groups

who conduct practically all of Ethiopia's business, industry and finances, the Armenian is the smallest and most distinguished. The East Indians are the most numerous and have the lowest standard of living.

Armenians Keep Apart

There are 1000 Armenians in the capital and 200 in provincial cities. They are rather clammy and exclusive and do not like to lose themselves in the interior. They are all literate and quite intelligent, maintain schools and churches, have a fine club in Addis Ababa, which is the only thing of the kind in the empire, and try in every way to preserve for themselves a favored place in the country. Many of them are Ethiopian subjects and practically all are permanently here. They belong to Ethiopia. This is their home. Hundreds of other foreigners left the country to escape the risk of war, but the Armenians remained. They have no place to go. The fact that they are permanent has made them a useful element. Their fate is identified with that of the empire, and they are very loyal citizens. Their future depends on Ethiopia's independence and development, and they have done much to help the natives advance in business and handicrafts.

One of the chief assistants of Menelik, both before and after he became Emperor, was an Armenian named Terzian, who at first helped supply the ambitious ruler with guns and later with more useful machines.

Slaves Pulled Engine

Thirty years ago this resourceful merchant ordered a steam engine sent out from England and had it pulled by 3000 imperial slaves from the coast at Djibouti to the capital, 400 miles distant. It passed over roadless and uneven country to a final elevation of about 8000 feet at the rate of four miles a day.

On arriving, it was received with imperial pomp at a great public celebration over which the whole royal family presided and was driven back and forth over a short avenue of rugs. Later a road was built from the city to a forest 20 miles distant, along which the engine pulled big loads of timber on heavy, clumsy trailers. This highway is still called "Engine Street."

One day the two huge, flat-topped hind wheels of the locomotive were removed and replaced with cleated ones. The discarded wheels were left where they fell and have remained there a quarter of a century. All vehicles still have to dodge between them as between Scylla and Charybdis.

Most of the Armenians who have not become Ethiopian subjects are under the protection of France, which has opened a special Armenian bureau in the legation here. This group of energetic and intelligent business men is one of the most effective means through

which France maintains its influence here.

The Armenians learn the Ethiopian languages readily and are interpreters in most of the foreign legations.

Greeks Go Inland

There are 3500 Greeks in Ethiopia of which 1400 are in the capital. The fact that 2000 Greeks and only 200 Armenians live in the provinces shows the difference between these two groups of foreigners. The Greeks are more daring and more adaptable. They rove farther, perform humbler tasks, put up with smaller profits and endure greater hardships. They are practically the only merchants in most cities outside the capital. They manage little mills in all parts of the land, conduct tiny shops in scores of remote and isolated places, and pierce into jungles, swamps and deserts to buy coffee, beeswax, skins and hides.

Wherever they go they remain Greeks, even thinking of the homeland and dreaming of the time when they shall have made their fortunes and be able to return as leading citizens of the towns of their birth.

They are artisans, builders, industrialists and bankers. They make Ethiopia's soap, manufacture the felt hats worn by all fashionable natives, vie with the Armenians as the leading tailors, and conduct caravans every place where there is something to buy and sell. They run the restaurants along Ethiopia's one railroad line and conduct the chief hotel in the capital.

Active in Business

They claim to have at least half the business of the empire in their hands. Most of the employees in the National Bank are Greeks.

Practically all of the first lawyers, physicians, dentists, pharmacists, architects and contractors were Greeks.

They boast of being the chief teachers of the Ethiopians in the arts and crafts, and have done so well that they have deprived themselves of a livelihood. The pupils are now taking the masters' places and during the last three years the number of Greeks here has tended to decrease. Natives can work cheaper and the customers here prefer cheapness to everything else.

Although coming here for material reasons, the Armenians and Greeks have rendered Ethiopia the greatest service. They have instituted a higher standard of living and given rise to new wants.

Six decades ago the Emperor himself spent most of his time in tents. Today quite a few of his ordinary subjects live in decent houses.

The example and incentive for progress came from the Armenians and the Greeks. To a large extent they are the makers of what civilization there is here. Such comfortable living as Ethiopian cities can boast is due to them.

Indians and Arabs

Some Indians also and a few Arabs have proven useful helpers. Almost all the tiny shops here are run by them. They live in huts and are almost as simple in their tastes and habits as the natives. Still they are cleaner, more enterprising and more versatile, dress better, take better care of their children and have a wider knowledge of world affairs, so their contact with the Ethiopians—in hundreds of "corner groceries"—has helped the nation to advance.

Ethiopia has come to a supreme testing place in its history. Until now foreigners have made the schools, business, handicrafts, mills, houses, bridges, electric light instal-

lations, soap, roads and better clothes. They alone have organized trade, built a railroad and unearthed the wealth beneath the soil. The few opulent Ethiopians have gained their wealth by preying on others and even by hindering the pioneers of progress. Foreigners have helped Ethiopia in spite of many of the Ethiopians.

The question now is: Can the Ethiopians themselves make wealth? Can they utilize the riches of their land? The foreigners here, who are best informed, say the Ethiopians are apt pupils. They will now have to show it in the hard school of relentless competition. If the Ethiopians can't develop their fine land somebody else will.