

The Urban in 1930 Ethiopia: A preliminary
Investigation of the 1930 *Berhaneana Selam* News
Paper

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Background: on BS and 1930.

On B.S:

- *BehanenaSelam* meaning 'Light and Peace' is an Amharic weekly newspaper that began being published in 1917 E.C (1924/25 G.C).
- **Why BS**
- The intellectuals of early 20th century communicated their ideas of reform to general public through two medias. Books and newspapers...however it is through the short newspaper articles than through large books that the intellectuals appear to have had a greatest impact on society... *Berhanena Selam*... the later [was] justifiably be described as the organ of the intellegencia. BS gives a richer representation of the contemporary intellectuals. Bahiru Zewde (1991: 188-189) Bahiru Zewde .1991. *Pioneers of change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of Early Twentieth Century* 188-189.
- **Why 1930 BS?:**
- **In 1930 at least two extended articles characterizes the year 1930 as 'the new era' and ' new sprit '**

After 1930, Fekade asserts: The issues published before this year [1930] were more liberal than those, which appeared after the coronation; there after the newspaper begins to focus on Haile Sellasie's daily routine, his family and the court... (Azeze, Fekade. *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica Vol. I. Wisebaden: Harrassowitz, 2003 (536-37)*)

Wider political context

- The death of Empress Zewditu,
- The Begemidir Rebellion
- The coronation Haile Sallassie

Katama 'the urban'

- Roderick J. McIntosh “Clustered Cities of the Middle Niger: Alternative Routes to Authority in Prehistory” in *Africa's Urban Past* in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone 2000
- After Jenne-jeno makes a suggestion that, the three theoretical planes of [urban theory] are definition, distinctiveness and authority.
- The concern of this paper is the first one: definitions meanings of what it means to be urban at a particular period.

What are the sources? Dictionary meanings: Katama

- The etymology of the word Katama which means an urban Ge'ez and Amharic. Aleka Kidane Wolde Kifle describes the term *katama* as encamped territory associated with military encampment. He further attests the economic relations between *Katama* and *Awidima* - an urban center and a place of work. Using examples of oral poetry, “Ya diha lij wede awidima ye mekuannint lij wede ketema” (children of the poor belong to the village (to work) and children of the nobility belong to an urban center (for court service and collecting taxes). Here, the characterization of the village and the urban are depicted as intertwined aspects of place making combined with the notion of rule and occupational identity - as those who work in urban center and those on the field. Aleka Kidanewolde Kifle, *Mezgebe Qalat Haddis 442*
- How the paper discussed and categorizes the notion of the urban : “Gabra Krestos created a model of world history that was deeply rooted in the local, derived from an intellectual culture that was decidedly historicist but still eminently historical.¹⁰ The texts and conventions of European print culture did much to alter the production of knowledge and the consumption of history in peripheries like Northeast Africa. But we should think of this imported historicism sitting astride local practices”

Ye Katama Ware 'news of the urban'

- Examining the notion of the urban from the BS Newspaper provides us with ethnographic accounts of the 1930s Urban centers as well as pay attention to themes that are categorized as urban. This perspective towards the source provides us with both empirical information of weekly news on urban centers particularly of 1930 Addis Ababa.
- However, here, BS is not only read as a source material but also to what Ann Stoler in *Refiguring the Archives*:15 states “what system of classification signals at specific time” in the making of the articles on the urban. as which can be used as source to construct urban histories but more so it provides with material to construct conceptual history of the urban that is embodied in the ways in which the term *Katama* 'The Urban' is mobilized.

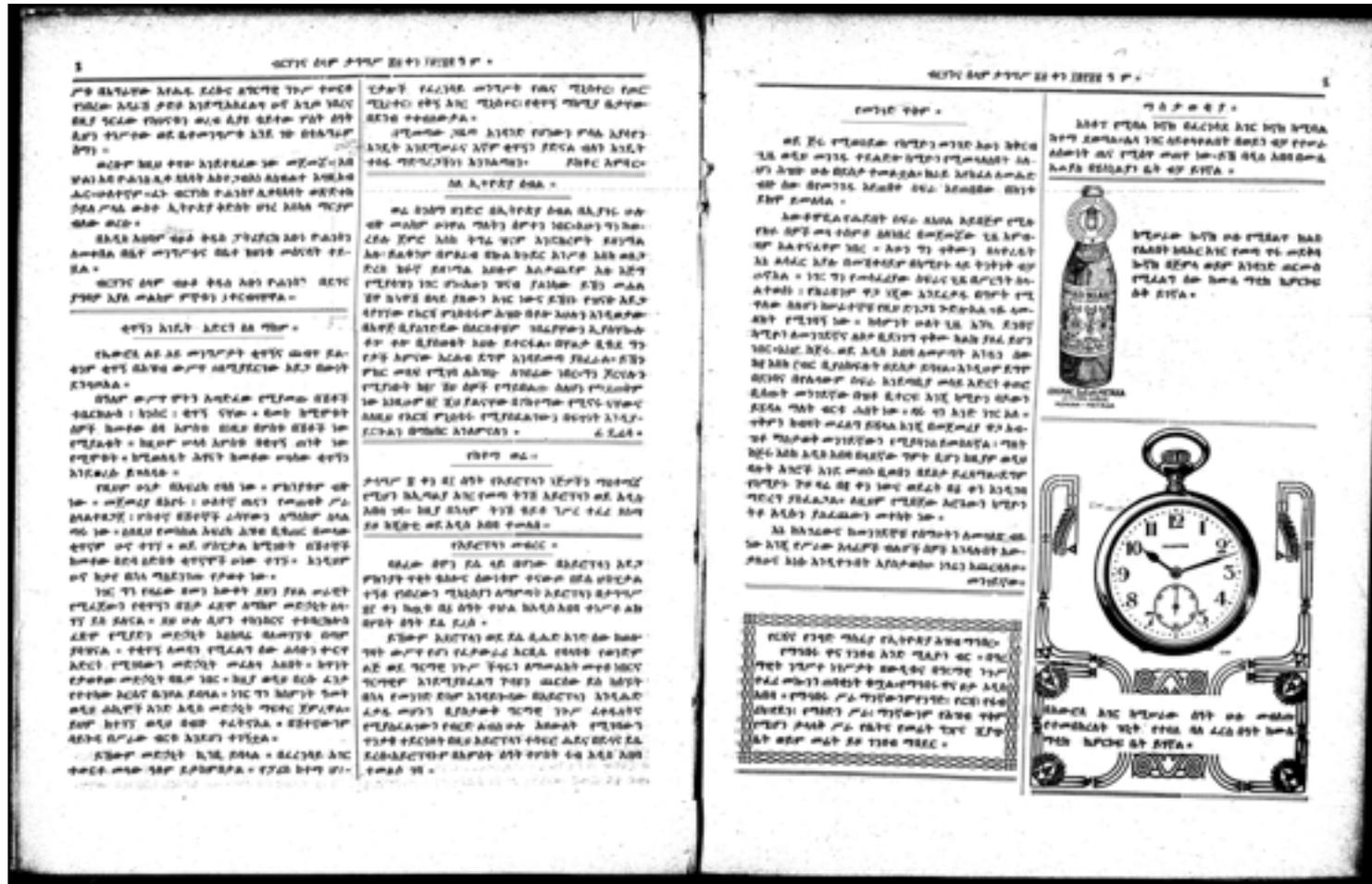
Research Questions

- What constitutes the notion of the Urban in the 1930s BS?
- what are processes, institutions, units and subjectivities that are discussed within the framework of *Katama* 'urban' in the 1930s Ye Katama Ware 'news of the urban'
- What is new? What has continued? the reconfiguration of *Katama* as a conceptual and empirical category.

Methodology

- BS has been used as source to construct early 20th century Ethiopian intellectual history, literary history and history of print culture. This paper mainly uses BS to construct a conceptual history of *Katama*- the urban as it is constituted in 1930 publication of the Newspaper.
- This paper draws a methodological insights from Achill Mbebe and Ann Stoller discussion on how to use archival sources beyond as sources to construct historical narratives. For the need to take sites of archives such as newspapers as as “ epistemological experiments” to think through what they have thought about urbanity.
- Secondly it is also draws on Coquery-Vidrovitch’s method of conceptual history on using “African vocabularies for cities” to illustrate that urban forms and urban centers and cities are not alien to African societies and distinctive urban centers have existed in pre-colonial times (13 and 16) This paper however closely examines the notion of *Katama* ‘urban’ not to proof Africa had urban history before colonialism but to note how terminologies of the urban- *Katama* gets reconfigured and reconstituted to gain new meanings in changing political and technological context.
- To do so one year publications of the column of Ye Ketema Ware ‘news of the urban’ will be used as a primary source material to present the different ways in which the then state owned Newspaper *Berhanena Selam* discusses the notion of the urban. An analysis of this column will not only show how the intellectuals of the time expanded the notion of the urban but also helps to capture which processes and ideas have contributed to reconstitution of the idea of the urban at least in the 1930s.

Results1: B.S Ya Katama Ware 'news of the urban': technologies of movement



Example 1

- His honor Ato Wedago has been appointed as Ethiopian Counsel at Asmara left Addis Ababa, on March 8, 1930, he has left to Asmara via train. On the same day, his excellence Fitawirari Mesfin representative of Ras Seyum and the representative of Bible association has taken the same train to go to Adwa and England respectively. BerhanenaSelam wishes them safe journey.
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- B.S, March 12, 1930.

Example2

- Food, clothes, and medicines have been sent to those who have got wounded in the battle in the north. These items were sent through an airplane to the very place of the battle. Moreover, this week, Emperor Haile Sellasie has visited 18 wounded soldiers, at Dagmawi Menelik Hospital Addis Ababa. The emperor has granted the soldiers land and money as they requested in return to their service.
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- BS, 1930, no6, vol, 20. [Referring to the battle of Anchim with RasGugsa Haile Selases last challenge before he has become a king the battle took place in the northern province of Begemedir- Gondar.

Result2: security and policing

- In maintaining peace and order Kentiba Nesibu organized a new City police force that was composed of old Arada Zebegna's (old security guards) and new recruits... when the city was divided in to ten administrative one in 1928 in each zone the commissariats (police station) were established in each police station and each station was lead by the Basha who was answerable to the kentiba... in the same period the tradition of the institution of the detection of the thief, *lebashay* has been abolished and the responsibility is transferred to municipal police.
- *Lebashay* is a communal forms institution that specifically deals with inspecting, investigating and punishing theft, robbery and looting. Whose service ends with the emergence of municipal police? Ehsetu Assen EshetuAssen (:89)

Urbanity and diversity

- The Indian association of Gujirat has opened Elementary school in Addis Ababa. The association had its annual meeting earlier on January 1930 and passed a decided to open an Elementary school for Indians living in Addis Ababa. Many people have contributed and are continuing to contribute for the establishment this school. MrAbudulaBayabeku, gave 1029 birr, WanmaliBordu 1001birr, Banyan Youth association gave 300 birr, and AtoAradom an Ethiopian gave 25 birr more than for the amount his contribution was mostly appreciated for supporting for the education of Indian students in Addis Ababa.
- BS, March 10, 1930

Muslim Festivities-holidays

- Muslim's Arafa holiday has been celebrated on February 22. Muslims has they have fired heavy weapons in celebration of the special day. Consequently, All Muslims in the city spent the whole week expressing their happiness, wearing new consumes and jeliwery. Both men and women celebrated the holiday by going out for a picnic around the city via automobile, horse, and on foot.
- B.S 1930, Vol, No

Result3: urbanity and marginality

- Prostitution is becoming widely spread practice in Addis Ababa and other cities. Many girls from rural areas are flocking to cities to make wealth from prostitution. First they get training from senior prostitute in cities, as they serve as maids almost for free. Then they through their meals and drinks they begin to trap young men and men from their respective duties. Mostly students get wasted from perusing their education. Therefore it is suggested that both local administration from the countryside and city counsel need to control the movement of prostitute in order to reduce the number of those who join the business afresh. Primarily, girls coming out of the countryside need to have a certificate issued by the local administration stating the whereabouts the traveler to the city and purpose of their travel. Similarly movement of women from the city to the country needs to be supervised through the city council. Thirdly the city council need to register and count prostitutes in the city and heavily supervise their act and punish if they are found practicing prostitution. Unless and otherwise they are stopped in such a manner their wrong doings will spoil the lives of many young men.
- BS, 1930, Vol, No

Result 4: The legislating Urban: Municipal laws in 1930s

Concluding Remarks: Katama Reconstituted/Reconfigured

- Transport- reaching to other urban and non urban networks beyond capital centric urbanity.
- Security and policing: primary urban subjectivities, nobilities and soldiers
- Urbanity and diversity: the question of the foreigner and Muslim festivities
- Urbanity and marginality: of thefs, drunkards and prostitutes

- While the old notion of being Katama- urban, continues to define what it means to be urban through the ways in which stories of the urban mainly focus the soldier and the ruling elite as the most important urban inhabitants. Yet, it simultaneously accounts for new notions of urbanity by showing how the role of the introduction of new forms of transport and municipal system. The introduction of new forms of transportation systems such as train and airplane to the urban centers in the region beyond began to develop as urban networks on the basis of transport technologies that connect places such as Addis Ababa, Asmara, Massawa, Dire Dawa, and Djibouti. The significant development in 1917 was the completion of the Djibouti- Addis Ababa Railway, by improving the communication of the city with eastern province and outside world the railway encouraged the growth of trade. BahiruZewde (1991:85) *Modern History of Ethiopia 1855-1974*.