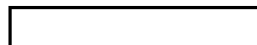


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Special Report

Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Succession

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ETHIOPIA: THE DYNAMICS OF SUCCESSION

Aging Emperor Haile Selassie I has ruled his empire for more than half a century by skillfully balancing Ethiopia's powerful political forces, preventing any of them from completely dominating the country or overthrowing the monarchy. When the Emperor dies, however, his successor will face formidable obstacles in attempting to establish himself firmly on the throne and in creating a stable and progressive government.

The powers of the church and the provincial nobility, long the strongest influences in Ethiopia, have been reduced by Haile Selassie, but he has also modernized the military establishment and expanded the civil service. These, like the traditional forces, are now striving to preserve their own interests. All four groups are continually trying to maintain a favorable position and are already maneuvering to enhance their status in any future administration.

Haile Selassie's son, Asfa Wossen - although not as strong a personality as his father - appears to be the most likely successor. His right to the throne may be challenged by elements of the nobility or by the military, but his opponents would probably be fragmented. Both of these groups - as well as the church and leading civil servants - will certainly try to influence or control him after he becomes emperor. The new ruler will also be confronted with the danger of fragmentation of the empire because of dissidence among some of its ethnically and culturally diverse peoples.

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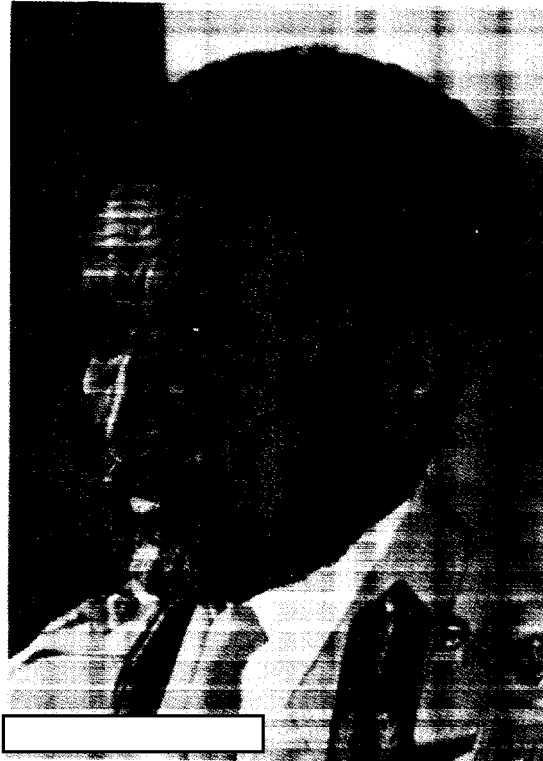
The Monarchy

The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Elect of God, King of Kings, Emperor of Ethiopia, is represented to his people as the 225th successive Ethiopian monarch descended from Menelik I, the legendary son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. He is both chief of state and head of government, and his powers, though overlaid with a constitutional veneer, are very nearly absolute. He effectively controls legislative, executive, and judicial power in the country and, even at the lower levels of administration, little is accomplished without his approval.

The Emperor appoints or approves the selection of most high officials in the government, and he has an absolute veto over any actions of the parliament. He is also the titular head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and approves the appointment of all high church officials. As commander in chief of the armed forces, he controls the appointment and promotion of all high-ranking military officers.

In addition to his legal powers, Haile Selassie also exercises an overwhelming influence on both government officials and the general populace. This influence results partly from his unusual personal vigor and long tenure as the nation's ruler and partly from the tradition of centuries which has ingrained an attitude of fear, reverence, and obedience to the Emperor in the minds of most Ethiopians.

When Haile Selassie gained control of the 2,000-year-old Ethiopian Empire in 1916, he became the feudal ruler of a medieval state. A large portion of his efforts during his 14 years as regent, and as Emperor since 1930, has been directed toward subduing two powerful and largely independent forces in the country--the provincial nobility and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Under his predecessors, the nobles had usually been autonomous, owing allegiance to the Emperor only as feudal vassals paying some tribute and serving if needed in the army. They were opposed to any attempt by the



EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE

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Emperor to reduce their power or to bring them under the direct control of the central government. The church aided Haile Selassie in coming to the throne, but remained fiercely jealous of its own exclusive position as the predominant religious influence on the government and a large number of its subjects.

Haile Selassie has spent a lifetime subduing and balancing the power of these two forces. To counter their influence, he has created a modern military establishment and a large civil service formally under the control of the central government. These organizations, however, have also achieved considerable power themselves, and must now be reckoned among the political forces that will shape the country's future when the present Emperor dies.

Despite his 76 years and more than half a century in power, Haile Selassie remains in generally excellent health although he has begun to show some signs of advancing age. Most observers agree that he has become more forgetful and easily fatigued in recent years, but he still regularly averages a 14-hour workday and continues personally to oversee all the major functions of the government. He apparently believes that he will survive another 10 to 15 years, a view which--though allegedly based on the prediction of a trusted astrologer--is supported by medical evidence to date.



The Emperor also has an extraordinary capacity to pit rival factions of the establishment against one another, aided by his absolute powers as ruler. Shum-shir, the practice of frequently transferring government officials from one position to another, is a common feature of Ethiopian political life. As with the de facto prohibition on political activity, government censorship of the press and radio, and other control measures, Shum-shir is designed to keep any group or individual from achieving a position of strength sufficient to challenge the Emperor's regime.

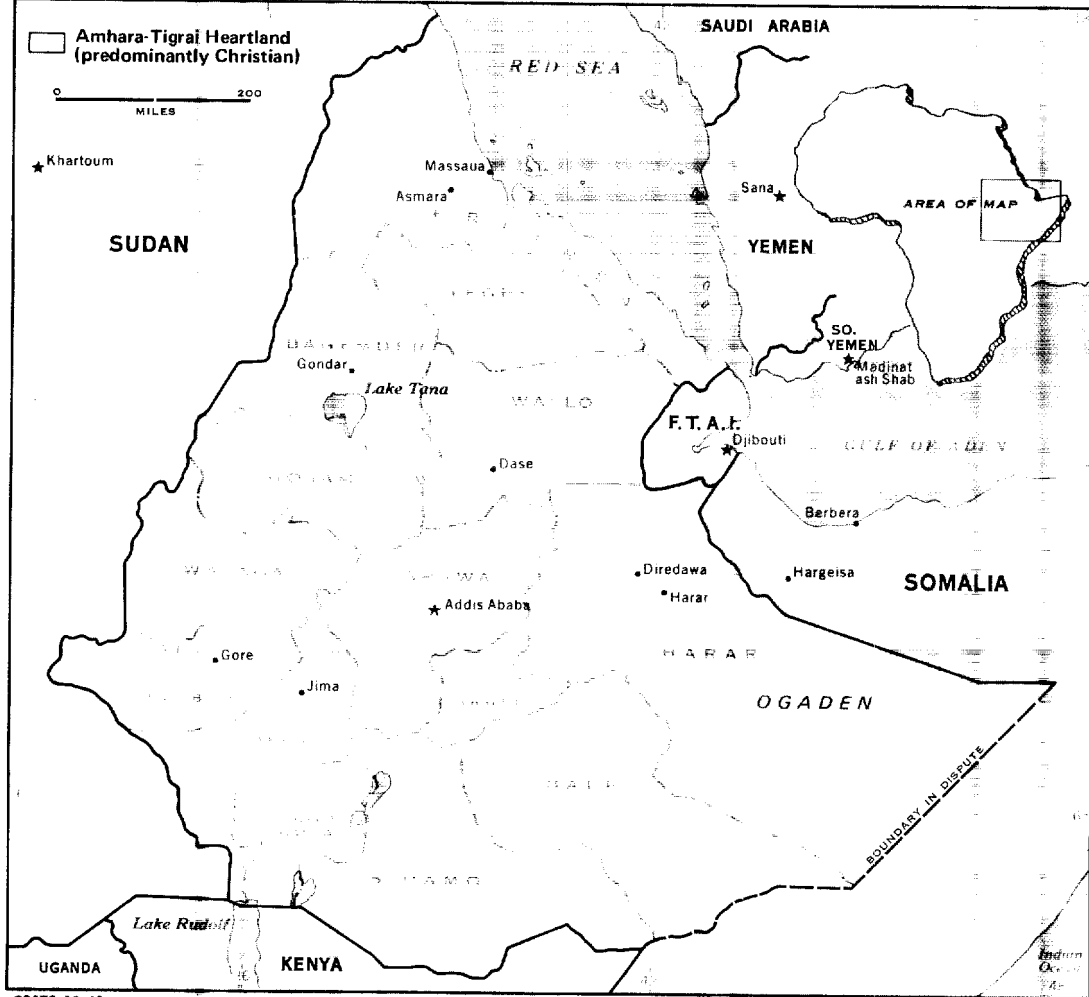
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The constitution carefully establishes succession on the basis of male primogeniture in the line of Haile Selassie I, and Crown Prince Asfa Wossen Haile Selassie, the Emperor's oldest and sole surviving son, is therefore heir to the throne. Although all foreseeable contingencies have been provided for in the 25 articles dealing with the succession, there has rarely been a peaceful succession in Ethiopia, and the prescribed system has not yet been tested.

Historically, the death of an emperor has usually resulted

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CROWN PRINCE ASFA WOSSEN

close to the Emperor

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The Emperor frequently snubs the crown prince in public and showed obvious favoritism toward his younger brother until the latter's accidental death in 1957.

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in an intensive struggle for the crown, with few qualifications required of any pretender except that he command sufficient force to make good his claim. Ruling emperors have also been compelled to defend their crowns against challengers who felt qualified to seize the throne. Haile Selassie has put down half a dozen major uprisings and innumerable smaller revolts against his rule.

The Crown Prince

Crown Prince Asfa Wossen, 52, is almost universally acknowledged as a less powerful personality than his father, but will probably succeed him. He is not

Only in the last two years has the crown prince begun to play a more active part in politics, but he still does not rank as a key member of the government.

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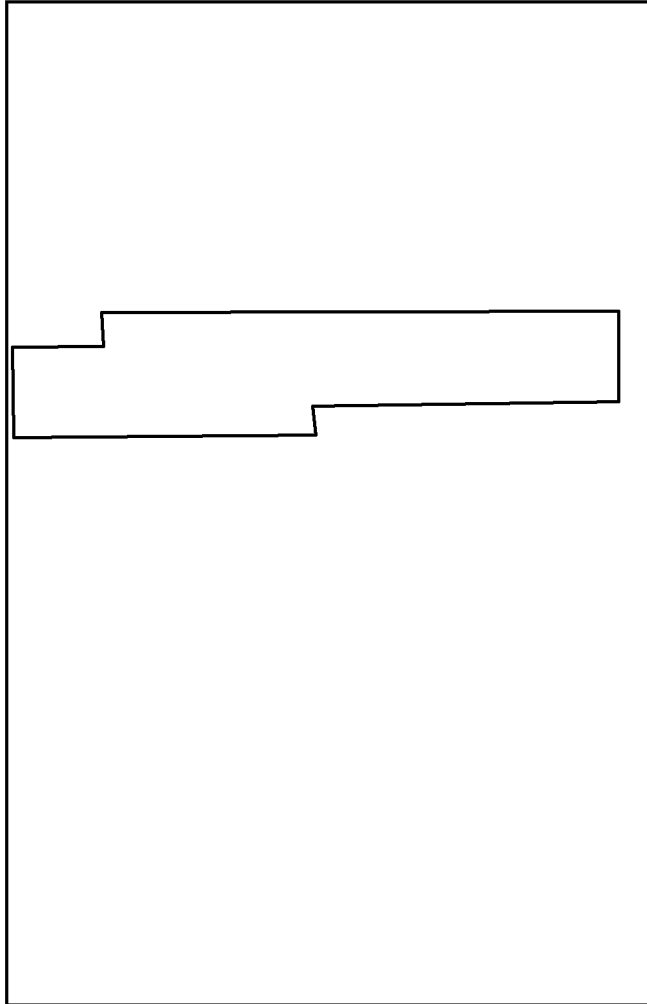
KEY ETHIOPIAN PERSONALITIES

	Name	Position	Remarks
NOBILITY	<i>Crown Prince Asfa Wossen Haile Selassie</i>	Governor of Wollo; member, Crown Council	
	<i>Ras Menghasha Seyoum</i>	Governor of Tegre	
	<i>Ras Asrate Kassa</i>	Governor of Eritrea	
	<i>Ras Bitwoded Andargatchew Massai</i>	None-former governor of Sidamo; injured 1964	
	<i>Ras Mesfin Seleshi</i>	Deputy governor of Shoa (Emperor is governor)	
CHURCH	<i>Leul Ras Imru Haile Selassie</i>	None	
	<i>Leul Ras Hailu Belew</i>	Member, Crown Council	
	<i>Patriarch Basleyos (Basilios)</i>	Head of Ethiopian church; Bishop of Shoa	
	<i>Abuna Tewoflos (Theophilus)</i>	Acting Patriarch; Bishop of Harar	
GOVERNMENT	<i>Like Siltanat Habte Mariam Workneh</i>	Chief of ecclesiastical affairs, Private Cabinet	
	<i>Aklilu Habte Wold</i>	Prime Minister	
	<i>Lij Yilma Deressa</i>	Finance Minister	
	<i>Lt. Gen. Kebede Gabre</i>	Defense Minister; dislikes chief of staff Iyassu	
	<i>Lt. Gen. Abye Abebe</i>	President of Senate	
	<i>Lt. Gen. Iyassu Mengesha</i>	Chief of staff, Imperial Ethiopian Armed Forces	
MILITARY	<i>Brig. Gen. Abera Woldemariam</i>	Air Force Commander	
	<i>Maj. Gen. Debebe Haile Mariam</i>	1st Division commander	
	<i>Maj. Gen. Teshome Irgetu</i>	2nd Division commander	
	<i>Maj. Gen. Abebe Gameda</i>	3rd Division commander	
	<i>Maj. Gen. Jagema Kello</i>	4th Division commander	

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taking away their right to levy provincial armies, a reform not completed until 1947. Haile Selassie further subdued the nobility by assigning many of them to remote provinces or abroad, by dynastic marriages between members of prominent families and the royal house, by his sole power to grant titles--not hereditary without the Emperor's approval--and by his right to give land and other rewards to loyal officials while confiscating the property of those who oppose him.

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Despite their reduced status, however, the nobles still rank as one of the most influential political forces in the country. Through their large landholdings, they control a sizable portion of the wealth in Ethiopia's agriculturally dominated economy. They also govern the lives of the many Ethiopians who work as sharecroppers on land owned by the nobility.

Eleven of Ethiopia's fourteen provinces have governors who are members of the nobility or the royal family, and other titled officials serve as deputy or subprovince governors. Although all provincial officials are under the nominal control of the central government, they retain considerable autonomy and a few of them have managed to build a personal base of support in the areas they govern.

The highest title of nobility given by the Emperor today is ras, of which there are now six. All are important political figures, but only two--because

The Nobility

The power of the nobility has been substantially reduced during the last 30 years. When Haile Selassie became Emperor in 1930, provincial nobles still raised their own armies, ran their own police forces, selected their own civilian administrators, and paid for all these with tribute exacted from their provinces.

The Emperor gained supremacy over the nobility principally by

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of their relative youth, political ambition, support, and royal lineage--are possible contenders for the throne. They are Ras Mengasha Seyoum, governor of Tegre Province, and Ras Asrate Kassa, governor of Eritrea.

Ras Mengasha, a great-grandson of the Emperor Yohannes (1868-1889), has been governor of Tegre since 1961. He is popular among the Tegreans, who have always competed with the southern Amharas from Shoa Province for dominance of the empire--of which Tegre was once the center. Ras Mengasha's personality and ambitions are the subject of much speculation, but as the leading member of the Tegrean royal house he might be capable of presenting a strong challenge to the crown prince. He does not appear to have any significant support in the capital, which he rarely visits, but he is married to a granddaughter of the Emperor and may be playing a quiet waiting game until Haile Selassie dies.

Ras Asrate Kassa is a member of the same large family as the Emperor. His father was a firm supporter of Haile Selassie and renounced his own claim to the throne in favor of the present Emperor. Ras Asrate may desire to become prime minister, however, and has been thought by some to harbor royal ambitions [redacted]

[redacted] He probably lacks the regional popular support of Ras Mengasha, but does have power-

ful connections among the Shoan nobility, notably as the leading member of the influential and wealthy Moja clan, and enjoys some connections with the army and police.

At present, most of the other important nobles appear to support the crown prince's succession. Loyalty, however, has not been a historically stable item among the Ethiopian nobility and there may be a considerable realignment in order to ensure a position on the winning side if any serious opposition to the crown prince develops.

The Church

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims 10 million members, but estimates place its strength nearer 8.5 million, about 35 percent of the population. Muslims are believed to constitute an approximately equal number. The remainder of the population is divided among various animist religions, Falasha Jews, and several Christian sects.

Although the church's members are not in the majority, they are concentrated among the Amhara-Tigrai ethnic group that completely dominates the country, and the church enjoys a correspondingly favored status. The Emperor is required by the constitution to be orthodox, and most government officials are also Orthodox Church members. In 1966, all but five out of 19 government ministers were orthodox (the others were Christians; there

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were no Muslims), as were most members of both houses of the parliament. Nearly all of the nobility belongs to the Orthodox Church, and many of them hold prominent lay positions.

In addition to its influence within the government, the church has considerable economic power. It collects taxes on some of its large landholdings, as well as renting acreage to tenant farmers in the time-honored Ethiopian system of sharecropping.

The clergy are among the most reactionary influences in Ethiopia. They are nearly unanimous in opposing any change in the country's traditional society that would reduce their influence.

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Although Haile Selassie has somewhat reduced the power of the church by gaining control over the appointment of high officials and by making the church more financially dependent on the government, he has also relied on it as a pillar of support for his regime. The Emperor regards the church as one of the chief stabilizing elements in Ethiopia because of its tremendous influence over the uneducated masses of the country and because of its entrenched position within the nobility and the government. He recognizes the need for reform to modernize the church, but has

been slow to compel any changes in recent years, largely from fear of losing the church's support for his rule and for the succession of the crown prince.

In a succession crisis, the church would probably support the crown prince. His relatively progressive views on the role of the monarchy and the need for reform within the church, however, might lead some clergymen to favor a more conservative member of the nobility. The continuance of the traditional imperial system is crucial to the church's power and prestige, and it would not hesitate to oppose any basic change that threatened its place in Ethiopian society.

The Military

The modern Ethiopian military is a post - World War II creation of Haile Selassie and is the first truly national armed force in the country's history. The 40,000-man army and the 2,500-man air force are the strongest physical forces in the country, far outstripping the 31,000-man Imperial Ethiopian Police both in size and in the quality of their training and equipment. There is also an infant navy, commanded by the Emperor's 34-year-old grandson, but it is of no military or political significance.

The Emperor, who relies on the military to protect the country against external threats from Ethiopia's Muslim neighbors as well as against internal dissidence among minority tribes, also

clearly realizes the danger of a military take-over and has been careful to maintain strict control over the appointment and promotion of leading military officers. The Emperor also fosters a certain amount of competition and intrigue among high-level officers in order to keep them off balance and to prevent any coalition of forces that might challenge his rule.

Such a challenge did develop in December 1960 while the Emperor was in Brazil. A group of officers in the Imperial Bodyguard, the best-trained and equipped of the army's four divisions, attempted to seize the government. Although the rebels gained some support within military and student groups in the capital, they were opposed by the church and by large segments of the army. After two days of bloody fighting, the revolt was crushed and some of its leaders killed themselves--the others were later executed. A large number of government ministers and high officials held as hostages during the fighting were killed. The crown prince was also a hostage but was released unharmed.

The army remains a definite contender for power in Ethiopia.

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[Redacted]

The higher officers, for the most part, are old, generally uneducated men who owe their positions to the fact that they have the Emperor's trust rather than

to their ability. The junior officers resent this favoritism and would prefer a promotion system based on merit, which would allow them to advance on the basis of their more extensive educations.

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The competition and rivalry among military officers, which the Emperor has used effectively to control the army, could have extremely divisive effects after his death unless the crown prince acts quickly to win the support of the military.

The Civil Service

Like the military, the civil service is largely a creation of

the Emperor, and it has expanded greatly since his return to power in 1941. Its more than 30,000 members are vitally necessary to run the government and have developed some influence over its operations, although they lack the power of the military or the prestige of the nobility and the church.

The civil service is composed mainly of young, educated officials who occupy the lower and middle echelons, and a smaller group of older administrators at the top who obtained their training before or during the Italian occupation. Some of this older group are far from competent, but they have demonstrated their loyalty to the Emperor and he continues to maintain them in their high positions.

There is a basic antagonism between those trusted officials who exercise a monopoly of decision-making power and the younger employees who are often better trained but are frustrated because they lack any real voice in government policies. The two groups are not united as factions, however, and many members of each have private ambitions and engage in various intrigues to improve their own positions. Their political influence is very limited, and the cliques that develop tend to be temporary alliances of like-minded friends with no ideological base. Even these are likely to be regarded as dangerous by the Emperor,

who keeps a close watch on all high government officials.

Because they depend on the present government for their prestigious jobs, government workers at all levels are likely to remain neutral in any succession crisis, although some individuals high in the administration might throw their influence to a particular candidate. Most would probably support the crown prince, but regional and ethnic leaders might attract some support.

Other Factors

Although most of Ethiopia's educated elite are associated with the military, the civil service, or the nobility, there are also a number of university students and secondary school graduates who are not connected with any of these groups. Having no vested interest in the present administration, they are consequently the most radical in their desire to change it, although their ideas are still mild compared with the political outlook of some African student groups. The students have not, however, succeeded to date in gaining any appreciable influence on the government, nor any large degree of popular support, and are not likely to play a major role in deciding the succession question.

Of far more immediate significance than student activists are the insurgents of the Eritrean Liberation Front (BLF), who

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have been active since 1961. The ELF is fighting for the independence of Eritrea, a province that was an Italian colony for 60 years and has been under Ethiopian administration only since 1952. The ELF is largely Muslim and opposes the domination of Eritrea by the Christian Amharas. Its guerrilla operations have been supported by the radical Arab states. Ethiopian Government forces have not yet been able to eliminate the ELF and--although the insurgents suffered some serious defeats in 1968--the movement remains an active threat.

The ELF, which lacks support outside Eritrea, is completely outside the ruling structure of Ethiopia, and its members have little hope of influencing the government on any question, let alone the matter of the succession. If a serious struggle develops during a change of rulers, however, the ELF might be able to break Eritrea away from Ethiopia and establish its independence with the aid of Arab states before the central government could be sufficiently organized to intervene.

The same possibility of breaking away from the empire also exists for other outlying provinces that have become part of Ethiopia within the last century, such as parts of Harar, Bale, and Sidamo, which have each had sporadic insurgent movements in the last five years. The danger of fragmentation of

the empire, however, is clearly realized by most Ethiopians within the ruling establishment and constitutes one of the strongest reasons for avoiding any prolonged struggle for the crown.

Outlook

Emperor Haile Selassie retains firm control of the government at present and should be able to retain his position as long as his health remains substantially unimpaired. His 52 years of practice have made the Emperor a master at his Byzantine system of ruling, and his methods will probably not change appreciably during the remainder of his lifetime. His government will continue to provide Ethiopia with a stable, somewhat repressive, and only haltingly progressive administration, characterized by the corruption and inefficiency at all levels that Haile Selassie regards as an acceptable price to pay for the loyalty of those who serve him. When the succession problem does arise, the crown prince will probably succeed to the throne.

The degree of support that the crown prince enjoys within the ruling establishment is difficult to evaluate, however, because he has been in the background in national affairs. He can probably count on the support of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and on most of the royal family, although many of its members are pessimistic about the dynasty's chances of survival in any form in the post - Haile Selassie

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period.

Many members of the nobility would probably support or at least not actively oppose the crown prince's succession. Few if any of them would favor abolishing the monarchy or the establishment of any form of republican government, but many would like to see the Emperor's power reduced to their own advantage.

The deciding factor in the succession will probably be the military, which the crown prince would need to hold the throne. If he can retain his present popularity within the army, his prospects are excellent to become a limited monarch with a close circle of military and perhaps some civilian advisers.

Ras Mengasha Seyoum, Ras Asrate Kassa, or some less well known member of the nobility could make an attempt to seize the crown but to be successful they would need to win wider support than their present regional bases as well as the acquiescence of the military. Members of the

military might also attempt to take over the government, but they would probably need to preserve some of the trappings of the monarchy in order to gain the support of the church and avoid serious challenges from the people who revere the traditional emperor.

Whoever takes over the reins of the government is unlikely to wield the authority or to have the prestige of the present Emperor. The impact of modern society, though still not great in most of Ethiopia, is being increasingly felt, and the traditional attitude of obedience to the church and to the Emperor is being called into question by the country's growing educated elite. Even the peasants are becoming interested in modernization and are beginning to view the government as an institution that should help them to achieve a higher standard of living. A coalition government of the crown prince and civilian and military leaders may be able to do this, but with Ethiopia already lagging behind the development pace of much of Africa, they will face a formidable task.

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