



A Victorian Gentleman and Ethiopian Nationalist: The Life and Times of Hakim Wärqenäh, Dr Charles Martin

Peter P. Garretson

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This is the first full biography of Hakim Wärqenäh Eshätu, or Dr Charles Martin (1865-1952), who was Ethiopia's first western trained physician as well as a statesman, administrator, diplomat, author and a major progressive force in modern Ethiopian history. Yet he had overlapping identities as a world citizen, citizen of the British empire and Ethiopian nationalist, living in many different countries but never wholly belonging in any one. The child of Ethiopian aristocrats, he was found on the battlefield of Magdala by a British officer and raised and educated in India. First employed in the Indian civil service he subsequently served as a physician to three Ethiopian emperors. The key turning point in his life came with his marriage to an Ethiopian aristocrat, closely related to two Empresses, a marriage which greatly enhanced his influence at court. This is as much a family biography as his biography, and focuses especially on his work as an educator, governor of a model province and, finally, the climax of his career when, as Ethiopian ambassador to England, he was a key international figure in protesting the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and mobilizing world opinion against Italy and for Ethiopia. He became a spokesman for the African diaspora during the 1930s and an Ethiopian elder statesman in the 1940s, and his extended family (and many of those he mentored) had an impact on modern Ethiopian history. The biography is based on Charles Martin's unpublished diary and autobiography and archival research in Ethiopia and Europe.

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