

**THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
PROVISION OF SCHOOLING IN ERITREA  
DURING  
THE BRITISH RULE  
(1941-1952)**



**UNIVERSITY** *of the*  
**FESSHAZION TEWOLDE SEBAHTU**  
**WESTERN CAPE**

**THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROVISION OF  
SCHOOLING IN ERITREA DURING THE BRITISH RULE**

**(1941-1952)**

**A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
M. Phil. in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.  
South Africa.**



**UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This investigation deals with the historical development of the provision of schooling in Eritrea during the British period (1941-1952). It traces the origin of education from traditional to modern education under the Coptic Church, the Mosque, the Catholic and the Swedish Evangelical missionaries. Missionary education served as a stepping stone to the emergence of colonial education.

Italian schooling, which was based on racial discrimination, was colonial in nature and consisted of two types. The school for the nationals was superior excluding access to the locals and the second, for the locals, was an inferior one. It had two concepts, emphasising the spoken Italian language and manual labour. In general, Italian education of the locals was limited only to grade four and was no better than propaganda and indoctrination. It was based on the glorification of Italy's past and present history, respect of its leaders, white superiority and black docility. Its long-term aim was to create future troops for Italy's further colonial expansion.

British schooling inherited a very backward educational system from the Italians, with lack of trained teachers, inadequate textbooks, and almost nonexistent school buildings. As a result British schooling began from scratch, without allocating sufficient financial expenditure. They only assigned teachers, leaving all the responsibility to be covered by the local people like construction of schools, providing residential areas and salaries to teachers. The British upgraded schooling to middle and secondary education. A number of new developments were introduced namely the opening of Teacher Training College, middle and secondary, English Institute and Girls' schools and they also granted bursaries for further education. They conducted inspection of schools once in three months. Above all they allowed the educated locals to play an active role in the schooling activity. In 11 years the number of schools, pupils and teachers outstripped what the Italians have not achieved in their fifty-one years of rule

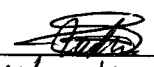
## Declaration

I Fessahazion T declare that **The Historical Development of the provision of schooling in Eritrea during the British rule (1941-1952)** is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



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Fessahazion Tewelde.

Signature   
11/12/01

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## **Dedication**

This mini-thesis is dedicated to all the Eritrean heroes who fell defending the integrity and sovereignty of Eritrea from the 1998 - 2000 aggression of the T.P.L.F. (Wayane).



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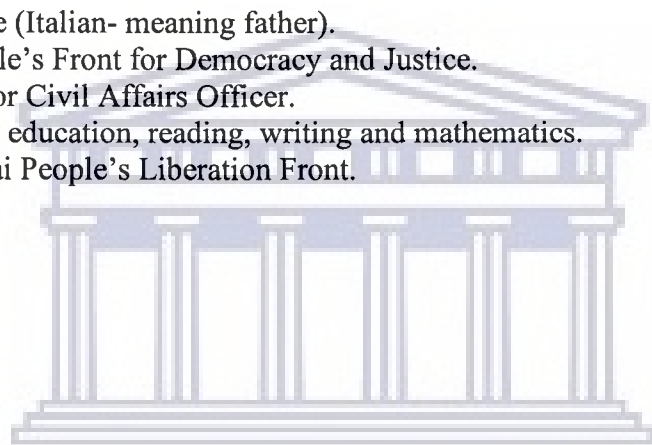
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## Abbreviations

A. D.	After the birth of Christ. (Anno Domini)
B. A. E.	British Administration Eritrea.
B. C.	before the birth of Christ.
B. M. A.	British Military Administration.
Bu/Bur.	Bursary/ Bursaries.
c.	Century.
ca.	Circa (about/around)
E. A. A.	Eritrea Administrative Assistant
ED.	Education Department
E. P. L. F.	Eritrea n People's Liberation Front.
E S. U. N. A.	the Association of Eritrea Students in North America.
P.	Padre (Italian- meaning father).
P. F. D. J.	People's Front for Democracy and Justice.
S. C. A. O.	Senior Civil Affairs Officer.
Three Rs	basic education, reading, writing and mathematics.
T. P. L. F.	Tigrai People's Liberation Front.



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## Glossary

Abba-	-father, monk or priest.
Askari	-native soldier in the Italian army.
Ato-	-Mr.
Awraja-	-district, province.
Azmatch-	-leader of an expedition.
Bahri Negassi	-Lord (King) of the sea.
ca.	-circa (about/around)
Carabineiri	-military police officer.
Debtera-	-learned man.
Dejazmatch	-commander of the king's gate
Dergue	-the Provisional Military Administrative council that replaced Emperor with zealous passion for the development of their country.
Fitewrari	Commander of the vanguard.
Four Power Commission	the commission set up by the U. S. A., Britain, France and the former Soviet Union to decide the future of the former Italian colonies after the Second World War.
Ghebar-	-tribute provider.
Kegnazmatch	-commander of the right column.
Maekel Bahri	-center of the sea.
Maestro (Italian)	-teacher.
Medri Bahri-	-Land of the sea.
Memhir	-teacher/ senior clergyman.
Mereb-Millash	-beyond the Mereb river.
Meticci (Italian)	-half caste.
Mislene	-district governor.
Negassi-	-Lord/King.
Scuola (Italian)-	-school.
Woizero	-Madam, Mrs.
Zoba-	-zone/ region.

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

“The scramble for Africa “ is a well-known term that describes the zenith of European imperialism. The industrialised European nations were striving for resources, markets, and cheap manpower, thus embarking upon a ruthless competition for political and economic control over African territories. During the last decades of the nineteenth century according to the agreement reached by the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), Africa was partitioned among the various colonial powers, largely regardless of any previous borders whether these were natural, ethnic or political.

The leading European nations competing for colonies were Britain and France. Other nations wanting to join “the scramble” needed to secure the support of one of these. As a result, Italy after the completion of its unification in 1870 entered the African scene with British blessing. Britain controlled most of north-eastern Africa, i.e., Egypt and the Sudan starting from 1882. This was strategically very significant area because of the Nile River, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea coastline. All these were crucial concerning the control of shipping and commerce. The control of the Suez Canal and the Red Sea was of a particular importance to Britain, as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had considerably shortened the sea route to India. The Nile has always been of indisputable importance to Egyptian and Sudanese agriculture and commerce. However, the river course has its source in Ethiopia. As Zewde (1991:73) clearly describes, “Whoever was to control this territory was therefore a matter of great concern to the British.” Into this area, Italy in the 1880s managed to squeeze in and get a foothold.

The various colonisers of Eritrea adapted the education system of the country to their own needs and requirements. Eritrea has been successively colonised by different groups of

colonisers for about a century (1890-1991). Like any other African countries, Eritrea has taken its ultimate and present shape at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

On January 1, 1890, Italy proclaimed Eritrea its colony. It remained under its control until the British occupied the territory in 1941 during the Second World War (1939-1945). This was the first colony acquired by Italy. Later the greater part of today's Somalia and then Libya were occupied in 1889 and 1912 respectively. The Italians furthered their colonial expansion by invading Ethiopia in 1935. This led to the interference of the British and French to safeguard their interests in the Horn of Africa. During the Second World War the British as members of the Allied Powers defeated the Italians and controlled Eritrea establishing a British Military Administration that lasted from 1941-1952.

In 1952, through a United Nations (UN) decision, Eritrea was forced into a federation with Ethiopia (1952-1962). However, many Eritrean people opposed the federation and later union with Ethiopia (1962 onwards). In 1961 an armed struggle was started and the Eritrean revolution has been continuing for decades. After 30 years of struggle the Eritrean revolution together with the T. P. L. F., an Ethiopian liberation army, successively defeated the Ethiopian army on May 24, 1991 liberating the country from the yoke of colonisation. After establishing a provisional Government, it was decided that a referendum for the independence of Eritrea to take place after two years. The promise that was given to the people of Eritrea by the British was realised by the struggle of the Eritrean people in 1993 after a political and an armed struggle of 52 years (Embaye, 2000:2).

A Referendum took place on April 23, 24, and 25, 1993 on the question, "Do you want Eritrea to be independent?" The result was 99.8% yes for the Independence of Eritrea. Eritrea was proclaimed an Independent Sovereign State on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1993. Its sovereignty was ratified by the U.N.O's. 104<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. On the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1993 Eritrea, thus became the 182<sup>nd</sup> member of the U. N. O.

This mini-thesis will concentrate solely on Eritrea. Further presentation of Eritrea its land and people will be given including a brief historical background of the territory with special

emphasis on the period leading up to the British occupation and the schooling they introduced in Eritrea during their rule.

## ***1.2 Research Problems***

Since independence the Ministry of Education has been making continuous effort to bring about the revival and development of education in Eritrea through effective schooling. However, the burden should not be shouldered upon the Ministry of Education only. The whole society must actively be involved in order to bring about everlasting solution to the backwardness of our country's standard of education. It should be clear that education is the base for the development of every society. In a free society, the more education is developed the more the manpower will become productive, conscious and responsible for the problems of the society.

In order to look at possible areas where education could be developed, it is necessary to look into the colonial past to see what structure was set up. As a good experience of the past to solve contemporary problems in education, some of the research questions that this study seeks to address are as follows: -

1. What was the nature of the provision of schooling in Eritrea prior to the British?
2. How was provision of schooling of the British in comparison to their predecessors?
3. So many Eritrean people claim that British schooling was better than that of the Italians, if it was so, what was this excellence?
4. How was the British schooling related to the real life situation of the Eritrean society?
5. What policy did the British design in the provision of schooling? How was it related with the overall colonial policy in Eritrea?
6. What subjects were taught in the British schooling?
7. What were the chances of access to British schooling in Eritrea?
8. What problems did the British face in the provision of schooling?

Answers to the above questions may enlighten decision-makers about how to deal the problems they encounter today.

### ***1.3 Aims and Limitations***

The topic of this mini-thesis is the Historical Development of the provision of schooling in Eritrea during the British Military Administration (1941-1952). Its main purpose is to overview the British schooling, its extent and content. That is, it will attempt to assess how the British during their brief stay in the country offered schooling. The level and contents of the schooling is to be investigated as well, together with the possibilities for the Eritreans to obtain any kind of higher education if it was existing. An attempt will be made to establish to what extent the local population actually attended or acquired the opportunity to benefit from British schooling. Besides, the challenges the British faced, if there were any, and the solutions made to overcome them will also be another point of discussion. Variables to consider in this respect are the likelihood for the pupils to acquire work once they had finished schooling, and the relevance of the syllabus to the Eritrean environment.

Regarding contents, the main question is to what extent the British provided conscious education policy or schooling. Although the British rule in Eritrea was a brief period of eleven years (1941-1952), and they ruled the territory as a caretaker and maintenance only, they also acted as colonial rulers. They dismantled some important parts of the infrastructure and many properties. As a good example, “they destroyed the airport facilities in Asmara, Assab, and Gurae. They sold the stationary and floating docks at Massawa to Pakistan and 16 harbour boats to Italian and Arab merchants. They destroyed and dismantled port buildings, storehouses, crane, residential areas at Massawa, and store buildings built by Americans at Mai Habar, Ghindae, Asmara and Gurae. They sold the cableways from Asmara to Massawa to other countries. They sold the cement factory at Massawa to the Sudan. They dismantled cotton, coffee and tobacco plantation plants, abandoned 500 fuel tanks from Massawa, and potash industrial plant at Fatna Dori, drilling and detecting machines of oil from Nakura were sold abroad” (Eritrea Geography Curriculum Department, 1995 7).



Since truth could not be hidden, as Beyene (1992:62) indicated the British Military Administration was not totally responsible for the deteriorating situation in Eritrea which is incorrect to hold so. On the contrary, it was the British who fostered democracy, education, and social progress in Eritrea. That is by the beginning of the second half of 1940s, the British allowed some kind of freedom which gave the opportunity for the formation of political parties based on different aims.

One important limitation to this mini-thesis is the scarcity of sources and their lack of continuity. The period of the British rule as already mentioned above was during wartime (1939-1945) and the second half of the 1940s was a brief period which did not give them the chance to consolidate their rule. On their departure, documents were not well preserved. The Federal Government (1952-1962) replaced the British Military Administration. On December 2, 1950, the United Nations adopted Resolution N0..390 A-(V) that resolved the establishment of a federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia, a process done under the extreme and effective diplomatic pressure. However, soon afterwards the Ethiopian government began a campaign of suppression slacking off the development in Eritrea to the level of the undeveloped provinces of Ethiopia, because as a result of Italian and British colonisation Eritrea was relatively in a better (capitalist) production relation while Ethiopia was in feudal stage. To establish their own rule and domination over the Eritrean society and to get rid of accusation the Ethiopians either removed or transferred all the documents which could give a clear picture of Eritrean progress, to Addis Ababa. This could be done especially after securing the complete annexation of Eritrea in 1962. That is Eritrea was made the 14<sup>th</sup> province of the Ethiopian Empire by force of arms. This was aimed at erasing Eritrean identity and history so as to accept Ethiopian supremacy without any opposition. The conflict that was taking place between Eritrea and Ethiopia for more than two years (May 1998 to November 2000) did not enable me to go to Addis Ababa for further research. In addition some documents could be lost during the subsequent years of liberation struggle for independence (1961-1991). So every aspect of document concerning Eritrea is not available as such and it has been very difficult to collect materials scattered here and there to make the story a complete one.

Though this is the situation, dedicated Eritrean scholars in particular, and interested individuals, successful accomplishments have been made in obtaining some sources. These sources are found in the archives of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice in the capital Asmara. Finding the necessary books dealing with Eritrea were hard to come by in Eritrea as they are regarded as precious items. Photocopying is therefore rarely allowed, leaving the information to be copied by hand which made it time consuming process. As will be seen later I therefore, also had to make use of oral informants.

#### **1.4 Rationale**

Eritrea has been a victim of successive colonial rule for a period of a century (1890-1991). It has suffered a lot under the Italians, the British and the Ethiopians. During that period, the local inhabitants of present day Eritrea have been deprived of social, political, cultural, economic, educational rights and were considered as second class citizens in this territory. Each and every individual colonial power has implemented its own respective educational policy to underpin its own overall colonial policy in the subjugation of the local inhabitants.

From my experience in teaching and living within the society, I have come across so many Eritrean people praising British schooling system and condemning those of the Italians and the Ethiopians. This belief could be true after having seen the minor adjustments made by the British who upgraded the already existing primary schooling of the Italians to post primary (middle school). But this could be without having a good understanding of the general aims of the colonial schooling and its quality. In addition, this could be said in contrast to Italian schooling, which restricted the education of local inhabitants only up to grade four, and as a result of the hatred of their notorious colour bar policy.

From this point of view, I am motivated to know how far this claim is true. If it is true, I believe that it could have its own contribution for the present day educational problem of the country in sharing the good and effective experiences of the past, which could be

applicable at the present. In addition, the mini-thesis could serve as a point of departure for those who want to make further study on the development of Eritrean education.

## **1.5 *Approaching the problem***

The mini-thesis is divided into five main chapters. The first chapter will cover the historical background of the country dealing from the ancient times up to the coming of the British. The second chapter deals with the provision of schooling prior to the British. This means it will include looking over indigenous schooling under the auspices of the two major religions of the country, the Orthodox and Islam. These two religions have to some extent inspired the society to develop the ways and means of acquiring knowledge. This will be followed by the introduction of modern schooling namely the appearance of mission schooling under the guidance of the Catholic and the Protestant missions. In the later period this kind of schooling was supplemented by the Italian schooling until the start of British schooling. The third chapter will discuss broadly about how the British provided schooling, the problems they encountered and the measures they took to overcome them. The fourth chapter will be reserved to the changes introduced by the British schooling different from their predecessors and the effects brought about by British schooling. The last chapter will deal with conclusion.

## **1.6 *Literature and Research***

In the case of material sources for the mini- thesis, they are scanty. The reasons for this are already made clear above. However, though not too much exaggerated, materials in the form of primary and secondary sources have provided me with better information in such a way that it could give a clear understanding about British schooling.

These include the “Eritrean Weekly News”, a newspaper published at the time, reports and letters of correspondence exchanged between the then British Education Department in Eritrea with other governmental and non-governmental organisations. Besides the three

informants, Kegnazmatch Asfaha Kahsai, Memhir Mishgina Yishak, and Memhir Semere Habteselassie who were participants in the schooling activity at the time are good sources of first hand information. The reason why I choose these three informants is because, I knew them before and they are resourceful individuals. I had also interviewed them earlier for my first-degree dissertation.

### ***1.7 Oral informants***

The first one I interviewed was Kegnazmatch Asfaha Kahsai born in 1919. His father had been a carabinieri (military police officer) In 1929 he tried to enrol his son in a school for Eritreans, the “Scuola Vittorio Emanuele III” in Asmara, but classes were already full. The first year Asfaha therefore attended the Swedish missionary school instead. Then he went to Keren, where he attended a course in typing at the “Salvago Raggi.” Two years later, his father was stationed in Massawa, and Asfaha followed his family. The fourth and the last year of schooling he got at the Catholic mission school in Massawa. From 1937 until the British took over in 1941 he worked at the “San Giorgio” school in Adi Ugri. In 1943 the British Military Administration summoned him to help restart schooling. In 1944 he became an assistant inspector at the Education Office, working with the already mentioned Kynaston Snell. Shortly afterwards he was promoted to the position of an inspector and during the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia he was director of personnel. In the following years, he worked at the Labour Office, the then Department of Education when he ended up as the general director. After five years he was transferred, though against his own wish, to the Supreme Court as a judge. As can be told from his life span, Asfaha Kahsai had a lot to contribute regarding first hand information about the contents and conditions of schooling for Eritreans. Having been both a pupil and a teacher during the times of the Italians and a teacher, assistant inspector and inspector during the British, his statements and viewpoints on the subject will be very fruitful. Asfaha was interviewed on December 20, 1999 in Asmara in his residence.

The second person I interviewed was Memhir Misghina Yishak, born in 1923. He was brought up in his village, Tsezegga, where he got the opportunity to learn Tigrigna at the

Swedish mission elementary school. Later his parents transferred him to Scuola Vittorio Emanuele III an Italian school in Asmara. After a short while, the school was closed to serve as a hospital when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. After this he did join a regular school but through his own effort and the support of other people, he upgraded his knowledge while doing his own private business as a railwayman. He succeeded in acquiring a good knowledge of Tigrigna and Italian, which enabled him to become a teacher in 1947 after passing an entrance examination. He attended a six-month teacher-training course and was assigned to the rural areas like Seharti and Anseba for three years as a teacher. After this he was assigned to Asmara where he was able to continue his studies through extension. During the federation, he was sent to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with two other colleagues, where he attended one-year directors' course at the Haile Selassie I University. Finally, he served in the Ministry of Education at different levels for about forty years until his retirement. I interviewed Memhir Misghina Yishak on January 15, 2000 in Asmara at his residence.

The third person I interviewed was Memhir Semere Habtesellasié, born in 1933 in Geza Waza in south Serae. He was the son of a farmer. He was enrolled in first grade at Sheka Wodi Bisrat elementary school in 1945. He continued to attend his studies in San Giorgio, Adi Ugri where he completed grade seven and transferred to Asmara to attend grade eight. To support his family then, he joined the teaching profession, as there was the need of manpower badly during the federation. Due to his early marriage, he was not able to get further education. After serving in the Ministry of Education for thirty-six years he retired in 1991. I interviewed Memhir Semere Habteselassie on January 27, 2000 at the Eritrean Teachers' Association Club.

Other materials, which enabled me to get secondary sources, are different books written by individuals of that period as well as journals alike. Some of the materials include: -

*Eritrea: A Colony in Transition 1941-1952* by the British, G.K.N. Trevaskis published in 1960. This book gives good information about education during the Italian and later discussed education during the British period. He expressed that the British inherited a very

backward educational system from their predecessors the Italians, which made it “formidable task” for the British.

*La Scuola in Eritrea Ieri E Oggi (The School in Eritrea Yesterday and Today)* by the Italian, Guiseppe Pugliesi published in 1953 in the periodical *Africa* in three volumes is very interesting full of information about the school in Eritrea. It gives a clear picture about how schooling started in Eritrea. It deals with the indigenous education, Church and Mosque education followed by the introduction of modern education. Mission education as well as colonial education is well described. In colonial education, Pugliesi has explained deeply about the school during the Italian and the British Military Administration period.

*A Historical Survey of State Education in Eritrea* published by the then education officer of Eritrea during the Dergue regime, Adane Taye (Dr.), in 1991 is also of great importance. This book is very interesting that it gives a foundation of education in Eritrea starting from Church and Mosque education up to the period of liberation. It provides the types and aims of education at different historical periods of the country.

*A Study on Italian Educational Activities in Colonial Eritrea: 1890-1941* by Christine Smith Simonsen (1997) is very resourceful material for pre-colonial and colonial education during the Italians. It clarifies the way Italians were providing schooling to the locals during their half-century colonial period on the territory.

A very good study which highlights about colonial education in Eritrea is also explained by Berhane Teclehaimanot (Dr.) in his work, *Education In Eritrea During European Colonial Period* in “*Eritrea Studies Review*” (1996), a semi-annual publication. Here Teclehaimanot has given a profounding knowledge about Italian and British colonial education in Eritrea in a clear way and in depth with due emphasis on their main objectives supported by statistical data.

*Rural Reconstruction in Action: Attack the Problem of Illiteracy (Eritrea)* by H. B. Allen published in 1953 is another book of importance. This book is based on the report of

Allen's tour to Eritrea about what he observed in the country when the British Captain H. F. Kynaston Snell, Director General of the Education Department, laid the foundation of British schooling. He discusses about what problems the British faced in starting schooling and how they encountered them. In addition, he was able to see how the local people were taking part in solving the problem by showing their full co-operation in the construction of schools, providing residence for the teachers and preparing the necessary facilities for the schools.

In the case of local writers, Memhir Yishak Yosief has prepared a good book which deals the coverage of British schooling under the topic *A Short Biography of Yishak Tewoldemedhin: War against Illiteracy (1986)*. Though the topic speaks about the biography of Yishak Tewoldemedhin the content totally is related with the British schooling because Yishak Tewoldemedhin was the first local inspector who was chosen to be assistant to the Director General of the Education Department. He has played great role in training the pioneer untrained teachers, preparing textbooks of different subjects, and providing vital teaching materials. He has good reputation in the Eritrean society for his service for the revival of education in Eritrea in general and the development of the Tigrigna language in particular.

Another book of good interest which deals with the development of schooling in Eritrea is the one written by Memhir Mehari Woldemariam by the topic *Timhirti Ab Eritra (Education In Eritrea)* published in 1997. These are some of the references used.

## ***1.8 Background History of Eritrea***

### ***1.8.1 Location***

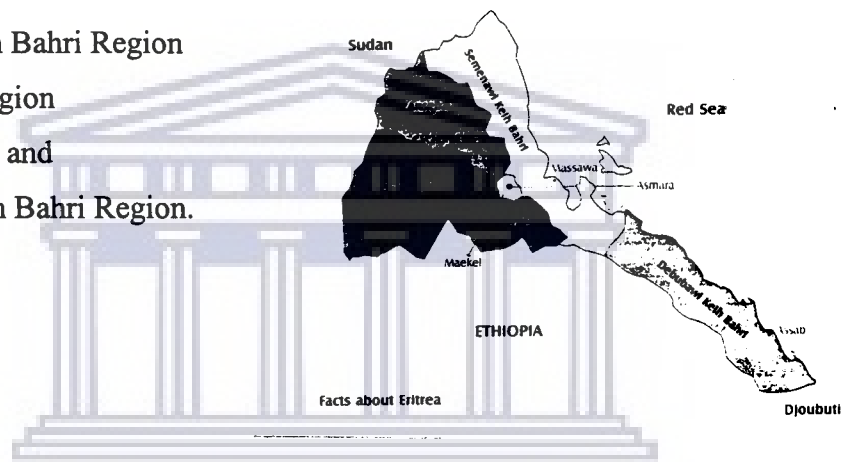
Eritrea is one of the countries on the Horn of Africa along the Red Sea. It is bordered by Sudan to the north and west, by Ethiopia and Djibouti to the south and the Red Sea to the east. Eritrea covers an area of about 125,000 square kilometres (over 48,000 square miles) and is thus approximately the size of England (Simonsen, 1997:15). Eritrea has about 360

islands in the Red Sea. The Red Sea coastline stretches about 1,200 kilometres which makes Eritrea occupy a very strategic position, that acts as a cross bridge between Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

### **1.8.2 Administrative Regions**

Today Eritrea is divided into six regional administrative zones (“zobas”) namely,

1. Anseba Region
2. Debub Region
3. Debubawi Keih Bahri Region
4. Gash-Barka Region
5. Maekel Region and
6. Semenawi Keih Bahri Region.



Administrative regions of Eritrea.

Source: - National Insurance Corporation Eritrea, Agenda 2000

Gash-Barka region and Anseba are in the Western lowlands, Maekel and Debub regions on the Highland Plateau, while Debubawi Keih Bahri and Semenawi Keih Bahri regions constitute the coastal areas. Asmara in the Maekel region is the capital city of Eritrea and thus by far the most important city. Massawa and Assab are the two main seaports of the country. Other centres are the capitals of the remaining administrative regions like Keren, Massawa and Mendefera.



### **1.8.3 Nationalities and Languages**

There are nine ethnic groups in Eritrea, a number that has remained the same since the arrival of the last of the waves of migrants in the middle of the nineteenth century (i.e., the Rashaidas). The names of the nine ethnic groups and their respective languages are the same with the exception of the Rashaidas whose language is Arabic. The rest are Afar, Bilen, Hidarb, Kunama, Nara, Saho, Tigre and Tigrigna.

In Eritrea, there is as yet no official language but Tigrigna and Arabic are the main working languages.

As Simonsen made it clear by quoting Pederson (1987:39), "Eritrea was for centuries the scene of migrations, into its territory and across it. The result is a mosaic of tribes, races, linguistic groups." Being this the case, the notion of Eritrean identity has been created as a result of opposition and resistance to the various enemies of the territory like the Turks, the Egyptians, the Italians, the British, and the Ethiopians. These were the ruthless enemies of the local people who were able to resolve their differences and created a common front against their class enemies. This by its self has been asserted by the thirty years of war of liberation (1961-1991) waged against the Haile Selassie I regime first and later against the Dergue which replaced Haile Selassie in 1974. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front which led the war of liberation in Eritrea has played great role in assisting, training and arming the opposition forces of the Dergue particularly the party which is in power in the present day Ethiopia (i. e. the T.P.L.F.). As Tareke, (1991: 220) clearly indicates, "T. P. L. F.'s military strength derives from peasant support and the leadership's resourcefulness, but Tigrai's peripheral location has been very helpful. The insurgents (T.P.L.F.) not only received vital assistance at initial stage of their struggle, but from time to time have co-ordinated their operations with the E.P.L.F., the formidable guerrilla force in the region." The T.P.L.F. have also contributed in eroding the power of the Dergue inside Ethiopia and Eritrea. At last the Eritrean society was successful to gain independence in 1991 from the hands of the Dergue by force.

### **1.8.4 Religions**

In the case of religion, the Eritrean population is almost equally divided into Islam and Christianity. In addition to the two main groups, a very small percentage of animists (ca.0.5%) are found amongst the Kunama, an ethnic group of Negro (Nilotic) origin located in the area around Barentu in Gash- Setit in the South- west.

The followers of Islam religion mostly live in the Western lowlands bordering the Sudan and the Northern Hills, on the Dahlak Islands and along the Red Sea coast. Some of the groups are nomads or semi-nomads like the Rashaida, north of Massawa. In the Highland Plateau a great number of Muslims live as well, and in Asmara both religious groups are almost equally represented. Most Highlanders are Christians. They belong to the biggest ethnic groups, Tigrigna, which are also found in Ethiopia. The Christian population consists of three religious sects, i.e., the Roman Catholic, the Protestant and the majority being Orthodox.

The name "Eritrea" is derived from the Greek and Roman ancient name of the Red Sea. The Greeks used to call the Red Sea "Sinus Aeretreys" while the Romans came to know it as "Mare Erytherium" i.e., Sea of Eritrea and this was due to the existence of red algae plant growth in the depth of the Red Sea. It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. that the Italians named the territory adjacent to the sea "Eritrea" (Beyene, 1991: 1). However, at different historical periods Eritrea was given different names, such as the Kingdom of Habeshat, the Kingdom of Axum, Maekel Bahri (centre of the sea), Medri Bahri (land of the sea), and Mereb-Millash (beyond the Mereb River) (Beyene, 1991:1).

People who live in current Eritrea territory are of various origins. The Nilotics are the earliest known inhabitants of present day Eritrea. The Bejas, who first appeared in the Egyptian history around 2700B.C.moved into northern and north-western Eritrea and settled there (Haile, 1988:12). The Semites came from Saudi Arabian Peninsula across the Red Sea. They came around (1000-400B.C.) to the Eritrean Red Sea coast and the Dahlak

Islands where they established commercial stations to escape from trouble at home as well as seeking wealth and easy conquests.

The Semites have introduced important developments which they have experienced before their coming such as, the domestication of animals (the camel, the horse, the sheep) and new seeds, irrigation farming, construction of stone-walled houses, handicraft (pottery, wood work, weaving), writing, trade and mining (Pateman, 1990: 3). Above all the art of living together in villages under the rule of one chief, "Negassi", (King) was one of their main contributions. This system developed the emergence of city-states out of which the Axumite Kingdom was formed (2<sup>nd</sup> –9<sup>th</sup> ca.). This kingdom ruled over some parts of southern Eritrea and northern parts of Tigray, the northern most of present day Ethiopia with its centre at Axum and its port at Adulis (now Zula) in Eritrea. It was a trading and military power.

The Kingdom ruled the areas between Keren in the north, Alagie Mountain (south of Makele), on the south, River Tekezze on the west and Adulis along the Red Sea coast. During the peak of its power, in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. A. D., however, its sphere of influence expanded as far as Meroe around Khartoum on the west, Southern Arabia in the east, Agew lands on the south and Suakin on the Northeast. The relations, however, were based on raids and counter-raids (Paice, 1994:9). It was at this time that Christianity was officially introduced and Ge'ez began to serve as a written language.

Towards the end of the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. A .D., the Axumite Kingdom entered into a declining stage because of internal disruption of the city-states and external pressures, i.e., the rise and expansion of Islam and the Beja invasion from the north (Machida, 1987:7). The disintegration of the Axumite Kingdom gave the Bejas the opportunity to establish five kingdoms namely, the Naqis, Baklin, Jarin, Qua' ta, and Bazen (Machida, 1987:8, Paice, 1994:11). These kingdoms fought consecutive internecine wars, which were the causes for their decline by around the 14<sup>th</sup> c. Since the Bejas were controlling all of Eritrea except the Denkel area, it is said that no Abyssinian king was ruling the Eritrean Plateau until after the 15<sup>th</sup> .c (Pateman, 1990:32).

After the fourteenth century, the present day Eritrea came to be known as the country of the Medri Bahri (Land of the Sea). Its local elected ruler, the Bahri Negassi (Lord of the Sea) ruled Medri Bahri with his capital at Debaruba. However, this area was sandwiched between the Turks who were controlling the coastal areas of the territory and the Abyssinians and Tigreans who attempted to control the area. Nevertheless, the Bahri Negassi retained his power until the end of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. challenging the incessant attempts from the Amharas and the Tigrean chiefs (ESUNA, 1978:34).

As Haile (1988:13) clearly indicated, the Ottoman Turks' conquest of the Arab countries had negative impact on the Red Sea region. The Turks reached the sea in 1517. By 1557 they had formally occupied Massawa and much of the coastal plain of Eritrea as far as Debaruba, where they built fortifications in 1558. They expanded their control to Western Eritrea as far as Keren and Sahel and stayed there until the 19<sup>th</sup> c. The Fung (Funji) Dynasty and Sennar in the Sudan likewise occupied parts of western Eritrea during the same period. Both these occupations of Eritrea ended in 1865, and were replaced by the Egyptians in that year.

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the significance of the coastal areas of Eritrea was augmented. Thus, the Egyptians followed the policy of expanding their rule to other parts of Eritrea like Keren and the Barka lowlands in 1872. Almost for twenty years (1865-1885), the Egyptians were able to control three fourths of present day Eritrea (Machida, 1987:11). They created a kind of united administration. However, the power of the Egyptians waned with the rise of the Mahdi rebellion in Sudan and with the advent of the Italians.

The two leading colonialist powers in competition for the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa were Britain and France followed by a relatively weak Italy. Great Britain already controlled Aden as a Red Sea base in 1839 and occupied Egypt in 1882 and the eastern coastline to Zeila and Berbera in today's Somalia (Paice 1994: 18). The French had also secured a foothold in Djibouti. Both France and Britain had diametrically opposite interests

in the African continent. That is, Britain to create an empire in Africa that would stretch from the Mediterranean to the Cape in the south (Cape to Cairo), while France was to establish an empire that extends from the Atlantic in the west to the Horn of Africa in the east (Dakar to Djibouti).

The Italian missionary who played great role in the colonisation of Eritrea by Italy was Father Guiseppe Sapeto. In 1840, he established a mission in Adwa, (Tigray) and another one in Keren in Eritrea. In 1869, the Italian shipping company, Societa di Navigazione Rubattino (Rubattino Shipping Company) purchased a piece of land in Assab in November 1869 from the local sultan to serve as a fuelling station. Through the mediation of Guiseppe Sapeto, the Italian government took possession of Assab in 1882 and began to administer it directly after stationing a garrison there.

The Italians after consolidating their position encroached to the hinterland by occupying Beilul in January 1885 and Massawa in February 1885. The Italians took possession of Massawa at the evacuation of the Egyptians (Taye, 1991:20, Beyene, 1991:47). The Italians in continuing their advance from Massawa and its outskirts towards the highland area were defeated at the Battle of Dogali, in 1887 by Ras Alula, Emperor Yohannes IV's (1872-1889) military commander and governor of Hamasien.

The chiefs of Hamasien and Akele Guzai decided to revenge the Tigrean chief, Ras Alula who was continuously plundering the local inhabitants under the umbrella of the Abyssinian kingdom. So the right time came that they finally allied themselves with the Italians. "It was because they were between strategies of collaboration and resistance that it was difficult to classify them along a sharp divide between the two except where circumstances clearly offered them little choice" (Freund 1984:104). In other words, they were caught between two fires. Besides all these, the Italians have gained British encouragement to serve as a counter balance to French influence in this area of Africa. Finally due to the superior weaponry of the Italians, lack of conscious and coordinated resistance of the local inhabitants and the co-operation of the British, the Italians were able to set up their own colonial rule in Eritrea towards the end of 1889. On the same year, as

Emperor Yohannes died at the Battle of Metemma while fighting against the Dervishes, the Italians signed the Treaty of Wichalle with his rival, Menelik, King of Shewa. According to the treaty, the Italians gained sovereign control of Eritrea in return for their recognition of Menelik as the sole emperor of Ethiopia (1889-1913) (Haile, 1988:17). Finally, on January 1, 1890, the territory was named "Eritrea" and was proclaimed an Italian colony. It fell under one rule for the first time in history (Pateman, 1990:39).

When Italy colonised Eritrea, it had the following political, economic, and military motives:

- to make use of Eritrea for industrial and commercial purpose,
- to exploit the natural resources and cheap labour, to get market for its industrial products,
- to develop and expand settlement of Italians in Eritrea and
- to make Eritrea as a base for further colonial expansion. (ESUNA, 1978:39)

To fulfil its motives, Italy confiscated all the fertile lands in Eritrea from poor peasants by passing a decree first in 1893 followed by another one in 1909 proclaiming that lands located below 800 metres altitude (over 50% of the country) as *terre dominiale* or state lands (ESUNA 1978:40). (ESUNA refers to the Association of Eritrean Students in North America). ESUNA further clarified that other decrees also were passed which delineated area of the colonies as state lands reserved for colonisation besides lands along river courses and other most fertile lands were declared state domain. The fertile lands were given to Italian immigrant farmers. The Italian farmers were given financial incentives to practice modern agriculture, e.g., free importation of agricultural equipment. Eritrean peasants were deprived of the right of owning the fertile lands and grazing pasture. The measure taken by the Italians had political significance. Peasants began to flow to the urban centres to sell their labour, others worked in the farms under new and oppressing foreign masters who got the right to possess the land under the law (Machida, 1987:18). The landless peasants from all nationalities were subjected to the same kind of exploitation and oppression and racial discrimination. This made them conscious and united against their common enemies. This led to the development of sense of nationalism. This was clearly

manifested by the rebellion of Dejazmatch Bahta Hagos, who was the chief of Akele Guzai in 1894, opposing the expropriation of the best lands of 1893, by the Italians.

As Haile (1988:18) makes clear the Italians had had high dreams of creating a great empire in East and North Africa, to gain control of easy access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Though they were successful in colonising Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, their designs of expansion, however, was not as successful as it was planned because of the Battle of Adwa (1896). The Battle of Adwa that was fought between Italy and Ethiopia, could be said a result of the Treaty of Wichale of 1889 which was signed between Italy and Ethiopia. By virtue of article XVII of the treaty, the Italians proclaimed themselves unilaterally Ethiopia as their protectorate. Thus, Ethiopia should get permission from Italy to establish diplomatic relations with foreign nations. However, Ethiopia rejected this violation of her sovereignty and demanded the abrogation of the treaty and Italy to denounce its claim openly. But the Italians refused and with the aggravation of the friction between the two, it led to open fighting on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1896 at the Battle of Adwa in which Italy suffered a devastating defeat. Thus, Italy's plans were interrupted with the defeat it had faced.

To renew their defamed name and compensate the defeat inflicted on them by Ethiopia, Italy made preparations by building roads, railways, and military installations, workshops, and warehouses in numbers. The airports of Asmara and Gurae were built and modernised. Italy under the rule of the Fascists invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and controlled it up to 1941. Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia (1916-1974) fled the country where he stayed in Britain in exile, appealed to the League of Nations for the withdrawal of Italy but to no avail.

In the Second World War, the British defeated the Italians bringing Italian colonisation to an end and the advancement of nationalist feelings in Eritrea. Eritrea and Italian Somaliland were transferred into British Military Occupation as former enemy territories. At last Ethiopia gained "partial independence."

The future of Eritrea was to remain under the British, that is, from 1941 to 1947 under the British Middle East Command, and that of Italian Somaliland under the British East Africa Command. Finally the two commands were united under one Chief Civil Affairs Officer at the beginning of 1947 and Eritrea remained under the British Military Administration (B. M. .A.) until September 1952. That is how the British came and set up their Military Administration in Eritrea.

## ***1.9 Conclusion***

Eritrea has been a victim of various successive colonial powers such as the Turks, the Egyptians, the Italians, the British, and the Ethiopians starting from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century up to the end of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Every aspect of its social, political, economic, cultural and above all educational activities were negatively affected. This was because of every colonial power has designed and implemented its own educational policy to underpin its overall policy in the territory. However, Eritrea began to acquire its present shape in 1890 with the start of Italian colonisation and gained its independence in 1993.

In the field of education, formal education has been in practice from early times in the form of Church (since 4<sup>th</sup> century A .D.) and Mosque education (beginning 7<sup>th</sup> century A. D.). The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the beginning of formal schooling under the guidance of missionary activities of various denominations. Though in different forms, this type of schooling was also dominated by religious education giving a chance to the introduction of Catholicism and Protestantism. However, this was followed by the colonisation of Eritrea by Italy in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1890), controlling the country for half a century. Italian colonisation was followed by a decade of British rule from 1941 to 1952. These European powers were both in charge of introducing colonial education into the country.



## **Chapter 2      The Provision of schooling prior to the British Rule**

### ***2.1 The Emergence of Schooling***

Though schools have existed since ancient times it is hard to realise that it is only within the last one hundred years that schooling has been a shared experience of the mass of the population in any society (Hurn, 1993:71). However, passing through different stages of change and reform, schooling attained its present shape beginning in the European Middle Ages (Hamilton, 1989:VII). Furthering his idea, Hamilton claims that schooling was conceived by Christianity and raised by capitalism.

Schooling emerged as a malleable instrument of the political state acting as a means of transformation of immature human beings into appropriately socialised adult citizens. This became possible because “schooling imparts formal reasoning skills which enable individuals to assimilate new information more easily into prior knowledge and thus facilitate learning” (Eisemon, 1989:332). Not only this, it has also played great role in imparting the cultural, moral, and behavioural values of the society, notably appropriate attitudes of respect for the rulers, the institutions and their agents. Thus it also serves as a means of controlling the society.

The historical development of schooling has been parallel with the development of urbanism. The first migration of agricultural people into towns in the third millennia B. .C., gave rise to the setting up of learning institutions, schools, to familiarise or train people with the new tools of urban government and control such as organised religion and accounting, experienced through the new invention of writing. Thus “schooling remained an urban activity particularly serving the administration, people who were assigned to run the bureaucracy of government” (Bash & et al, 1985:1).

Even at the beginning of the industrial era in Europe by around 1800, most adults were not able to attend any kind of school. It was only in the twentieth century that schooling entered a new stage through which mass education began to develop in every society. It started in the richer societies of Europe in early decades of the century and spread to the developed societies of Asia and Africa after the Second World War (Hurn, 1993:71). As a result, “schooling has become the principal source of modern scientific knowledge which most individuals could possess” (Eisemon, 1989:329). However, so many factors can decide in its attainment like access to schooling and what the students learn in school.

Schooling plays great role in the socialisation of the young people to perceive their future roles in societies through those who control the educational system (Cole, 1989:VII). By continuing this idea Cole has stressed that the principle of educating the young of today for the job of tomorrow should be the first priority of nations. But the society we live in does not have identical nature throughout time. It is characterised by rigid class, race, and gender stratification. Although some say it is through schooling that these divisions are sustained. So in the implementation of the activity of schooling for jobs, too much care needs to be taken to avoid the emergence of social inequalities in all aspects. That is, the chances of access to the provision of schooling and economic status of the different social classes as well as the development of culture of the society should be put into consideration.

## **2.2 *Schooling and society***

From the perspective of sociology of education, schooling has great share in the development of society. Schooling through its functional paradigm performs two imperative functions. As Hurn (1993:42-43) indicates, schools act as means of an efficient and rational way of sorting and selecting talented people in the highest status positions. This could be achieved by schools, which enable to create a society of equal opportunity in which effort and ability play decisive role than family backgrounds. The second function deals with imparting cognitive skills and norms, which are essential to achieve adult roles in a society increasingly depending on knowledge for economic growth. The process of

creating and transmitting knowledge as well as the institutions which primarily deals with such knowledge become increasingly vital to the society's welfare.

In addition, poor children could achieve high status position parallel as long as they are given equal opportunity with the more privileged ones. As a result, in all western societies particularly after the Second World War, "governments have put emphasis on this belief by trying to maximise equality of opportunity through expansion of higher education, introduction of universalistic rules for employment in order to discourage nepotism and legislating elimination of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, and gender" (Hurn, 1993:45).

Schools do not only meet numerous needs of children by providing knowledge and skills to students but also play an important role in the socialisation of the individual valuing societal needs. In short, "schooling could be said as one means of positive socialisation (along with families and peer groups) by which children become committed to society's values and their specific roles with the society's values and to their specific roles with the society's structure" (Hill and Tsidall, 1997:118-119).

"Education is the mechanism by which a society generates the knowledge necessary for its survival and sustenance and transmits this from one generation to another, largely through the process of instruction to the young" (Habte and Wagaw, 1993:678). As Fafunwa (1982:9), makes clear, every society, whether simple or complex, has its own system for training and educating its youth.

In agriculturally based society, education tended to be informal. It was not given in classrooms (schools) by trained teachers but took place naturally throughout one's life. The education was in direct connection with the purposes of the society and usually be restricted to certain periods of life cycle, namely, "initiation" or "coming of age" (Rodney, 1982:262). Initiation rites were marking the transition from one age group or stage in life to another, which were experienced by both sexes. Circumcision ceremonies, the celebration

of a girl's first menstruation, and a man passing from one age group to another or his joining of a new brotherhood are worth mentioning as examples of initiation rites.

Informal education was essentially a practical preparation for life children learnt by doing. In the homes and in the fields they were taught the skills of the society and the behaviour expected of its members. They learnt such essential skills as the provision of food, shelter and clothing and were introduced to nature, the seasons and their effects. Some also learnt the art of fighting. In other words, children learn through imitation from their parents, peer groups and the community as a whole.

Community responsibility was one major part of informal education. The child's experience with his/her father in hunting, fishing, farming and crafts and with his/her mother in domestic arts taught him/her, his/her most immediate knowledge and skills. Deeper lessons were taught by the elders who passed in the oral traditions, history, story telling, and literature of the people and taught the meaning of religious ceremonies, dances, and other customs (Ellis, 1984:13). Truly speaking, every adult was a teacher to a greater or lesser extent and every environment was a school.

Like any other social activity, education has undergone a number of stages through history. That is, informal education was supplemented by religious education that paved the way to the introduction of schooling in the modern society. And Eritrea through out its existence has experienced informal, missionary education as well as colonial schooling, which will be discussed later on.

### ***2.3 Formal Education in Eritrea***

In pre-colonial period, formal schooling in Eritrea was in the hands of the two traditional institutions: the Qur'anic and the Coptic school, both devoted to the teachings of their own respective religions. These schools are still functioning.

The Orthodox Church had developed the Ge'ez language while Qur'anic school used Arabic. Education took place in mosques, churches, convents, and monasteries (Pankhurst 1968:66). The contents in both church and mosque schools were religious. They were teaching the word of God/Allah. Further, schools were also involved to a certain extent in the teachings of social ethics (acceptable way of behaviour). Students of both schools were obliged to memorise and recite the word of the scripture (the Bible /Qur'an).

The content was thought to be God/Allah given handed from generation to generation. Students had to accept this content without any question. It was based on dogmatism. There is no means of encouraging the student to develop creativity or making investigation. Even teachers had no right to interpret the Scripture. They had to present or transmit it as it is. Due to this, their ability to understand the world and means of improving their standards was restricted. The objective of this education was to produce submissive and obedient people to serve the Lord and the riches particularly the ruling class. Further it was also aimed at producing people to preach and extend their respective religions.

### **2.3.1      *The Coptic (Orthodox) school***

In every Coptic village of highland Eritrea, where there were at least 50 rate payers (ghebar) who could pay a teacher, there was a kind of school for Coptic children, the classroom was the shady enclosure of the church (Pugliesi, 1953:69). All the heads of family could send their children to the Coptic school, unless they preferred to send them to look after the cattle or to till their fields.

The teaching included reading and memorising the sacred books in Ge'ez, but not writing. The teacher (memhir) was usually a monk or a "debtera" (learned man), was paid with many a fertile lands, or grain by the collectively or community. They did not teach writing, nor Tigrigna, because writing was considered the competence of paid people, the scribes, and the Tigrigna language was considered nothing in comparison with the classic liturgical language (Pugliesi, 1953:69). The teachers could not teach Tigrigna because they were accustomed only to Ge'ez which had been in use for so many centuries.

The children receive an ecclesiastic education rather a practical one. "The same teaching was given also in the Coptic convents, based on the gradual reading of the sacred books, starting from the spelling book in the first year, and continuing with the Epistle of Saint John, the Acts of the Apostles (Ghibri Hawariat) and the fourth year the Psalms (the Dawit), the praises of Mary (Wudase Mariam, Melchae Mariam) or the praises of Christ (Melchae Christos) which the pupils learnt first to read, then recite by heart"(Taye, 1991:7). With this method and programme, deacons and priests were prepared. The same method was used for "debteras" who were specially trained for liturgical singing, but not consecrated priests.

The number of schools for the Coptic Church were numerous because as O 'Hanlon explained in Pankhurst (1968:672), "In the Christian parts . . . there is a church in almost every village. Every church is a school." This makes it difficult to estimate the exact number of the church schools.

In the past Coptic churches were the only centres of education for Christians. The Tigrigna language was spoken language. In fact, very few, ancient documents are written in Tigrigna. As an example, one book dealing with the legal statute, written by Habtesellus Ghebrechristos was preserved in the village of Adi Qontsi, in the outskirts of Asmara and another one, certainly more ancient, written at the beginning of the eighteenth century of the Loggo Sarda is written in the margins of the two pages of the Gospel preserved in the church of Sarda (Akele Guzai) (Pugliesi, 1953:69).

Church education was mainly dependent on the Bible. It began with the learning of the alphabetical or more properly, syllabary made up of 26 basic characters, each with seven forms, indicating the various vowels (Pankhurst, 1968:682).

### **2.3.2      *The Qur'anic School***

The Muslim people provided since centuries ago (beginning the introduction of Islam), the elementary instruction through the Qur'anic. In Eritrea, there were permanent schools in the high and lowland areas and there were mobile schools for the nomadic and semi-nomadic people (Pugliesi, 1991:69). The teaching was given in Arabic (reading and writing as well), and the textbook was the Qur'an. Teaching most often was conducted in the Mosque, in the solitude, pasture, where there was a gathering of shepherds and at night by firelight. An elder was the teacher of the boys and girls. Night-time was dedicated for learning by heart a whole "sura" (chapter) of the Qur'an.

In Eritrea, these schools were scattered among the Baria, the Sabderat, the Maria and Beni Amir in the Western lowland, many of them were also in the Assaorta, Semhar, Sahel and in the temperate zones of Hamasien, Seraye, and Akele Guzai (Pugliesi, 1953:70).

The period of these courses was five years. They were taught to read and copy the Qur'an and the pupil at the end was able to read including the newspaper. "Education was available in the ilm (formal school establishments) or madrasas (classes conducted by mu'allimum (scholars) around the mosque). Subjects studied included tafsir (commentaries on the Qur'an), hadith (sayings of the Prophet) especially on issues of personal conduct such as marriage, divorce and inheritance) and fikh (studies of Islamic law or sharia)" (Habte and Wagaw, 1993:682).

### **2.4      *Emergence of more formal schooling in Eritrea***

The vast exploration of Africa in the nineteenth century and the evangelistic and trading activities that followed led to the 'scramble' for Africa in the 1880s and the eventual establishment of colonial rule over large portions of the continent by Europeans (Fafunwa, 1982:10).

Before the establishment of colonial schools, the first general remark on the history of schooling in colonial Africa was those foreign missions (Catholic and Protestant) whose interests in Africa have pioneered and dominated the educational sector for a number of years. The main aim of missionary education was for the propagation for the gospel and to win African souls for Christ in colonial Africa.

Modern missionary schooling in Africa began with the Portuguese in the late 15<sup>th</sup> c., but it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> c. that it got a firm hold there as a result of the protection of European colonial power (Simonsen, 1997:23). The missionaries won enthusiastically the protection of colonial administration, so long as missionary practices did not create undue hostility and foment unrest (Schmidt, 1992:128). “If the missionaries could indicate in their converts’ ideals of obedience, hard work, and respect for authority, the task of the state in governing the colony and ensuring an adequate supply of docile labourers would be significantly easier” (Schmidt, 1992:128).

The general motive behind missionary activity in Africa was to spread Christianity and docility. The main teaching was concentrated upon Christian virtues and knowledge of the Bible. In the beginning, schooling was merely a peripheral part of the missionary work, often in the shape of evening schools where young and old of both sexes would learn to read in order to be able to study the Bible (Simonsen, 1997:23). By schooling the young people are socialised into their perceived future roles in society, perceived that is by those who control the education system (Cole, 1989:VII).

In this respect, holding the same banner, missionary groups from the Catholic and Swedish Evangelical and Adventist missions came into being in Eritrea by the 19<sup>th</sup> c. just before the colonisation of Eritrea by the Italians.



### ***2.4.1 The Catholic Missions***

From the extract of Pugliesi (1953:70-72), a number of Catholic missionary denominations came into being in Eritrea to fulfil their missionary zeal. Among them were the Lazzarists, Capuchin Fathers, Sisters of Charity, the Daughters of Saint Anna, the Comboni Fathers, Pie Madri Della Nigrizia and the Ursuline Sisters.

The missions came to Eritrea at different periods beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were engaged in different social activities as well as ecclesiastical duties. For example, proselytising the population, performing theological and philosophical studies in the training of seminaries and nunneries, founding secular schools (day and boarding), set up printing presses, orphanages and clinics, teaching tailoring, embroidery, domestic science and carpentry. In the field of education, a number of schools were opened in urban and rural areas of the country for both sexes.

From the above-mentioned Catholic missions, the Lazzarists and Sisters of Charity were French nationals whereas the rest were Italians. As a result the Lazzarists were badly treated by the Italian government in Eritrea (Pankhurst, 1968:672). The Lazzarists being French were considered inimical to Italian ambitions (Pankhurst, 1968:672). On April 28, 1894, the Italian Prime Minister Crispi wrote to the Governor of Eritrea, declaring: "Of the work of French Lazzarists, I confess to you frankly, I have no confidence. It is obvious that the Lazzarists cannot be eliminated by the stroke of the pen, it is an elimination which must be carried slowly and with prudence" (Pankhurst, 1968:672). The Lazzarists were blamed for supporting Bahta Hagos, an Eritrean chief and the then governor of the provinces of Akele-Guzai and Seraye, in his opposition to the Italian proclamation of state lands of 1893. Finally, the Lazzarists were banished by the Italian government on January 22, 1896, and left Eritrea for Ethiopia.

### ***2.4.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission***

On March 1861, three Swedish evangelical pastors, who were sent to the land of the Galla (Oromo) in Ethiopia by the “Evangeliska Forsterlands Stifteslsen” of Stockholm, landed at the port of Massawa (Pugliesi, 1953:111). However, their journey was interrupted when they heard the news of the persecution of the Catholic and Swedish missionaries by Emperor Theodros II (1855-1868) of Ethiopia. So they were forced to stay in Massawa for some time until conditions became normalised. Other members of their group followed suit and their number increased over time. During their sojourn at Massawa, they established a school at Monkullu near Massawa in 1866 and shortly afterwards began working among the animists, Kunama, near the Sudan frontier. This happened at the initiative of Munzinger the then governor of Massawa in the name of the Egyptians (Pankhurst 1968:72). When the Kunama began to persecute them and they faced death from diseases, the missionaries left the Kunama area and settled down in Monkullu where they opened a school to instruct young people of different ethnic groups for the purpose of evangelising their own people after going back home.

After confining themselves in the lowland areas for some time, the missionaries moved to the highland region of Eritrea. They opened schools at Beleza in 1890, at Tseazzega in 1891, at Asmara in 1897, and at Adi Ugri in 1905 directed by Rev. Iwarson (Pugliesi, 1953:11, Pankhurst, 1968:672). The Swedish missionaries were treated equally unlike their Catholic counterparts but not like the Lazzarists. They won the favour of the Italian government, for example, got protection and were granted free shipment on a ship hired by the government, and got an Italian official to teach Italian language freely in their school.

The Swedish mission had strong desire of introducing new developmental skills to the society in addition to their evangelistic work inter alia, typography, bookbinding and carpentry and philologic studies. The role played by the pastors in the field of linguistic development itself is a good witness to the calibre they developed in mastering some of the local languages and producing experts in Tigrigna language (Pugliesi, 1953:111). A good

example was the late Ato Woldeab Woldemariam who used Tigrigna in the journalistic field in the 1940s and who was pioneer in publishing a book for the native beginners in the study of Tigrigna, “Fidel Tigrigna Ngemerti” (Tigrigna for beginners). It was published in 1933 and was used as a textbook by all elementary Eritrean schools, government and private as well, according to my informant Asfaha Kahsai.

The missionaries themselves have contributed a lot in the publication of religious and secular books. “The main objective of the missionaries was to comprehend indigenous cosmology in their own terms, and only those terms could facilitate that process were included in the vernacular language” (Makoni, 1998:243). Moreover, literacy and language education are as much tools for social control as means of social emancipation. As Pugliesi (1953:111) listed some of the books were as follows: -

1. Spelling Book in Tigrigna by K. Vinquist (1896)
2. Spelling Book in Tigrigna by a commission (1911)
3. Spelling Book in Tigre by K. G. Roden (1889).
4. Spelling Book in Amharic by K. G. Roden (1907)
5. Spelling Book and First headings in Kunama by A. Anderson (1903)
6. Spelling Book in Tigre by K. G. Roden (1904)
7. Elementary Arithmetic in Tigrigna by A. Tron (1923) etc.

The second group of Swedish mission was known as Bibeltrogn Vanner or the True Friends of the Bible. They founded schools at Asmara, Addi Quntsi and Quazen.

The good relation that was existing between the Swedish missionaries and the Italian colonial government did not last long. With the rise of Fascism in Italy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, relations became worse as a result of which the missionaries were denied freedom of movement in Eritrea. At last the Italian Government closed their schools in 1932 after alleging them of teaching against the principles of Fascism. (Woldemariam, 1997:10; Pankhurst, 1968:685).

## 2.5 *Colonial Schooling*

Schooling according to the objective it represents could be characterised into two groups. These are colonial and non-colonial schooling. Before colonialism, schooling was voluntary.

The reason why further clarification is found to be necessary on colonial schooling is only to help understand the Italian and British schooling in Eritrea. Both Italian and British schooling existed in the period of colonial era based on their interests and policies. In fact, the latter, is believed to have ruled Eritrea in a caretaker position and not as a colonial power.

Before dealing with colonial schooling, for the sake of clarity it is better to deal with the coming of colonialists and their policies. The purpose of the coming of colonialists to Africa, Asia and Latin America was in search of raw materials for their industries, markets for their manufactured goods and to get cheap manpower. So their coming was not to help, to educate, to create friendship, or to impart part of their civilisation to the subject people but to oppress, to exploit and get use of the colonised society's natural wealth for the benefit of their own societies.

To implement their own plans effectively, they have designed the policies, which they considered could enable them to achieve their goals without any shortcomings. The two leading colonial powers who gained the upper hand in controlling vast territories in the already mentioned continents were Britain and France. Britain and France have followed two opposite kind of policies in their administration of their colonies. The British followed the policy of "indirect rule" (i.e., method of ruling through traditional chiefs) (Gann and Duigan, 1969:245), and the French followed "direct rule" (the French ruled by themselves by getting orders from Paris) (Turner, 1971:60). However, even though the policies were different, none was better than the other was because they served the interest of the coloniser. The policies enabled the colonisers to subdue the colonised people as well as expropriate their wealth.

The other colonial powers like Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Italy had followed one of the two policies or variants of them and did not generate their own.

The indirect rule policy of Britain was based on “divide and rule” system, which divide the colonised people on religion and tribal lines. The object of this system was to weaken the people and create a weak society with loose affinity that could not challenge and liberate the people from the yoke of colonialism.

On the other case, the French colonial policy of education was based in support of the policy of “assimilation”, which regarded the colonised people as future Frenchmen (Wieschhoff, 1944:91).

The French, Portuguese, and Belgians made it clear that education of any level was designed “to civilise the African native”, and of course only a civilised native could hope to gain a worth while employment and recognition from the colonialists (Rodney, 1983:271).

As Rodney and Seidman (1983:263-264, 1990:53) explained the main purpose of colonial school system was: -

to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks and staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans. In effect, that meant selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole. It was not an educational system that grows out of the African environment or one that was designed to promote the rational use of material and social resources.

Most colonial schools, regardless of whether they were urban or rural, governmental or missionary, emphasised two things –language instruction and moral education (Kelly, 1978:12). Additionally the schools also taught “practical” subjects –namely Western hygiene (often called general sciences) computational skills, and agriculture or some kind of craft or manual labour.

The colonial education system was based on models developed in the newly industrialised societies of Europe as methods of ideological and social control during the violent class struggles of the nineteenth century. Thus schools: -

- provided the skills training appropriate to the needs of industrial capitalism -the dominant economic interest;
- provided a moral training based on strict religious observance, respect of authority, punctuality and a fervent nationalism. These were all important in controlling the working class militancy of the time;
- reinforced the social structure by creating a separate system of elite “public” schools for the sons and daughters of the ruling class and another system for the children of the working class (Zvobgo, 1994:2-3).

“Colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion, and the development of underdevelopment” (Rodney, 1983:264). This kind of educational system was the one that was applied by the Italians in Eritrea.

### ***2.6.1 Italian Schooling***

The Italians introduced modern education in Eritrea. The government did not take instant measures to establish an educational system in Eritrea. For the sake of convenience, that is, for easy provision of facilities, the Catholic missionaries were given the responsibility of running the government schools. Earlier, the Swedish and the Catholic missions have shown their presence and established a number of secular and religious schools in many parts of the country. In the course of time the Italian government set up a separate education administration and curriculum for the Italians and Eritreans.

#### ***2.6.1 Objectives of Italian schooling***

“The objective of Italian education was based on colonial needs and policy that put more emphasis on indoctrination and subordination. The educational policy was based on the principle of separate schools for Italian and Eritrean children, the nationals and the subjects” (Pankhurst, 1972:362). The policy was proclaimed on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1909. According to Article I of the decree, elementary education was compulsory for nationals in the colony aged seven to sixteen and was based on the Programme of the Kingdom of Italy

with some modifications as might seem desirable in the light of local conditions (Taye, 1991:25).

The Italians have designed their curriculum composed of two main concepts. The primary objective of Italian schooling as Teclehaimanot (1996:4) stated by quoting De Marco was “instilling in its subject peoples devotion to Italy and a respect for Italian civilisation.” According to the professor of colonial law, De Medici (1931:645), schools were adopted to Eritreans for military purposes. Eritreans were trained to become “worthy elements of native troops, interpreters, clerks, telegraph operators, typists because by aptitude and tradition they take to arms” (De Medici, (1931:645) as quoted by Teclehaimanot (1996). In support of this idea, my informant Asfaha has also clearly stated that during his school days, students used to wear uniforms and held clubs, serving as weapons, during physical training and military exercises which were made compulsory at schools.

Further Andrea Festa, the then director of Education in his speech to the Third Colonial Congress of 1937 in Italy, explained that, “it is desirable above everything that the child knows and feels the need to wash himself. These are the best results that a teacher can obtain in the colonies. The rest, reading and writing will certainly be seen later, but it is necessary to waste time with soap” (Gottesman, 1998:76).

This was given due consideration because for most twentieth century Westerners, the soap has defined hygiene. Where it and similar commodities have been absent, Westerners have perceived a complete absence of cleanliness (Burke, 1996:24)

Continuing his strong belief on the influence of Italian education in changing the Eritrean character, Festa, an Italian Director of Education stated that schools designed by Italians had already established “future soldiers for Italy” (Trevaskis, 1960:33). Festa was just expressing his internal feeling about how Eritreans were going to be useful in the implementation of the Italian dreams of colonial expansion towards Ethiopia and Somalia. Additionally he openly made clear what the final goal of Italian education was as follows: -

By the end of his fourth year, the Eritrean student should be

able to speak out the Italian language moderately well, he should know the four arithmetical operations within normal limits, he should be a convinced propagandist of the principles of hygiene, and of history, he should know only the names of those who made Italy great (Trevaskis, 1960:33)

There was no mention of Eritrea or Ethiopia in the curriculum. Propaganda to make the Eritrean people deny their existence as citizens of the ancient Ethiopian kingdom was disseminated (Tewolde, 1997:3).

The second emphasis in Italian schooling was mainly based on manual labour. The main target of this objective was to produce as many skilled and semiskilled cheap manpower as possible for the different firms set up by Italians in the country. The agricultural and industrial firms were badly in need of artisans who would give service for the Italians masters (Taye, 1991:27).

By referring the Four-Power Commission, Teclehaimanot (1996:8) clearly explains that only one book containing a certain amount of general knowledge was in use during the Italian schooling. (The Four-Power Commission was a commission that was set up by the U.S.A. Britain, the former Soviet Union and France to decide the future of the former Italian colonies after the Second World War).

Generally speaking, Italian schooling emphasised loyalty to the Italian State, the Italian flag, and the virtue of obedience to white supremacy. It was from this point of view that Andrea Festa in clarifying the aims of the schooling, he said that it was

to make the child a conscious propagandist of Italian civilisation and so to proselytise the parents, to inform the native child of Italy's ancient and present glory and greatness, so the child might become 'a conscious milita man' under the protection of the Italian flag; and to give him a knowledge of hygiene, geography, and history. (Teclehaimanot, 1996:4-5).

In general, the Italian educational system emphasised loyalty to the Italian flag and the virtue of obedience to white supremacy.



The following statement in colonial textbook illustrated what attitudes, character and behaviour were expected from the colonial students.

O; children of Eritrea, love the three colours  
of the Italian flag, because it is your flag,  
salute it, raise your right hand to it and  
promise it with faithfulness and honour.

Love . . . your teacher who teach you to love  
Italy, the common mother, be always obedient  
children.

When you enter class in the morning, child,  
salute your king. He is the Supreme head of  
the nation, the first citizen of Italy (Taye, 1991:27).

## 2.6.2 *Access to Italian schooling*

Under the Italian colonisation, there was a dual system of schooling, one for the Eritreans and another for the Italian nationals. The Italian schools were not open to Eritreans. Prior to 1938, “half castes”, who were recognised by their Italian fathers were admitted to the schools, but after 1938, they too were denied admission with the tightening of racial policy (Four Power Commission, 1948:69).

During the Italian colonisation, access to schooling was easier for the towns and cities than to the villages. This was without including the schools established by the missions who penetrated to the interior to get more converts like the Kunamas. The reason for this was, the rural areas inhabitants could be easy “prey” for evangelisation than the stronger groups of Muslims and Orthodox Christians who were strong believers and mainly urban based (Simonsen, 1997:59).

Access to schooling in the case of gender, it was free for boys but girls were denied of up to 1937. It was in 1937 that few girls got the right of access to schooling but only to attend home –economics. The aim of this was to be menial servant or to be caretakers of the Italian or white children and become smart housekeepers (Simonsen, 1997:96). All this was

in reference to the native schools only. Concerning access for the Italian schools, locals were completely denied with the exception of few children of some selected Eritrean notables.

### ***2.6.3 The organisation of Italian schools***

The structure and organisation of the local schools were divided into three sections. As Simonsen (1997:67-68) identified and my informants explained, the following discussion can give clear picture what they were looking like.

1. There were primary schools that were to provide education only up to grade four. The medium of instruction was the Italian language. “Native languages were suppressed except in the mission schools. In these schools, subjects like geography, history and arithmetic were taught. In the case of history more emphasis was placed on Italian history.

2. There were schools of arts and crafts based on a four years course. These kinds of schools were opened with the initiation of Salvago Raggi, the governor of Eritrea from 1907 to 1914 replacing Ferdinando Martini. He opened three schools of arts and crafts during his stay in Eritrea. As a criteria for joining students who already completed two years of primary schooling were only allowed.

The school of arts and crafts in Keren was opened in March 1, 1909, which was to serve the Moslem population. After a while children of other religious groups were also allowed to join it. It was named “Salvago Raggi”, after its founder.

The second school of arts and crafts was opened for the Orthodox Christians in Adi Ugri in 1914 (others say in 1912) by the name “San Giorgio.” It was a boarding school allowing access to the sons of chiefs and notables. In addition, the sons of Tigrean chiefs were also allowed to attend.

The third school of arts and crafts was opened in Segeneiti known as San Michele in October 1914. The school was intended for the service of the Catholic population of Akele-Guzai, the sons of Catholic local chiefs, and notables and meticci (mulattos) not recognised by their Italian parents (Simonsen, 1997:71).

In the aforementioned schools, the subjects taught were almost the same with only minor differences. They taught mechanics, saddlery, shoemaking, gardening, carpentry, telegraphy, blacksmithery, and typing. Physical training and military exercise were compulsory.

The third type of schools were those which were offering two years, known as complementary schools. Students who completed four years of schooling in primary or elementary school were only allowed to attend these schools. This was supposed to be the highest stage of learning during the Italian colonisation of Eritrea. The only school for this purpose was Vittorio Emanuele III in Asmara, which was founded in 1926. It was performing a dual-purpose activity, elementary education for four years and complementary for two years.

As mentioned above, the three types of schools, primary, arts and crafts, and complementary schools were set up. Additionally, there were also schools set up by missions. But what were their effects? They trained Eritreans in some kinds of skills but only a small proportion to the total population of the country.

The number of schools opened for the locals were very scanty when compared with that of the settlers. As Sylvia and Richard Pankhurst (1953:33) made it clear, "In Eritrea, there was one school for every 820 Italians as against for every 50,294 Eritreans." This clearly shows that the Italians were not interested in the training and educating of the locals. A good supportive argument for this can be presented from the speech of Ferdinando Martini who was the governor of Eritrea from 1898 to 1907. On paying a visit to a missionary school in Massawa, Martini commented as follows: -

Punto primo! Mixed schools of white and black; no, no, and again no.

The native child, much more agile and alert, has the intelligence of a white child ergo avoid confrontation. Schools for white? That is for the government to organise, and they will. Schools for black? Is there any point in establishing them? We are not in the position of the British at Kassala (Sudan). We cannot make use of the native in the postal or telegraph services, And happy the day when we are not going to need them as interpreters either. Then what? As to ape some Italian they can learn by themselves (Simonsen, 1997:53-54).

Not only this, in undermining the black (native) people my informant Asfaha has said, Andre Festa expressed his feelings openly in one magazine as follows, “ to educate the blacks equally with the white, they will either become mad or conceited.” It was the fear that they had on the blacks that they neglected the “ native” his rights to learn. In another case, Maritini after visiting the St. Anna Sisters school, showed his reluctance to educate the Eritrean in the speech he made, “...in my opinion, the blacks are more alert than us, and the superiority of the whites, on which every colonial regime is based, proves in the schools not to hold water” (Simonsen, 1997:55).

The formation of separate schools for different religious denominations had negative influence on the society. It was leading the people to develop prejudice, suspicion, and divisive factor among each other based on regional, religious lines and social status. Since some schools were admitting only the sons of selected chiefs and notables, it was not providing equality of opportunity to the members of the society. In this instance, the Italian education was focusing on segregation, subordination, oppression and exploitation, which are typical natures of colonial system. It had no aim of emancipating the people from any societal problems. What Allen commented below is suffice to confirm the neglect of locals schooling by the Italians. “The schools were established for the settlers and eventually twenty five such schools were in operation. For the Eritreans only six government schools were maintained throughout the country”(Allen, 1953:83).

### **2.6.4 Textbooks**

The textbooks employed may further enlighten the analyses of the intended contents and scopes of the Italian education for Eritreans. These were books written and published by the Catholic mission in Asmara. Between 1912 and 1920, seven books were published. Except for one, which was written by P. Egidio da Caraglio, they were all written by a missionary, Padre Ezechia da Iseo (Simonsen, 1997:77). In the drafting of the Tigrigna part of the books, it is said that the missionaries have gained the support of the local colleagues. Between 1923 and 1925, another twelve books of textbooks were published which were written by another missionary, P. Giandomenico da Milano. To enable provide service in the academic field, they were distributed in the following sequence, two volumes for the first grade, three volumes for the second, four volumes for the third grade, and the rest three volumes for the fourth. In the succeeding editions these volumes were merged into one volume for each grade (Simonsen, 1997:78).

Concerning about the contents of the first book Negash (1987:73) has given full information as follows. The first textbook was published in 1912 by Padre Ezechia and was named as *Manuale d'Istruzione* (Manual of Instruction). It contained six chapters and five appendices. Accordingly, the first chapter was a brief outline of the history of human progress and various industrial inventions, such as the steam engine, electricity and various forms of modern transportation. Chapter two deals with geography, starting with some elementary knowledge of our universe and its planets, with some rudimentary information on nations and populations on the earth, with special emphasis on Italy and Eritrea. The third chapter solely teaches about hygiene, the human body and how about to keep it clean and healthy. Chapter four covers on the knowledge of elementary principles of agriculture, although with very little reference to Eritrean conditions. The fifth chapter dealt with elementary knowledge of natural and physical phenomena, and the final chapter was mainly

dealing on moral duties, towards God, oneself, your neighbour, and the Patria (parents) notably in that order.

The five appendices clarified the activities of famous travellers and explorers, art, rules of descent behaviour, proverbs and quotes of famous men, and finally, some six pages dealing with common superstitions and prejudice (Negash, 1987:73). The text was divided into two separate sections, one in Italian and another in Tigrigna. Because of the shortcomings it had had to locate the matching pages of the two texts used, as an exercise in translation was limited.

The next book published concentrated on the subjects of industry, arts and crafts. However, there is no information on how the Italian and Tigrigna versions were distributed in this textbook. Since the Tigrigna version was a direct translation and was printed in the opposite side of the Italian anecdote short stories, tables and poems. These were in relation and in addition to the more factual subjects. As a leitmotif there was the story of a little Michelino (Simonsen, 1997:78). The book started with him leaving his home village at the age of twelve to attend school for three years, some thing that had always been his dream. The end of the book was Michelino leaving school, writing a thanksgiving: “Addio cara scuola”(Goodbye beloved school). The contents in between were presented as what Michelino learned while he was at school, the pupils asking questions and the “maestro” (teacher) responding.

The fourth volume in the Italian collection dealt with Eritrea as a colony (Simonsen, 1997:79). It was divided into nine chapters in the following order, geography, the colonial government, the colonial judicial system, colonial trade and commerce, industry in the colony, agricultural activities in the colony, the functions and the need of a colonial bank system, educational facilities in the colony, and various religions practised in the colony.

The headline indicated its objective as a history book, but the contents were exclusively in Italian activities and achievements in Eritrea.

The fifth volume was a reader on illustrious men within fields such as science, exploration, art, and military victories. These illustrious persons were mostly Italians, and almost exclusively men (Simonsen, 1997:79), like Michael Angelo Buonarroti, Leonardo Da Vinci, Gallileo Gallili, Gulilegmo Marconi, and Christopher Columbus. The only exception was the Duchess Filangeri, a well-known benefactress

The sixth volume was a *Manuale d'Igiene* (Manual of hygiene), of which sources tell very little. The seventh and last volume, on the other hand, was far more interesting. It was called *Embaie*-or the *Victory of Work*, a title that gave a fair indication of its contents. This reader told the story of a young Eritrean by the name *Embaie*, who after two years at a Catholic mission school succeeded in finding a job in a store in Asmara (Simonsen, 1997:79). One year after his recruitment was asked to come with his employer to Genoa, Italy. His employer trained him there in the trade of commerce, and *Embaie* managed to more steadily from being a manager, via shareholder, of commerce, to finally inherit the entire business. The message of the book was to give the role of commerce and trade in Italy, and of how education and hard work were the road to prosperity.

The following collection of P.Giandomenico da Milano, were to a certain extent based on the general Italian syllabus, though modified to meet the objectives set by the colonial state (Negash, 1987:75). These were written in Italian only, though with some Tigrigna words and proverbs spread in between. The volumes consisted of grammar, arithmetic and other elementary subjects. Usually, the headlines of each chapter would be followed by a fictitious conversation picturing the pupils asking questions and the maestro (teacher) explaining the various phenomena.

All of the textbooks seem to fall with the picture of the aims and scopes of the official regulations issued. According to Negash, the Catholic mission had attempted to inculcate certain values, attitudes and perceptions. From the textbooks, as Negash (1987:75) indicated, two distinct objectives emerge, the position of Italy vis-à-vis Eritrea, and the *raison d'être* of colonialism. There are many examples from these textbooks which could support these asserted objectives, like in one of the volumes by P. Giandomenico where there is a chapter dedicated to "La Bella Italia"(Italy, the Beautiful).

From that day when Italy put Eritrea under its protection,  
Eritrea became a land of work, rich in commodities, free  
from any hostile invasion, secure within its borders,  
open for trade and commerce, and respected among all  
African territories. You should therefore greet Italy as  
Your dear benevolent Madre-Patria (Simonsen, 1997:80).

Concerning textbooks used by the nationals and the locals, there were a lot of differences in the content of the same subject. As a good example, for the sake of comparison, it will be of good help to understand the difference in the history curriculum of grade four below.

#### History textbook for nationals

1. The Disintegration of Italy in 1815
2. The Movement for the Unification of Italy
3. The Works of Mazzini
4. Pio Pius
5. The 1848 Revolution
6. Garibaldi
7. The Works of Count Cavour

#### History textbooks for the native

1. Ancient Roman Emperors
2. The Turkish Invasions
3. The Problems of Libya and Eritrea before Italian Occupation
4. The Great Works of Mussolini.



5. The Conquest of Ethiopia and The Power of the Duce (Mussoilini) referring Ministro Degli Colonia Scuola Elementari Per Indigino (Ministry of Colonial Elementary School for the Indigenous) (Woldemariam, 1997:14-15).

From the list of topics offered to the Italian and local students above, by comparing and contrasting the contents, the Italians students had more opportunity to study the History of their own country. In the case of the native or the local students, they lacked it. What they have studied has nothing to do in relation to the history, culture of their country. They were learning the power and the superiority of the Italians and other foreign powers.

### ***2.6.5 Pupils and Teachers***

Comparing with the number of schools, the number of pupils attending in the Italian schools for locals was very low. A number of reasons could be given for such situation. First and foremost, Italians were not agitating the people to send their children to school because they did not want the locals to be educated.

Secondly, even though it could attract the people to learn in Italian, on the other hand it might have been a hindering block because to learn it for the first time without having any knowledge about the language, could make them afraid. They could develop hatred and lose interest.

Thirdly, setting up different schools for different religious groups could create suspicion and develop prejudice. Not only this, to my understanding, the people would not feel secure to send their children for the reason that they might be forced to change their religion or be recruited as soldiers.

Finally, the schools since they were set on religious lines with limited access for some parents it would have been difficult due to distance of the school from their place. So as Pugliesi put it during the scholastic year 1927-1928 the student body in Eritrea over a local population of over 300,000 people, were 3,656 pupils divided in the following way:

Italian students	614
Eritrean students	2,928
Other nationalities	114

And subdivided in the following way according to their religion: -

Catholic	996
Coptic	673
Muslim	1,143
Hebrew	38
Greek Orthodox	71
Other religion students	435

Source: - Guiseppe Puigliesi, (1953) *La Scuola in Eritrea Ieri E Ogg* (The school in Eritrea yesterday and today), VIII NO. 5, Maggio, p.112.

The Qur'anic schools had at that time 925 students, while the Coptic one had 373. (Pugliesi, 1953:112-113)

In the scholastic year 1934, over the population of 600,000 Eritreans and few thousands of Italians all in all they had a total number of 3,656 students. In 1938-39, the number of students was reported to have been 4,177. The small number of Eritrean students had further declined towards the close of the Italian colonial rule because the number of schools greatly decreased to 16 schools.

In the case of the condition of teachers, with the exception of the language teachers, the teaching staff was composed of Italians. There were 152 teachers in the Italian schools at the end of Italian colonial rule including 33 Italian elementary school teachers, 86 nuns, and 27 Eritrean assistants. However, in the later years, those who completed the primary school were serving as teachers. During the Italian colonial schooling as my informants Asfaha, Misghina and Semere expressed there was no training given to teachers.

## 2.7 Conclusion

Italian colonial rule in general and Italian colonial education in particular have left their own imprints in different social activities of the Eritrean society like urbanisation, cultural infiltration, variety of skills, and development of infrastructure etc.

Education policy was based on separate curriculum for nationals and locals aiming at recognising white supremacy and creating black docility. This made Eritreans to remain as agricultural and manual labourers. However, it enabled them to develop mixed experiences

such as mechanics, carpentry, masonry, house- and out door servants, odd-job men porters, electricians etc (Simonsen, 1997:111). They achieved it through imitation while working with their Italian masters. This was because the higher education and para-professional services were reserved only for Italian immigrants.

The demand for the above types of work was very high especially for the implementation of their colonial expansionist policy in Africa namely, Libya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. As a result tens of thousands of Eritrean youth were recruited as soldiers. All summed up and the proclamation of the appropriation of the best lands depriving the Eritrean peasants of cultivating their own lands were the causes to the flow of rural population to the towns and cities. Thus urbanisation flourished. It was because of this that the population of Asmara increased six folds and its native population rose from 15,000 in 1933 to 90,000 in 1941 (ESUNA, 1978:41).

The development of urbanisation has brought its own setbacks. As social segregation by reference of disease, dirt, and pollution was justified in colonial Zimbabwe under the British (Burke, 1996:35), so also the segregation for Europeans and Eritreans or whites and blacks was applied in colonial Eritrea by the Italians. A good reflection of this such dwelling quarters are still holding their former names as Gheza Banda Habesha “native militia quarter” and Gheza Banda Tilian “Italian militia quarter” in different towns of Eritrea. This was exactly similar to the policy of Apartheid in South Africa, which was imposed upon the blacks.

Though limited in its provision and quality, Italian schooling triggered off the quest for modern type of education by opposing to the more traditional type offered by the Church and the Mosque. Those who were lucky enough to finish their ‘quarta classe’ (4<sup>th</sup> grade) managed to become the leading figures of Eritrea’s “Modern Elites” and some of them

excelled the position of “interpreters” and “collecting taxes” and succeeded in occupying high governmental offices during the Federation years (1952-1962) (Mebrahtu, 1992:8).

Italians were criticised for neglecting the local population to allow getting better education. On the other hand, this might have been for the better, as this minimised the negative and disruptive effects this education had on the local society through its repressive and discriminatory policies particularly after the coming of Fascism to power.

The main intention was not to educate the native people but rather to promote the Italian language and administrative policies of the state. There was no distinction between education propaganda and indoctrination. All played great role in shaping the native in the way the Italians wanted him/her to be under their command. The aim of Italian colonial schools was to produce Eritreans who had had a minimum knowledge but much loyalty and respect for Italy. The curriculum has put too much emphasis on Italy’s past glories and the great efforts it was making to establish “future soldiers for Italy.” etc.

Finally, Eritrea was to serve as a settler colony as well as a market for its industrial products and as a source of raw materials and cheap manpower. Above all, Eritrea had also served as a launching pad for further Italian expansion to Ethiopia in which about 65,000 native soldiers were conscripted (Simonsen, 1997:108). When the process of colonisation was accomplished, living conditions for the locals and Italian nationals were not changed until the coming of Fascism to power. With this, schools were established for the settlers, and eventually about twenty- five such schools were in operation. For the local people only six government schools were maintained throughout the country. The Italian language was made the medium of instruction suppressing the several native tongues. The inspection that was conducted once in five years by itself asserted the nature of the poor quality educational system and limited education facilities. The worst but not the least, one textbook was used for all of its pupils in all the grades. In 1939 at the out break of the

Second World War, even these few struggling centres of learning came to a stand still. This measure was implemented upon a number of schools under various denominations by the order of Fascism except the Catholics. It was at this moment that the British defeated the Italians in 1941 and began to apply its own policy on the territory.



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## Chapter 3 The Provision of Schooling during the British (1941-1952)

### 3.1 *The Formation of the British schooling*

During the course of the Second World War, the British promised to help the Eritreans in the exercise of self-determination on the condition that Eritreans askaris (native soldiers in the Italian army) co-operate with the British to drive the Italians out of Eritrea. “The British Royal Airforce dropped leaflets during the hostilities promising freedom to Eritrea and stimulating national aspirations. The political agitation grew in intensity and the British were welcomed as liberators (Habteselassie, 1980:55).

The British propaganda over the Eritrean askaris was effective. Many of them deserted the Italians and joined the British forces while many others began to go back to their respective districts and villages leaving their weapons behind. Therefore, this led to the demoralisation and loss of confidence within the Italian forces resulting in their total annihilation. As a result, on April 1, 1941, the city of Asmara fell in the hands of the British (Taye, 1991:39). By 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1941, Massawa was captured and all of Eritrea came under the British rule bringing the fifty-one years of Italian rule to an end.

In Eritrea, the British set up their own rule as the British Military Administration, with the Chief Administrator being identical to the British Commander in Chief under the British Middle East Command (Teclhaimanot, 1996:100). The Administration was composed largely of officials from the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, who cared nothing about the problem of the locals. The aim of the Administration was to operate on the basis of “care and maintenance” with the existing Italian laws and with a small budget to maintain the status quo, on the basis of the Convention of the Hague conference of 1907 (Taye, 1991:39). In 1949, the responsibility for the occupied Italian colonies was transferred to the British Foreign Office.

To the disappointment of the Eritreans, the British ignored all the promises they made to the Eritreans. Instead they held the view, as Sherman (1980:19) pointed out that “ the best solution for Eritrea would be its partition between Ethiopia and the Sudan. The reason for their view was that to allow the Eritrean Abyssinians to join their kinsmen in Ethiopia and the Muslim tribes of Western Eritrea to be incorporated into the Sudan.”

By referring Dilebo, Tecelehaimanot (1996:10) made it clear that the British policy was totally directed to the favour of the Italian functionaries and Muslim merchant communities, while adversely affecting Eritrean workers, urban elites and clergy in the urban centres. The British retained all the major offices for themselves and the minor ones for the Italians. It strengthened the Italian land property holdings. Business licenses were given only to Italians for the exploitation of woodlands, mineral resources and retail shops. The British applied the policy of ‘ divide and rule ’ system which they used to exercise in all their colonies earlier, aiming at elongating their stay in the territory by weakening the integrity of the people.

Nevertheless, the British introduced certain reforms into the administration. They gradually abrogated the colour bar policy, which was practised by the Italians earlier, and began an “Eritreanisation” of subordinate administrative positions, allowing Eritreans to have share in services which were not covered by the Italians or the British. Sherman (1980:17) wrote concerning the reforms “native courts were introduced to replace the residents courts. Eritrean Advisory Councils were set up in each division and in principal towns. The educational system was revitalised, books in Arabic, Tigrigna and English were utilised in 60 new schools.”

### ***3.2 The Objective of British Schooling***

As explained earlier in the previous chapter, the Italian administration neither encouraged nor allowed proper education for the people of Eritrea. The schools for the locals during the Italian colonial period were very small in number. And to make matters worse, those



functioning governmental and mission schools were closed at the outbreak of the Second World War to serve as hospitals for the war victims. Thus, education was one of the greatest needs of the Eritrean people during the British occupation. This was because some local people have understood that education was vital for them due to their denial by the Italians. So the British Military Administration had a serious problem to face, i.e., to start schooling from scratch by reopening the closed schools and opening new ones in addition to other problems which were related to schooling like teachers, textbooks, school buildings and other facilities etc. Therefore, the Department of Education was established on 1 August 1942. H. F. Kynaston Snell, a British captain, was assigned as the Director General of the Department. He was a well-trained and experienced schoolman. Two Italians were also employed in the educational services (Taye, 1991:43-44).

As Judith (1998) has spelt out the 1920s and 1930s were the years in which a number of imperial powers achieved success in the development and implementation of education policies of 'cultural adaptation' in colonial territories. The British government signalled in 1925, the acceptance of such a policy with the publication of a White Paper, "Education Policy in Tropical Africa." The policy was formulated by Ormsby Gore, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the colonies and Chairman of the Advisory Committee. He explained at the time (1932) that the document 'epitomises the policy of Great Britain as regards native education and was taken as the foundation upon which the education departments in the African dependencies have since been endeavouring to build' (1932: 70).

The British education policy of adaptation as clearly shown in the 1925 White Paper stated that:

"Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life, adapting them where necessary to changed social circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution." (Education in British Tropical Africa, 1926:3).

A particularly significant influence, upon the development of the British colonial education policy of cultural adaptation, was the political policy of 'indirect rule.' Indirect rule was a

system of rule in which colonial administration operated through tribal chiefs and institutions. Indirect rule involved the delegating of a measure of authority of tribal elites who were ready to co-operate with the colonisers in return for personal privileges. Its architect, Lord Lugard (1938:402), never intended as a form of self-rule or to involve a relinquishment of power by the coloniser.

Indirect rule as explained by Lugard “ . . . has reference in Africa to a situation which includes black and white with white at the top, but where the institutions of the black are not abolished but ‘progressively adapted’ to modern conditions ” (Lugard, 1938:402).

According to Lugard’s belief, education had a significant role to play in indirect rule. The object of education, as he explained it, in the year the White Paper was published, was: -

to enable the African ‘find himself’ - to emerge from the habit of mind which has through centuries marked him out as the slave of other races, to show him the higher rungs of the ladder which lead him from mere obedient to co-operation, from servile imitation to individual initiative and a sense of personal responsibility-in short “a new way of life” with higher standards of duty and efficiency (Lugard, 1925:1-2).

For Lugard, then, the good of education policy of adaptation was essentially political-that of social control through limiting opportunities for ‘emancipation of thought’ that might lead to counter-hegemonic political ‘unrest’ amongst the colonised. The Advisory Committee responsible for the White Paper shared this view.

The British education policy of adaptation advocated a practical education focusing on agriculture and traditional crafts. It also recommended the use of the vernacular languages, calling for co-operation amongst scholars to produce textbooks written in these languages.

The above stated aim of the policy overall was: -

to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life...and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation

of the ideals of citizenship and service.(Lugard, 1925:3)

The policy concerning the use of vernacular languages was applied in Eritrea at the start of British schooling. Tigrigna and Arabic were made as the media of instruction according to the choice of the local people in the primary schools while English was used in the middle and secondary schools. As many of the local people had been eager to learn Italian during the Italian colonial period, they were also eager to learn the English language during the British Military Administration. Later in the primary school Kunama, a language spoken in the Western lowland was added in the Gash-Setit area with the use of Latin script (Taye, 1991:54). This was done to satisfy the needs of the Kunama who had had the problem of communicating either in Tigrigna or Arabic.

The locals might have considered using or allowing vernacular languages in schools as advantageous, but on the contrary it had negative effect upon the society because it had acted as a divisive factor particularly between the Christians and the Muslims. The Muslims regarded Arabic as the language of Islam only. They knew Tigrigna and could speak fluently in school as well as at home. But in the name of using it to read the Qur'an, the Muslims demanded Arabic to be used as a medium of instruction at the Moslem schools.

The British accepted their demand that separate schools for Christians and Muslims were opened to provide education. This separation in language gradually led to separation in religion. That is the Moslems associated themselves with the Moslems or Arabs than with their fellow Christian Eritreans. Allowing two kinds of schools, based on religion and language, i.e., Christian and Moslem and Tigrigna and Arabic did not seem was decided by careful study. This was so because after making an inspection tour to some Moslem schools, Brigadier Drew, the then Governor General of the territory discovered that the Moslem students had no problem of communication in Tigrigna (either in speech or written). It was after this that, Brigadier Drew gave his comment to the then inspector Asfaha Kahsai by saying, " I think we are making a wrong policy". But since it was after causing the feeling of division, it was worthless. And yet, as my respondent Asfaha said it could have had a political mission. This was because the British created disagreement and

distrust among the local communities in order to prolong their colonial period, to make the local people involve in dispute and continuous internal conflict so that they could not pay attention to the exploitation. As a result in the second half of 1946, the Eritrean society had been shaken by two serious incidents, the Sudan Defence Force incident in August 28, and the Tor'a –Tzen'adege war in November, both of which had resulted in an increased Christian and Muslim hostility. The Tor'a and Tzen'adege were two Eritrean Muslim and Christian communities. As a consequence of this and of the general climate of uneasiness, the Eritrean people looked hopelessly divided weak and disorganised (Beyene, 1991:66). However, through the effort of the ardent nationalist Woldeab Woldemariam and his associates the friction was cooled down for the time being. But the contradiction became fiercer during the Haile Sellasie and Menghistu regimes that used it as a tool of suppressing the Eritrean revolution for liberation. It was only after independence that the animosity was resolved through the active involvement of the Eritrea government.

British colonial education in Eritrea was implemented as per the White Paper. "It was to train interpreters, clerks, and para professionals who would act as vanguards in the 'civilising' missions. Thus, when the British Military Administration was installed in 1941, the authorities saw the need for educational process that would also force the Eritreans into money economy and help break down tribal solidarity" (Teclehaimanot, 1996:11). In other words it was serving in weakening solidarity between different tribes and was strengthening tribalism.

Colonial schooling was to a large extent tied to employment outside indigenous occupational structures like farming, handicrafts and fishing. Some who went to school learned to read and write the coloniser's language and became qualified to work in jobs subordinate to the colonised in governments, private industry or trade, or in missionary or government schools.

During his inspection visit to Eritrea, the British Chief Political Officer had made a special point of pressing the local administration to crystallise its ideas about the educational policy. But he found out later nothing was done as the matter, except instructions were

issued that no government expenditure was to be incurred on education. A number of reasons could be stated why the British Military Administration did not assign sufficient budget for education. First, Eritrea was economically unviable for the British because its low revenue could not compensate the expenditure and was in a state of economic collapse (Trevaskis, 1960:36). Secondly, the high cost of the Second World War, the uncertainty of the future of Eritrea, and the system of rule of the British as caretaker and maintenance did not encourage them to deal with the urgent problems and initiating useful projects in the development of Eritrea (Taye, 1991:58). Since it was a mandate territory given to the British by the League of Nations, “the intention of mandate was that the administering power should not benefit economically and militarily, but to develop the territory so that the inhabitants could determine their own future” (Ellis, 1984:18). Finally, the Political Officer directed Brigadier Longrigg, the Administrator of Eritrea (1942-1944), to fill the vacancy on his war establishment for an Inspector of school, with the rank of captain. Thus, Captain Kynaston Snell was put in charge of the Education Department.

The establishment of the Department of Education from the start had two major roles as Taye (1991:44) explained: -

1. to assume responsibility for Italian Education and
2. to create a new system of education for the locals since there seemed to have existed no system of education for the locals during Italian colonisation.

According to a publication issued by the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia through the Provincial Education Office of Eritrea on January 2, 1985 indicated that the objective of British schooling in Eritrea had been as follows: -

1. to disseminate British supremacy and glory on the people
2. to spread the English language and British culture and
3. to get the necessary cheap human labour by providing rudimentary knowledge side by side with handicraft, weaving, shoemaking, and metal work (page 6).

### ***3.3 Formal Access to Schooling***

The establishment of the Education Department was not a solution by itself to the problem of schooling in Eritrea. The Department had had numerous problems to tackle in order to

facilitate the provision of schooling. There were lack of suitable textbooks, no available trained teachers and a limited supply of financial resources. Above all there was no effective educational programme (Trevaskis, 1960:33).

According to the British Policy, it was decided that Italian government schools were not to be reopened because that was demanding too much expenditure. In accordance to the understanding reached between the General Office Commanding East Africa and the War Office in Asmara general broad principles towards education and to adapt the model of British Somaliland, i. e., providing grant aid to Qu'ranic schools was to be implemented in Eritrea (Teclehaimanot, 1996:12).

Education for Italians was reopened (Appendix I) as it had existed before the occupations because repatriation has removed most of the Italian children and the remaining were not creating serious problem (Teclehaimanot, 1996:13). No school was suppressed. Five pre-university courses under the sponsorship of private organisations were started in Asmara namely, in medicine, jurisprudence, economics, philosophy, engineering and mathematics (Taye, 1991:44).

While the Italians allowed access to schooling to urban areas and for males only, the British did give equal opportunity of access to rural and urban and male and female. In the urban areas, they changed former warehouses, military installations and depots to schools by making minor modifications. In the case of the rural areas, access to schooling was free as long as the inhabitants co-operated to construct schools. The government took the responsibility of providing teachers and other facilities. The rural population then succeeded in constructing a number of schools by subscription (Pankhurst, 1955:695).

The only problem of access to schooling was the smallness of the school or the capacity of the rooms to contain as many students as they could. One teacher was allowed to teach only 20-25 students in one shift (Woldemariam, 1997:26). In this case access to schooling was limited. In other words, access was free for the students who came first. All this was only in reference to primary schools.

In the case of the middle or intermediate schools at the initial stage in 1946, access was limited. This happened so not because of the incapacity of the students to pass the general (national) examination but the number of the schools was limited. So passing was very strict, i. e., competition was very high for admission.

The “all- age” limiting admission into first classes of young children of the same age gradually standardised school. Students were supposed to complete elementary education between the age of 5 and 10 years. The aim was to fix the age range that would enable them to effect admission at 11 years to middle schools and prescribe a normal school learning age at fifteen years (Teclehaimanot, 1996:13, quoting British Military Administration, 1930

### ***3.4 Epistemological Access***

In the case of epistemological access, British schooling was mainly primary education at the initial stage. The curriculum included primary, middle and the beginning of secondary educational levels. The general curriculum embodied subjects like agriculture (refer photograph), woodwork, clay modelling, carpet making, shoe making, reading, writing, hygiene for boys and reading, writing, hygiene, weaving (refer photograph), sewing, embroidery, basketwork and domestic sciences for girls (Teclehaimanot, 1996:15). The primary level and middle level were from grade one to four and from five to eight respectively (Taye, 1991:51).

In the four-year term of primary education, the syllabuses were practical and adapted to the local needs and conditions. Theory and practice were encompassed within the framework of the pattern of living condition of the local people. The syllabus was consisted of the following subjects: English, Arithmetic, Geography, General Knowledge, History, songs, science, language (Tigrigna or Arabic depending on the choice of the local people) and handicraft (shoe-making, weaving metal work, knitting, carpentry (refer photograph), and gardening were taught. The subjects in the primary level were taught either in Tigrigna or Arabic, while in the middle schools all the subjects were taught in English.

When access was allowed to girls, sewing, weaving, mending, cooking, basketry, and embroidery were added. In the workshops, pupils made articles that were needed by other sections of the school. The boys constructed looms to be used by the girls to weave cloth, out of which suits and dresses were made for the poorly clad youngsters. The boys were also included in the training to make cloth. The children were also moulding different clay objects and several of the schools put this interest into practical use. They produced different clay tiles for the floor of their new quarters. Different materials were produced like chalk, inkwells, stools, picture frames and equipment for games from local raw materials. In schools, where black-smithy (refer photograph) was emphasised, the pupils made ploughshares, knives, chains and spears. They took turns operating the forges set up in the yard. Besides, there was some form of gardening (Allen, 1953:90). Such kinds of activities were applied for two reasons. The first one was to attract children to develop interest of joining schooling particularly the poor who could not afford to buy some of the teaching materials. The second was to make the students develop the sense of self-reliance as well as to save money for preparing teaching materials by the Department.

### **3.5 Schools**

When the Education Department came into existence on 1 August 1942, schools opened very quickly in the towns as well as in the villages (refer Table) This was particularly very active during the administration of Brigadier Stephen H. Longrigg (1942-1944) (Woldemariam, 1987:32). This meant that the change of colonial power in 1941, led to several changes in the Eritrean school system under the British rule different from that of the Italians. The most striking aspect was the increasing number of schools throughout the decade of British colonial rule (Bergem and Ertzgaard, 1995:18).

Two years after the British took over power in Eritrea; the number of schools had increased from 5 to 28. During the following nine years, additional 69 schools were built so that the country had a total of 97 elementary schools in 1951; one year prior to the federation with Ethiopia was established (Pugliesi, 1953:145). This development has been started as soon



as the British took over power, but the establishment of the Department of Education in August 1942, seemed to have been of great impetus in the quest of developing educational structures of Eritrea. The local communities played an important and active role in the establishment of these new schools. In addition to taking part in the financing and construction of the schools, they were paying the teachers' salaries (Bergem and Ertzgaard, 1995:18).

The British government in Eritrea did not co-operate in constructing new schools. The reasons they put forward were lack of interest, shortage of budget, and to ensure that construction was speedy. Buildings in Asmara, which were used by other departments, were returned for educational use, the only loss being one elementary school, which was allotted to the American Army. The American Army was stationed in Asmara as members of the Allied Powers and it was because of the threat of air attack from the Axis Powers that they moved from Egypt to Eritrea for safety purpose. Besides because of the blockade of the Mediterranean by the Axis Powers and the closure of the Suez Canal, the flow of manufactured goods from Europe to this region was ceased. As a result there was the need of supply of consumer goods to the Allied Forces and European communities in North Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Africa. The British immediately set out to exploit the abundant skilled labour and available resources in Eritrea to meet this demand (ESUNA, 1978:44).

The Education Department showed full co-operation only in providing teachers and other facilities. The responsibility of construction of schools rested on the shoulders of the local people (refer photograph). The schools were opened for teaching in September and ended in June. The scholastic year was divided into three terms. Teaching programme was conducted for five days a week. Each day has two shifts, morning and afternoon. It was a kind of platoon system that was in operation. Due to weather variations in the country conditions differ from place to place. In the morning session, schools used to start at about 8:00 A.M. and ended at about 12:00 A.M. with a break of 10-15 minutes starting at about 10:00 A.M. In the afternoon session, schools start at 2:30 P. M and ended at 5:00 P.M. with a break of 10-15 minutes starting at about 3:30 P.M. (Taye, 1991:52).

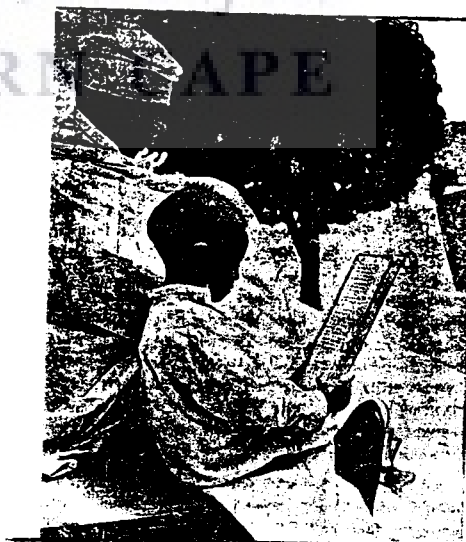
The timetable was of the simplest, with considerations to avoid the imposition of too great a strain upon the teachers who were required to teach unaccustomed subjects. The instruction consists of daily of forty minutes arithmetic, eighty minutes reading and writing (in two periods), ten minutes physical exercises, ten minutes break for free recreation, with fifteen minutes at the beginning of the session for registration and inspection of the pupil. One period a week was allowed for drawing and one for general knowledge or handiwork.

Even though not included in the timetable, the Education Department announced that teachers could take their students for excursion at a distance of 8 kilometres long (round trip) in an area which was consisting of trees and flowers once a month.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this was to enable the teachers particularly in the process of teaching about vegetation, trees, flowers, and animals. The students were to develop the habit of appreciating nature and its use for human benefit.

During the British Military Administration, schooling was in operation aligned with the Orthodox Church, the Mosque, and the missionaries and in full scale by the government under the guidance of the Education Department. The Orthodox and the Mosque schools were mainly concentrating on religious teachings while the missions were including secular education.

Religious education at St. Mary Church courtyard during the British period, Asmara

Source. Mehari Woldemariam, *Timhirti Ab Eritra* (Education in Eritrea), 1997, p. 6.



<sup>1</sup>Eritrea n Weekly News, NO. 161, 27 September 1942, at Research Library, University of Asmara.

The mission schools included the schools run by the Catholic and Protestant mission the majority of mission schools were founded before and during Italian giving services schooling as well as opening clinics, helping the poor and taking care of the orphaned. Besides those schools, which were established earlier, new religious orders like the Adventist, the Cistercian Fathers, the Comboni Fathers, the Comboni Sisters and Brothers of the Christian schools were also founded during British rule.

In addition, the Lazzarists and Daughters of Charity were expelled from Eritrea and went to Ethiopia for the reason mentioned earlier by the order of the Italian government. But now with the defeat of the Italians in 1941 they re-established themselves and founded their own schools. They started a centre at Hebo (Akele Guzai) the place where Justino de Jacobis, founder of the society is buried (Pugliesi, 1953:71). They founded an evening school for adults and a school for females run by the Daughters of Charity taking care of the orphaned.

The Comboni Fathers have played a great role in the development of schooling in Eritrea. They set up the Comboni College in March 3, 1947 in Asmara as a branch of Comboni College of Khartoum (Sudan). It was set up first for Eritreans and gradually (1951-52 onwards) for the expatriates. The school was dedicated to the bishop, Daniel Comboni, founder of the order of the Fathers of the African Mission (Pugliesi, 1953:71). The Comboni College of Asmara was preparing students with a complete course of studies to join the British universities, which was similar to that of the Comboni College of Khartoum.

A new missionary group, which was founded in 1941, by some American and Norwegian religious group was the Adventist mission. They settled at Gaggiret in Asmara and founded centres in Hamasien and Seraye in 1948. In the year 1950-1951, the mission had founded five schools in the whole territory with a total number of 394 students (made up of 299 males and 95 females) and 11 local teachers (Pugliesi, 1953:146).

### 3.5.1 *Private Schools*

There were a number of private schools that were founded and funded by different individual benefactors and non-governmental organisations. These included the Greek community school, the Muslim and Arab community schools.

John P. Paris founded the Greek community school at Asmara in 1900. It was an elementary school, which developed a sexinnal programme. The Greek public school in the scholastic year 1950-51 had 37 students (Pugliesi, 1953:146).

The Arab community school was founded on 1947 at Asmara. It was teaching 3 years of elementary and intermediate one respectively. In the scholastic year of 1950–51, the number of its students was 120 with 5 staff members.

The Moslem schools were the greatest numbers of private schools. The schools were in operation by the good will and contribution of the Eritrean Muslim people. Different reasons have insisted them to establish such kind of school. Among them are as follows: -

First, they were very interested in the development of education and their religion Islam. Secondly, some Muslim people were not enthusiastic for their children to attend the Christian missionary schools, which were mostly attended by the Coptic. Besides, they were equally suspicious of the new British rulers, as they had been of the Italians. But truly speaking, the British had treated them equally with the Christians because Arabic was used as the medium of instruction in the Muslim inhabited areas as Tigrigna was to the Christians.

Thirdly, they wanted to set up their own schools because they complained that there were too few British schools in the Muslim inhabited areas as compared to Christian dominated areas. As an example, Hamasien region with a population of 216,000 (80% being Coptic) had 30 schools of the B.A.E., while the vast region of Western Lowland with a population

of 345,000 (92% Muslim) had 28 schools with 1856 students (Pugliesi, 1953:146). In fact the reason for the scarcity of schools among the Muslim population could be the nature of their living and their human activity. The majority was nomadic pastoralists. However, government school was even mobile like the B.A.E. school of Nacfa, which was sometimes moving to the plane areas during the rainy season with the same population.

Moreover, one of the reason for the small number of schools of the Muslims would have been the migration of Eritrean Muslim students towards the Sudan due to the proximity of the place and because Sudan itself was a colony of the British. This mobility had already started during the Italian period. They were joining the schools of Kassala, Carb El Gash, Wed Medeni, Khartoum, and Omdurman. They were comforted by the warm hospitality of some Sudanese people. Numerous rich Sudanese people also considered themselves lucky to entertain such students who came to the country for the study of the Koran (Pugliesi, 1953:70).

Some of the Muslim schools in Eritrea were Madrasa El Islam of Asmara, Islamic school of Adi Ugri, the elementary school of Adi Keih, the school of Senafe, Evening elementary school of Masswa, Islamic College of Keren, the school of Hirgigo and Institute of Religious studies of Asmara (Pugliesi 1953: 146). They were opened between 1942 and 1952 with the help of individual people as well as the co-operation of the Muslim people. Individuals like Mohammed Bahbushi and his Brothers, Pasha Omar Kekchia, Ahmed Abdurahman Hilal, Abdalla Gonafer, Ahmed Jaefer Yoman and his Brothers and the local cultural Islamic Association played a great role in the construction of the schools, and providing financial and material aid to the students and the staff. Some of these Islamic institutions were getting foreign staff and Arabic textbooks from the University of El Azhar in Cairo as well as offered scholarships. Some of them were having free access to students of Christian and Islam as well. All the schools followed the curriculum of British schooling except Institute of Religious Studies and Mahad El Islamia in Asmara, which included notions of Islam religion into the curriculum.

### 3.5.2 *Number of Schools*

In January 1943, when the Department of Education in Eritrea was set up by the British Military Administration, schooling was started in 19 new schools. There were 28 schools in operation already in 1943, three of which were in Asmara (Teclehaimanot, 1996:13). The number of schools began to grow from time to time as the demand of the local people for schooling was increasing.

During the following nine years, additional 69 schools were built so that the territory had a total number of 97 elementary schools with approximately 13,240 students in 1951, one year prior to the federation with Ethiopia was established.

As a good example within a decade of British rule, from 1941-1951, the number of schools opened for the locals reached 97.

Development of the Eritrean Elementary Schools During 1943-1951

Year	Schools
1943	28
1944	37
1945	47
1946	54
1947	67
1948	80
1949	80
1950	83
1951	97

Source: -Inchiesta di Guiseppe Pugliesi, *La Scuola in Eritrea Ieri E Oggi*,  
Rivista La Messile di Interesari Africani, Anno VIII NO. 5, Maggio, 1953, p.145

From the diagram one can get a clear understanding about the rapid increase of schools. This reflects the interest of some people for education because it was at their own expenses that schools were constructed by subscription. Why they were so interested will be issued in the next chapter. The distribution of the elementary schools was as follows as shown in the diagram below.

Places	Eritrean Population	Number of Schools	Number of Students
Hamasien	216,000	30	5,602
Western Lowland	345,000	28	1,856
Akele Guzai	189,000	18	1,879
Seraye	180,000	14	2,011
Red Sea	120,000	7	412
Total Number	1,050,000	97	11,760

Source:-Inchiesta di Guiseppe Pugliesi (1953), *La Scuola in Eritrea Ieri E Oggi* (*The School in Eritrea Yesterday and Today*), Anno VIII NO.5, Maggio, p 5.

This increase of schools from time to time led to the need of higher level of schooling beyond elementary level. As a result of this in 1946, the establishment of middle schools and secondary school systems in Eritrea were approved by the British Military Administration. Due to this, the Chief Administrator was informed to make necessary preparation for this organisation and staffing. By September 1948, two middle schools, one in Asmara at Bet Ghiorghis and another one in Keren with a total number of 264 students were opened (Teclehaimanot, 1996:15). The middle schools increased in number and reached 14 by 1951. Out of the 14 middle schools, six of them were found in Asmara and the rest in the provincial centres like Adi Ugri, Adi Keih, Massawa, Ghindae, Decemhare, Tessenei, Akordat, and Keren. Admission for the middle schools required the passing of the national (general) examination that was given at the end of grade four (Teclehaimanot, 1996:16). In 1951, one secondary school was opened at the Vittorio Emmanuele III School

in Asmara according the explanation of my informant Asfaha. The teaching staff was composed of Eritrean teachers.

In addition to the above schools, a kindergarten and an elementary school for the children of British soldiers and civilians was also existing. Other than this one teacher training institute was opened in 1946. In general, the number of schools during the British Military Administration were 97 elementary schools, 14 middle schools 1 secondary school and a number of other private and mission schools.

### 3.6 Number of Pupils and teachers

At the initial period of British schooling, the number of schools was very small. This was because of the neglect of the Italians and the Second World War that was going on. On the onset of schooling, the first registrations of schools for locals reached in 1943 with 2,405 students in 28 elementary schools. By making rapid advance the number of students by 1950 reached 9,131.

Enrolments in Eritrea Elementary schools 1943-1950

YEAR	SCHOOL	STAFF	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
1943	28	58	2,330	75	2,405
1944	37	79	2,670	430	3,100
1945	49	109	3,457	619	4,076
1946	54	144	3,659	712	4,371
1947	59	151	3,984	922	4,906
1948	65	170	4,140	1,254	5,394
1949	74	192	5,675	1,774	7,449
1950	85	210	6,658	2,473	9,131

Source: -*Eritrea Studies Review*, Education in Eritrea During the European Colonial Period (1996), p.14



From the above diagram one can easily understand the fast increase of the number of schools, students, and the staff. Besides, it is possible to get a clear picture once access was given to the girls, their participation became increasingly active.

### ***3 7 Provision of resources, textbooks, teachers and infrastructure***

The British in their start of schooling, it was not only shortage of schools that was their problem. They came across a lot of shortcomings that needed to be dealt with order to offer efficient schooling. These included textbooks, teachers and infrastructure.

The British were having a problem of how to manage getting sufficient and well-trained teachers. Teachers were not available either in quantity or in quality. The reason was that several of the teachers disappeared during the fighting (Second World War) and some others might have been engaged in other types of jobs. Even then those who existed were not that much qualified because they had received only 3 to 4 years of Italian education according to the view of my respondents.

The British, as a result then, decided that they must search a person from among the locals who can help them to set up British schooling in the territory. From the information they collected, they came to understand that Yishak Tewoldemedhin was the right person for the specified job. Yishak Tewoldemedhin was an able man who had studied two years at the American University of Beirut as my informant Asfaha explained. He was a devoted person who was well oriented in modern education. He has been a teacher in the Swedish mission during the Italian period but with the closure of the missions he had been engaged in agricultural activities of his own. He was made the first “native inspector” to assist the British Director of Education (Allen, 1953:85, Taye, 1991:56). He enabled the British to provide training courses for the teachers, prepared teaching materials and textbooks for different subjects.

Before starting schooling, the Education Department dispatched an advertisement to all Eritreans who were teaching before and for others who want to be teachers here and after to

report on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1942 to the Education Office.<sup>2</sup> Another call was also made a week after and to report on 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1942.<sup>3</sup> By January 4, 1943, 32 teachers were called and showed their presence at Suola Scalera (Acria) on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1943 to attend a training course. Captain Kynaston Snell, Director General of the Education Department gave briefings to them on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1943.

The would be teachers were given two weeks refresher course about how to manage with teaching activities. Besides, the Department prepared an evening course for the newly recruited teachers in Asmara, so as to enable them to understand the concept of organisation, equip them with the necessary techniques and strategies of teaching methodology and the ways and means of keeping discipline. This kind of imparting of knowledge continued throughout the year as more and more new schools came to the scene, but with a lengthened period of training (two to three, three to a month etc.). In addition to this at the end of each scholastic year, a nation-wide meeting of the teaching staff was convened to discuss over the problems they had faced during the year. Inspectors, experienced teachers were giving teaching models. The forum created a conducive atmosphere in sharing experiences from their colleagues. Besides, refreshing and increasing their knowledge of the basic subjects of reading, writing geography and history were also conducted (Gottesman, 1998:79). In the case of textbooks, the problem was also very critical. During the Italian period, every subject except the local language was taught in Italian language. The local language, Tigrigna was only taught as a subject and was used as a translation. During the British schooling, textbooks in the elementary schools were prepared in the vernacular languages (Tigrigna or Arabic) while in the middle schools they were prepared only in the English language. To render schooling smoothly then, textbooks were very vital for the British to start with. When the Moslems choose Arabic, the problem was minimised because Arabic textbooks were brought in to the territory from Egypt and the Sudan as they were under the British rule and were following common belief, Islam.

<sup>2</sup> Eritrean Weekly News, NO. 16, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1942, at Research Library, University of Asmara.

<sup>3</sup> Eritrean Weekly News, NO. 17, 21 December 1942, at Research Library, University of Asmara.



The first batch of teachers before starting teaching, they are mostly seated with Kynaston Snell, other British officials and Yishak Tewoldemedhin.

Source: -Yishak Yosief, *A Biography of Yishak Tewoldemedhin: War against illiteracy*, 1986. p. 19.

In the case of infrastructure, the British did not construct anything but they used those constructed by the Italians. During the Italian period, roads, railway lines, ports, and other buildings were constructed for their own benefit. As a result these also benefited the British. Teachers, books and other teaching facilities were transported to the destined places with the government trucks. In the case of students and teachers, when they faced health problems the dispensaries were providing free services as Memhir Asfaha Kahsai responded to my question.

As years went on, the local people understood the value of education. As a result more people began to send their children to schools and schools faced the problem of overcrowding. This condition raised the demand for the opening of new schools to satisfy the interest of the local population. Due to this concerned members of the Education Department and interested ones began to write articles on the "Eritrean Weekly News"

newspaper which recommended more schools to be opened to meet the interest of the masses, and to make preparation for middle and secondary schools in advance. Besides, they recommended that technical and arts schools and training of teachers as very essential for enhancing the advance of schooling. A good example of such recommendation was that of the late Memhir Solomon Teclé.<sup>4</sup> Among the recommendations mentioned were: -

1. provision of formal schooling in elementary schools should get governmental and non-governmental follow up.
2. Opportunity of joining secondary education should be provided for elementary and middle school students on passing the national examination and preparation should be made in advance for their easy accommodation before its opening.
3. Skill and technical education should get special consideration in having well organised programme, materials and teachers with special training, and
4. teachers for all types of schools should get necessary training and should be well orientated.

The British Military Administration was convinced to accept the demands and began to take instant measures. The reforms introduced are going to be discussed in the succeeding chapter, which follows.



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<sup>4</sup> Eritrea Weekly News, NO. 131, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1945, at Research Library, University of Asmara.

## Chapter 4      **Reforms Introduced in Schooling by the British**

### *4.1 Introduction*

Even though the British did not assign a sufficient budget for schooling and other educational equipment attached to education, they began agitating the people continuously to develop a deep interest on education. Such kind of propagation intended to consolidate British rule in Eritrea because western education was seen for the most part as a means of upward social mobility. The local people became very busy in constructing schools taking care of the teaching staff, paying their salaries, and providing the facilities of residence. It was the time that the numbers of students increased highly and more schools were opened, especially for students in the intermediate years.

Different parents were sending their children to colonial schools for various purposes. Some parents sent their children to schools to enable them secure well paying jobs after completion. Others like chiefs and notables were ambitious that they aimed at maintaining their status, to become elites. On the other case, learning Western technology and science was accepted as the key to revitalisation of one's own societies and a means of regaining their autonomy. As in other colonies where nation-states had not developed coinciding with European defined borders education became a route for developing incipient nationalism (Kelly, 1978:16-17). As a result many among the colonised saw education as a way of gaining new ways and developing new states free from colonial control.

Like any other colonised societies, the Eritrean local people had faced harsh treatments as a result of colonial rule. They were segregated by the Italian racial discriminatory policy. The evils of the British could not also be underestimated. They denied the Eritrean local peoples their right to self-determination that they promised just before the outbreak of the war with Italy. This made them severely enraged that they became eager to learn so that they would get rid of the British rule. To some extent when some locals became interested in benefiting themselves from education, on the process they became enlightened to understand the evils

of colonial rule as well. In most colonies, there was an initial indifference towards school education but once it was understood that schooling represented one of the few avenues of advance within colonial society. It became the question of the Africans, clamouring and pushing the British much further than they intended to go (Rodney, 1983:289). As Africans then, this was also the demand of the Eritrean local people. They determined to eradicate illiteracy to implement the local proverb, “better learn seven years than be ignorant for seventy years” as their main slogan.

The British then faced various demands from the population for the improvement of schooling. These included the training of teachers, the opening of intermediate schools, establishing of teacher training college, the opening of Girls’ and middle schools, the appointment for new inspectors, the national convention on Tigrigna language, the setting up of school and publishing committees.

“Educational development aroused an unexpected enthusiasm amongst a large number of Eritreans. Not only were parents ready to make substantial sacrifices to send their children to school but, in the towns, the young and even the middle aged clamoured to be given the opportunities denied them during the Italian regime” (Trevaskis, 1960:34).

The British responded positively to the demand of the locals because they were in need of English-speaking personnel. In Africa, the colonialists were training low-level administrators, teachers, Non-commissioned officers, railroad booking clerks, for the preservation of colonial relations, and it is not surprising that such individuals would carry over colonial values into the period after independence was regained.

The British had the idea of using British officers but could not find in abundance, and the Italians were very expensive and politically unreliable for being loyal to Rome and young Eritreans therefore, demanded tuition in English. As a result the policy of “Eritreanisation” was followed (Trevaskis, 1960:30).

## ***4.2 The Opening of the Teacher Training College***

At the start of the British schooling one of the serious problem encountered by the British was the shortage of trained teachers. The British recruited former soldiers and teachers with no training who were teaching under the Italians. They had only three or four years of Italian education. To enrich their experience of teaching, the British began to give a crash programme of two weeks and sent them to their assigned places.

This kind of training was consolidated by the exchange of experience shared during the general teaching staff meeting of the territory which was convened every year on August for one month (Allen, 1953:90-91). During the general teaching staff meeting discussions were conducted, and model teaching methods were presented by inspectors and experienced teachers. On their return to their respective places they were enriched with a supply of maps, charts, and supplies of all kinds, as well as notes of the studies they had attended. As Allen (1953:90) witnessed the first year course was concluded with an exhibition of the pupils' efforts during the term, their notebooks, charts, clay models, garden produce, and anything else they might have made were displayed. Their teaching materials were increasing from time to time with better quality, as the general meeting remained common phenomena. Hundreds of the local people, parents, government officials, and religious leaders were among the visitors besides delivering of flowery speeches and pledging co-operation and encouragement by different governmental authorities were made.

As the years went on this kind of general training was conducted over a longer period, that is, three weeks, four weeks, three months, and six months respectively. In 1945, a short course was given in which 12 Christian and 8 Moslem trainees took part. The Christians were trained in Asmara while the Moslems were trained in Keren and Massawa, i.e. four trainees in each centre (Allen, 1953:91).

In October 1946, for the first time in the history the territory, a well-organized Teacher Training College was established in Asmara. It was training students for one year. As

Teclhaimanot (1996:16) explained, “the requirement for entrance included a pass in a test on English.” They were studying pedagogy, arithmetic, English, history, geography, science, and physical education as my informant Asfaha elaborated.



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Teachers practicing physical training program

Source: - Mehari Woldemariam: *Timhirti Ab Eritra* (Education in Eritrea), 1997, p.31.

From year to year the number of trainees was increasing. The trainees were conducting teaching practice in different schools before assigned as full time teachers. Due to the budget limitations it had had, there were only fifty- three men and seven women trainees in training in 1950. The growth of the Teacher Training College is shown in the table below.

Enrolments in Eritrean Teacher Training College 1943-1950

Year	Staff	Men Trainees	Women Trainees	Total
1946	1	15		15
1947	2	28		28
1948	3	31	4	35
1949	3	47	7	54
1950	3	53	7	60



Source: - Berhane Teclhaimanot: *Eritrea Studies Review*, Education in Eritrea During European Colonial Period, 1996 p.17.

As Teclhaimanot further clarified the demand for teachers and equipment in 1950 had increased a lot. However, the lack of sufficient budget limited the supply of the middle schools with qualified English teaching staff and resources for utilising instructional materials (Teclhaimanot, 1996:17).

### ***4.3 The establishment of Girls' School***

During the initial period of schooling, the local people were opposed to send their daughters to school without wearing shawl like garment because it was out of the culture of the society. Other reasons which became obstructions for the parents not to send their daughters was the insecurity of their daughters would face violence on the way due to the location of the schools few kilometres further from the villages. Besides, the lack of female teachers at schools put parents suspicious of some irresponsible male teachers who could cause violence over female students. As Bank and Hall (1997:94) stressed "as early as elementary school was concerned boys used sexual insults and approached relations with girls in a daring, aggressive manner." These negative experiences were part of the widespread problems, which discouraged some females.

However, the problem did not last long. It was resolved through the effort of the first local inspector, Memhir Yishak Tewoldemedhin. Yishak began to persuade some of the leading religious figures and begged them to co-operate in serving as teachers. Then the females began to attend schooling with their fellow brothers wearing their shawl like garment (Yosief, 1986:37) (refer photograph). Further Yosief elaborated that it was in 1944 that the Asmara Girls' school was opened. Gradually two schools for Moslem female students were opened in the Western Lowlands. Up to 1945, ten female teachers were registered to become teachers. According to Allen (1953:93) the number of female teachers working in the teaching and training in the practical art reached 14.

The opening of separate schools for boys and girls strengthened sexual differences. It should have been co-education that should be encouraged so as to provide equal educational opportunities and equal treatment in school. These separate schools by themselves were the sources of differences as well as leading to inequalities of different forms or activities instead of favouring gender equity. Although the education of girls in Eritrea during the British did not show very rapid progress its objectives were seen on the positive side, it was recommendable. In other parts of colonial Africa, education of girls was rudimentary, comprising of reading, writing, and arithmetic in the lower grades. In addition, girls in the higher grades learned to keep house and raise their children according to middle class Western elites (Shmidt, 1992:154). By the scholastic year 1951-1952 two females were attending the secondary Sisters School in Khartoum.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.4 *The Opening of the English Institute*

In colonialism, securing African compliance in carrying out policies favourable to the metropolises was the major problem. There was always the possible use of force for that purpose, but naked force was best kept in reserve, rather than utilised for everyday affairs. However, it was understood that only education could lay the basis for smooth functioning colonial administration (Rodney, 1983:282).

At the beginning, the British were in need of English speaking personnel. The Administration wanted to use British officials but could not be found. Besides, the British found the use of Italian officials very expensive as well as politically was unreliable due to being loyal to Rome. Therefore, young locals demanded tuition in English. British schooling was not limited to educate the young only but was also extended to adult education.

The spread of the language of the European colonising power was considered of major importance. The use of European language in the educational system almost immediately creates a kind of caste system of those who know that language and can thereby qualify for

<sup>1</sup> Ref. NO. BU/ 1 28 May 1952., at Research & Documentation Centre, P. F .D .J., Asmara.

prestigious and remunerative positions. Even though to limited minority the metropolitan language had served as a means of upward social mobility.

In the first place in education, there was the elementary language problem of Europeans communicating with Africans. Most of the time, Europeans used translations to pass on orders, but it was known that African translators seized the opportunity to promote themselves and to modify or even sabotage orders. In the French colonial Africa, it was said, “translation is equal to treason”, and the only way to avoid that was to teach the mass of the people (Rodney, 1983:282). As a result colonial powers aimed at giving a certain amount of education to keep colonialism functioning (Rodney, 1983:295).

To get efficient and capable employees, the British Administration decided the plan of swelling its English speaking personnel. That is, the Education Department took consideration to upgrade the knowledge of English of adults by opening wide opportunity through an extension programme (Taye, 1991:62). This was made practical by establishing the English Institute in 1943 in Asmara. That happened after observing the strong desire of part of the urban residents. The number of participants included Italians as well as the natives.

The English Institute of Asmara was not only concentrated in offering courses in the English language, arithmetic, typing and shorthand but was also active in organising social and educational activities. It was also conducting lectures, discussions, gramophone recitals, debates, concerts and film shows were arranged (Trevaskis, 1960:34). It has opened a library, which contained over 600 volumes. Other branches were also set up in other regions of the territory, like Adi Ugri, Ghindae, Segeneiti, Adi Keih, Massawa etc. British officers and English –speaking Eritreans and Italians taught English. In Asmara in particular, when additional rooms were opened, agriculture and first aid was also provided for the youngsters who were to be English teachers after completing their education.<sup>2</sup>

The lessons were given for people who were between grade 5 to 8. Classes were in active two times a week.

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<sup>2</sup> Eritrea Weekly News, 8 February, 1945, at Research Library, University of Asmara

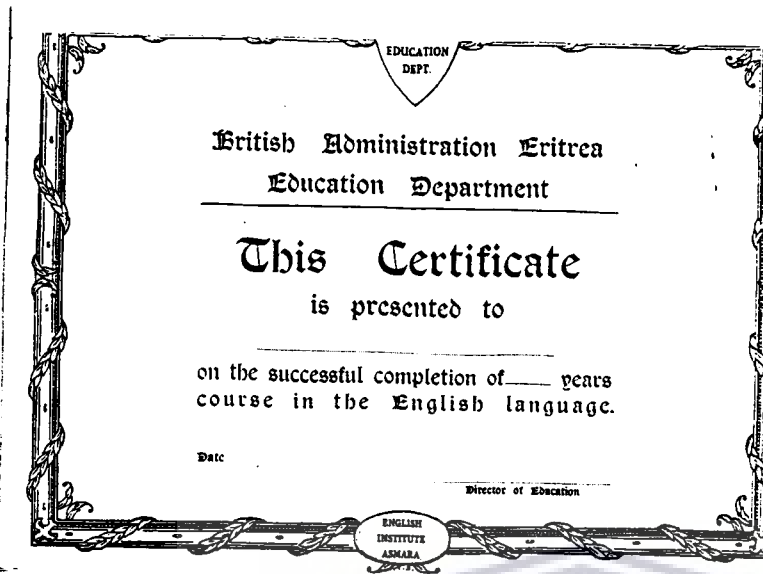


Eritrean employees of the Government (British Military Administration) learning to type.

Source: - H. B. Allen, *Rural Reconstruction in Action*, 1953 p. 76.

The advisor for the Institute was Signor Manfredini. The Institute also provided free education to government employees for six months provided that they passed the entrance examination. A certificate of merit was given to the participants who completed the course successfully (refer diagram below). The British Military Administration was very interested to upgrade the knowledge of its employees that it was in continuous contact and co-operation with other government offices and organisations to work jointly. In so doing, the British Military Administration Office<sup>3</sup> requested the Public Information Office that according to S.C.A.Os (Senior Civil Affairs Officer) conference it was recommended that Eritrean Administrative Assistants should be supplied with every facility that could help them to improve their knowledge of reading and writing. Regardless of their station in Asmara to join the library and obtain books from it through their District Officer, the Secretary of the Administration

<sup>3</sup> Ref. NO. S/EAA/5035/1 15 February 1949, at P.F.D.J., Research & Documentation Centre, Asmara.



Source: -Research and Documentation Centre, at P.F.D.J. Archive Asmara.

Office confirmed that he could guarantee that every care would be taken of the library books. It was also suggested that it might be possible to arrange a correspondence course for them in How to speak English, essay writing and précis writing in English and arrangements were made up to give correction of the papers and give explanations of mistakes.

Accordingly<sup>4</sup> it was announced the setting up of a Correspondence Course in English for Eritrean Administrative Assistants. The Education Department then made Essential English books, such as Book I, Book II, Book III, and Book IV, available for sale at 5 shillings each.

As a reply, the British Military Administration Office sent the list of EAA who were to take part in the correspondence course<sup>5</sup> like: -

1. Omar Hassano Arabic

District Officer of Barentu

<sup>4</sup> Ref. NO. ED/A/61/ 2, 17 February 1949, at P.F.D.J., Research & Documentation Centre, Asmara.

2. Elamin Idris	Arabic	District Officer of Akordat
3. Ahmed Hassano	Arabic	District Officer of Tessenei
4. Abdurahman Ali	Arabic	District Officer of Keren
5. Ibrahim Mohammed Hussien	Arabic	District Officer of Akordat
6. Ahmed Mohammed Zein	Arabic	District Officer of Ghindae
7. Moussa Gass	Arabic	District Officer of Massawa
8. Berhe Tesfayohanes	Tigrigna	District Officer of Adi Keih
9. Kahsai Kidane	Tigrigna	District Officer of Adi Keih
10. Ato Fessahazion Haile	Tigrigna	District Officer of Adi Ugri
11. Grazmztch Ghebrehiwet	Tigrigna	District Officer of Adi Quala.

In addition, the Administration Office encouraged to all officers of the Administration to learn one or more of the local languages. To make the officers interested they were informed that knowledge of one or more languages used locally would be taken into consideration in times of provision of promotion.<sup>6</sup>

As an encouragement, the British Administration proposed to cover all expenses of tuition books for those who were taking part in studying local languages in the following manner: -

Language	Elementary standard	Lower standard
Italian	£15	£25
Arabic	£25	£50
Tigrigna, Tigre, Saho, Kunama, Beja(Hidarb)	£50	£75 for one or more but only one rewarded

Source: -Ref. NO. 17/c/10, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1949.at Research and Documentation Centre, P. F. D. J., Asmara.

<sup>5</sup>Ref. S/EAA/ 50/35/1 Vol. II. 16 May, 1949, at P. F D .J., Research & Documentation Centre, Asmara.

The estimated expenditure for the year (1949-1950) was as follows:

Italian	£4000 (100 for each test),
Arabic	£1500 (20 for each test),
Remainder	£2500 (20 for each test).

However, there is no clear statistical data about how many officers took part and how the plan has worked out.

In general this reflects that the British Military Administration was trying to create a well efficient work force. After completion the schooled usually became government employees in jobs not necessarily suited to their education or aspirations. They became part of an urban scene, which as yet lacked real definition that was one that placed them in an uneasy world apart from both the indigenous traditions, and from the coloniser's society (Kelly and Altbach, 1978:4-5).

#### ***4.5 The School of Delinquency***

Besides the different academic schools, a reformatory school was opened at Adi-Ugri for delinquent children. The inmates were young law-breakers who were in need of reform. For instance, "there were 63 boys in 1948 and 61 in 1949 in the reformatory school of Adi Ugri"(Taye, 1991:61). These young children were taught the three Rs, some vocational activities and physical training. Those who had improved their character and behaviour were released from the reformatory and were admitted to normal schools of their residence. The committee of supervision of Adi Ugri Reformatory school, in its meeting of the board, recommended the admission of the following boys to Asmara schools.

#### Names of Delinquent Students and Place of Residence

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<sup>6</sup> Ref. NO. 17/c/10 5<sup>th</sup> August 1949, at PFDJ, Research & Documentation Centre, Asmara.

NAME	AGE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
Alemseged T/Birhan	13	Edaga Arbi
Mohammed Said	8	Acria
Shishai Tesfu	11	Bet Mekae
Abraha G/Ghiorghis	12	
Hagos Abraham	12	Gheza Birhanu

Source: - Taye, Adane, *A Historical Survey of State Education in Eritrea, 1991*, p.61

#### ***4.6 The Publishing Committee***

Among the serious problems of the British in advancing the progress of schooling was the absence of textbooks. For the British it was from the scratch to start with because the Italians did not give them the chance to inherit something as they were depending totally on Italian language. Since Tigrigna was not serving as a written language, and if existing education in Tigrigna was not well developed for it was not given too much consideration. This became critical problem for the pioneer teachers assigned to teach the Tigrigna language.

Possibly to minimise the problem, the first batch of teachers decided to work jointly by organising their methodology of teaching to have uniformity and use the same kind of textbook. Accordingly, they began to make efforts themselves to get orientation about the readings, discuss about and collected written materials to set up by their own.

The teachers did not keep folding their hands and leave the problem aside until it gets a solution or wait till the books come but they attempted to read and refresh their own knowledge by exposing themselves to readings on the articles written by different inspectors, teachers and school directors. This enabled them to teach the Tigrigna language and they introduced the advantage of reading a newspaper to the students, parents, and other social classes of the society particularly the working class.



As mentioned above, the textbooks were very essential materials for teaching. For the first time *Tigrigna Nigemerti*, which Ato Woldeab Woldemariam published helped them to learn the Tigrigna alphabet. It was used as a textbook in the Swedish mission schools. Just following the example of Ato Woldeab, Yishak Tewoldemedhin also compiled and published a book by the name “Zanta Arban Arbaeten” (The Story of Forty-Four Tales) (Yosief, 1986:25). It was a collection of various tales by a number of teachers and other scholars published in the newspaper, The Eritrean Weekly News. It was the first book ever prepared in Tigrigna and is still used and remained a very valuable book to the present.

Schooling during the British began to gain importance. The local people understood its uses and demanded the co-operation of the British Military Administration to open schools. The British Military Administration was surprised at the consciousness and readiness of the people and started to open new schools as possible as they could include even to the nomads. They started to make a study and searched the means and ways of implementing it.

In addition, at the beginning of June 1944, in order to enable all the schools teach the local language and particularly to the Tigrigna speaking people to follow one common Tigrigna, organisation became the question of the day. So a National Conference in which intellectuals, religious leaders, teachers, and education authorities participated was convened. The conference was organised by the British Ministry of Information Office at Asmara. Major F. Mumford, the Director of the Ministry of Information Office in his opening speech stressed that “Eritrea was badly in need of educated people”<sup>7</sup> Among the local participants included Abba (Father) Yacob Ghebreyesus who wrote so many books about languages of Ethiopia, Father Okubazghi Michael who studied many languages including foreign ones like Greek, Hebrew etc., Yishak Tewoldemedhin, Tedla Bairu, who was an inspector and later became the Chief Executive of the Federation, and Woldeab Woldemariam. The British scholar, Doctor Edward Ullendorff, was also one of the participants.

<sup>7</sup> Eritrean Weekly News, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1944, No. 93 p. 1, at Research Library, University of Asmara.

The conference discussed the development of the Tigrigna language and encouraged so many people to write books on the field of their interests.<sup>8</sup> At the conference, they planned to decrease the letters in the Tigrigna alphabet with similar pronunciation to avoid confusion. However, since every letter had its own meaning they agreed to leave it as it was but made minor changes in the usage system. The participants of the conference passed a resolution that the Eritrean Weekly News, books, and other written materials here and after should be published in the new form. Besides, it was agreed that the schools should be repaired. Those, which were constructed by mud and earthen materials, were reconstructed. Out of the schools in the territory 54 of them were repaired in 1949 (Yosief, 1986:26).

Finally, resolutions were passed about the system of using two dots, semicolon, comma, exclamation mark, question mark, four dots, the construction of language, word, sentence, composition etc., and the system of marking. In conclusion new technical terms which could express the sport activities were set up (Yosief, 1986:27).

To eliminate the problem of lack of textbooks, a publishing committee was set up under the chairmanship of Asfaha Kahsai. The other members included Memhir Estifanos Gaim, Memhir Yayinshet Ghebreigziabher, Memhir Haile Damiano, as my informant Memehir Semere Habteselassie explained in a discussion raised after I interviewed him. All these were teaching staff who had good experience of writing articles and books on different topics. The main mission of the committee was to organise interested people and encourage them to write on their interests. As a result different books on different subjects were written.

Some of the books were as follows: -

1. Educational Programme–Memorandum for Eritrean teachers (1946) by H.F. Kynaton Snell, (refer the Memorandum).
2. A Short History of the World for Eritrean Schools (1942) by H. F. Kynaston Snell,
3. A short Reading Book in Tigrigna –“Zanta Arban Arbaeten (The story of forty-four tales) (1943)- by Yishak Tewoldemedhin.
4. Geography Book in Tigrigna (1943)- by Yishak Tewoldemedhin.

<sup>8</sup> Eritrean Weekly News, 8<sup>th</sup>, June 1944, No..93, at Research Library, University of Asmara..

5. Elementary Arithmetic in Tigrigna (1943)- by Yishak Tewoldmedhin.
6. A General Knowledge Book (1944)- by Asfaha Kahsai.
7. The Story of Living Things (1949)- by Asfaha Kahsai.
8. The Teaching and Analysis of Our Letters (1949)-by Doctor, Abba Ghebreyesus Hailu.
9. Four Years Elementary Education for Teachers (1944)- by Education Department.
10. Tigrigna Ngemerti Reading Book (Tigrigna for Beginners)(1933) – by Woldeab Woldemariam.
11. Erosion and its Destructive Effect – by Woledab Woldemariam.
12. Reading and General Knowledge Book -by Education Department (Yosief, 1986:35-36).

By the beginning of 1946, Capt. Kynaston Snell published a Manual for Eritrean Teachers. It was written in three languages- Arabic, Tigrigna, and English. It consisted of sixty main guidelines for teachers, in fourteen different headings. As Allen (1953:92) had listed the fourteen points included: -preparing a lesson plan, the use of the abacus, the use of the blackboard, pictures and maps, discipline and conduct, record of daily work, care of books, errors to avoid in teaching, maintaining interest, writing, reading, arithmetic, backward pupils and physical training.

Different educational films enabled teachers to consolidate their lessons as a result of the strong affinity that was created between the Education Department and the local British Information Service. Appropriate film show programme was set up and a loan system was established between these two organisations. From the information given by Taye (1991:55), there were 281 filmstrips in action. All were dealing with academic subjects like biology, history, domestic science, hygiene and health, language, physical education, general science, sociology and geology. Topics of interest gave support ideas to the subjects included, Heat and Pressure, Characteristics of Liquids and Gases, Life in South Africa, Road to Recovery, and Battle against Poverty.

The film shows were not only seen in the schools by students but also during the general meeting of staff teachers were also benefited to see model teaching demonstrations. During the general teaching staff meeting of September 1945, film shows on Land Use, Handicraft,

Taking Care of Patients, Tapping System of Trees, Rope Making as experienced in India were also observed.<sup>9</sup> This kind of film show enlightened teachers with different social activities helping them to instil the kind of knowledge necessary for emancipation and conscious choice for human freedom (Price, 1986:41), to the community besides teaching their children. Topics in which teachers were able to help the community in gaining knowledge were like gardening, animal husbandry, terracing afforestation, and first aid education. The aim was to make the community conscious of their problems and work jointly in mutual assistance to improve their living conditions and enhance their social development.

The co-operation of the British Council with the Education Department was not confined only in this, but it had also opened a number of libraries in different places of the country. In Asmara alone three libraries were opened. These were for

1. Eritrean local schools,
2. Italian nationals and
3. the Municipality of Asmara (Woldemariam, 1997:21).

Other branch libraries were opened in Massawa, Hirgigo, Keren, Nacfa, Akordat, Barentu, Tessenei, Adi Ugri, Adi Keih, and Assab. Library working hours were 9:00-12:00 A.M. in the morning and 5:00-7:00 P.M. in the evening.

#### ***4.7 The Opening of Middle Schools***

In any place especially in the rural areas, the erecting of school buildings was the responsibility of the inhabitants. The British local government or the Education Department was only providing teachers, ink, pencils, exercise books, papers, nibs, books desks, blackboards, maps chalks etc. The inhabitants had to prepare the teachers' residence. This was only concerning to the elementary schools, which were teaching from grade one to four.

By the beginning of the scholastic year of 1947, the first batches of students had completed grade four. This raised a problem that needed special consideration. The students needed to go to another school different from the one they had been attending for the last four years. This was the intermediate school, which teaches students from grade 5 to 8.

<sup>9</sup>Ed/Dept/ Head Office/ Box 249 Ref. N0. Bur/ 2 Nov. 1949, at Research & Documentation Centre, P. F. D. J.,

The first batch of students took the national (general) examination in 1946. Candidates for these examinations had to produce certificates of four elementary school completions. The first group of candidates who passed the entrance examination for middle school is shown in the table below: -

The First Group of Middle School Candidates (1946-1947).

PLACE OF SCHOOL	NAME OF STUDENT
Acria	1.Girma Berhe 2.Russom Ghebremeriam
Hibret	1.Woldetsion Kelati 2.Alganesh Kahsai
Mendefera (Adi Ugri)	Amanuel Andemichael
Akordat	Abubeker Haji
Dekemhare	Kinfeghebriel Gabir
Segeneiti	Okubghebriel Desta
Adi Quala	Berhe Menghistu
Mai Edaga	Semainesh Abraha

Source: - Taye Adane, *A Historical Survey of State Education in Eritrea*, 1991 p.50-51

As Teclhaimanot (1996:14), showed clearly, in 1946, the British Military Administration approved the establishment of middle and secondary school systems in Eritrea and urged the Chief Administration to make the necessary preparation for its organisation and staffing. By the beginning of the scholastic year of 1948, in September two middle schools were opened one in Asmara at Bet Ghiorgis and another one in Keren, with an enrolment of 264 students. From year to year the number of students increased and by 1949 it reached 504 with the additional opening of two new schools at Dekemhare and Ghindae. For more information the enrolments of middle school refer the table below.

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Asmara.

## Enrolments in Eritrean Middle Schools, 1943-1950.

Year	School	Staff	Boys	Girls	Total
1943					
1944					
1945					
1946					
1947	1	4	115		115
1948	3	15	236	28	264
1949	5	21	425	79	504
1950	7	32	730	132	862

Source: - Berhane Tecelehaimanot, *Eritrean Studies Review* Education in Eritrea during the European Colonial Period, 1996, p.15.

According to Allen (1953:93), the curriculum was stressing practical studies in agriculture, in the arts and crafts, and in homemaking. Additionally, the department resisted pressure from some quarters to adopt a purely academic course preparing the students for the entrance to college and university studies. The middle schools were providing boarding services for the students who came from far places. In the centre, Asmara, the Bet Ghiogis middle school was filled by British and native staffs and Memhir Solomon Tecele was the first native director of this school.

Since the secondary school was not well established, in September 1949, however, seven bursars (grants) were allowed to students to go to school abroad. The seven students, who were awarded scholarship grants, were sent to Comboni College secondary school in Khartoum. The students were:-

1. Ibrahim Tamir
2. Ghebru Woldeghiorghis
3. Seyoum Ghebremedhin
4. Ghirmai Berhe
5. Asghedom Kahsai and

6. Tekie Okubagabir

7. Mebrahtu Negusse<sup>9</sup>

According to the letter, a cheque for £350 payable to a/c Comboni College was forwarded to Barclays Bank Khartoum to meet those awards. All liabilities and expenses exceeding £350, were paid by the parents.

Due to the unavailability of secondary education inside Eritrea in the 1949-1950, a token sum of £500 was awarded for bursaries for children deserving further education outside the territory.

The Education Department had announced the return of 19 male and 2 female students from their study in Khartoum Comboni College and the Comboni College Sisters School Khartoum for break<sup>10</sup>. Out of them four students were supposed to take the final School Leaving Certificate in Asmara in June 1952.

#### **4.8 The School Committee**

The Education Department insisted and ordered the establishment of school committee in every school. The purpose of its establishment got full popular support. A number of school committees were set up in all the schools in the towns as well as in the villages.

The school committee was composed of four or five members. According to the Education Department, the committee was endowed with rights of :-

1. organisation and construction of schools
2. providing residence and other vital facilities to teachers
3. following up attendance of students and
4. playing active role to solve any hindering problem in the teaching learning process (Yosief, 1986:39; Allen, 1953:89).

<sup>9</sup> ED/Dept/ Head Office / Box 249 Ref. No. Bur/ 2 Nov 1949, at Research & Documentation Centre , P. F. D. J., Asmara,

<sup>10</sup> Ref. NO.BU/1 28 May 1952, at P.F.D.J., Research & Documentation Centre, Asmara

For the sake of effective implementation of these objectives, the British Military Administration dispatched a circular to all provincial and district administrators and village headmen to work in co-operation with the school committee and to provide every aspect of support.

#### **4.9 *The Appointment of New Inspectors***

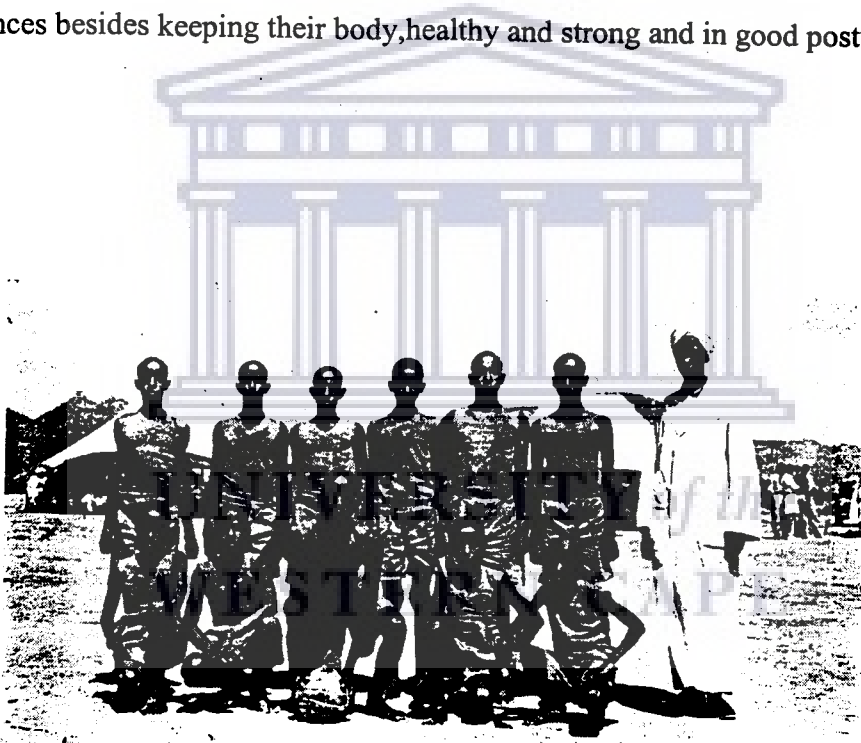
Under the leadership of H.F.Kynaston Snell the number of schools, students, and teachers were increasing. It was developing in breadth and depth. Side by side with this, the responsibility of the Department to bring about effective schooling was also growing. The responsibility of inspection relied on the Director General and Memhir Yishak Tewoldemedhin only. With all the changes which were existing in, it was very difficult for both of them to manage. They were not only confined in supervising only but were also making efforts to solve the current problems that teachers faced and including demonstrating lessons to introduce sound teaching methods and the importance of practical skills (Allen, 1953:91).

With the increase of schools they were not able to make rounds once every three months as before. It was discovered that additional personnel should be assigned. As Allen indicated by 1946 only, however, it required two thousand miles to travel to make one complete circuit of all the schools. To fill in the gap then, two additional inspectors were appointed. These were Memhir Asfaha Kahsai to supervise the Christian schools supporting Memehir Yishak and Kynaston Snell, while Sheik Osman was assigned to supervise the Moslem schools (Yosief, 1986:49). But in the course of time these two additional inspectors were not sufficient. Other inspectors were posted like Memhir Kidane Woldeselassie, Memhir Misghina Almedom, Memhir Seare Kahsai, Memhir Tedla Bairu, and others like Memhir Woldeab Woldemariam also were appointed inspectors.



#### 4.10 *Sports Activities*

During the British Administration, in the schools different types of sport activities were introduced and practiced in the native schools like football, basketball, volleyball, and athletics. Instructions were given in physical training, football (soccer) and boxing. Handball was popular type of sport particularly among the girls. Inter-school competitions were conducted between the schools throughout the territory which was concluded by an annual festival in Asmara presided over by the Chief Administrator of the territory in the award of a cup (Taye,1991:55). These sport activities enabled the students and teachers to know each other, their territory, culture, languages and enhanced the exchange of experiences besides keeping their body,healthy and strong and in good posture.



One of the fourteen school teams at the annual sports rally in Eritrea.

source: - H. B. Allen, *Rural Reconstruction in Action*, 1953, p.76.

#### ***4. 11 Resistance of Local People to British Military Administration***

At the very beginning of schooling in Eritrea during the British Administration, various villages began to show their resistance and did not send their children to schools. The reason was nothing but that Tigrigna, the local language was made as a medium of instruction in the primary schools. The people were expecting that Italian or English be the media of instruction. However, it was contrary to their expectations. This was because that Tigrigna had never been a written language. They did not expect that Tigrigna having its own alphabet could serve as a written language. My respondent Memher Asfaha Kahsai stresses a good example when he was assigned to Adi Quala School. As soon as he started registration the chairman of the Adi Quala School committee instead of encouraging the people claimed, “Why are you rushing to register the teacher is whom we know before and the language is Tigrigna, which we speak?” The people were discouraged and decided not to register with the exception of a few ones. The problem was solved when Asfaha Kahsai reported to the Education Department. The Office advised the chairman to reconsider his idea and co-operate with the school. The chairman was convinced and paid a visit to the school. He was received warmly with his mates in great respect that the children sang songs in Tigrigna that transmit messages of nationalism and virtue of hard work. He was deeply regretted and wept for his past mistakes and pledged to work in harmony with the school and encouraged Asfaha.

The other reason, as my informant Asfaha explained it, “ why the local people opposed was that they considered Tigrigna as the language of Protestant religion and the teachers as its messengers”. Beyond that they misunderstood that the schools themselves were serving the interest of Protestantism. They dare said this because the first native inspector assisting the British Education Officer, Yishak Tewoldemedhin, was a Protestant. He was very active and was supervising the schools frequently and this initiated the people as if he was performing his own private business and not the country’s work. This opposition was raised in the rural areas because the majority population was Coptic religion followers. Since this happened due to the prejudice that was developed as a result of the missionaries who

converted the Coptic. The rural population thus misconstrued the teachers as implementing the interest of the inspector.

Although all of the aforementioned reasons existed, Yishak Tewoldemedhin solved the problems very wisely and tactfully one after the other. He replaced the teachers assigned to these areas by teachers with common religion with that of the local people. The replaced teachers were either assigned where they could be accepted without any opposition or in the towns where religion was not given this much consideration.

Another problem that was not related to religion but to gender was that the local people did not understand the need of modern education for girls like the boys. People upheld strong belief that girls should marry at earlier age and take the responsibility of looking after their children and husbands. Education for a female was considered of no use. They did not believe that literate females could be employed and can lead their life in a proper way equally like the males. They only took that female is inferior to male for granted as an accepted theory. They associated that knowledge of knitting, weaving, and child rearing, and caring of her husband and her children wisely, which she could acquire from her mother through imitation as sufficient. In this case, the British in general and Yishak in particular made unravelling efforts to minimise it and persuade parents to send their children (girls) and encouraged girls to join schooling. They started to offer tea during the break freely as well as providing other materials for weaving, knitting and basketry free from payment. This attracted so many girls to join and their number of girls increased from time to time. Due to this three Girls' Schools were opened up to 1947, the first one in Asmara, the capital, the second in Keren, and the third one in Adi Ugri (Mendefera). As a good achievement up to 1945 ten females were registered in the teachers' training institute to become teachers (Yosief, 1993:56).

#### **4. 12      *The Effects of British Schooling***

Schooling during the British Military Administration had shown tremendous change than ever before in the short stay of their rule. Schools increased in number and level and were

opened in rural as well as urban areas. Though the British did not allocate sufficient expenditure for schooling, the local population was so much devoted in taking responsibility to educate their children and was ready to make any sacrifices. They showed full co-operation in the construction of schools, preparing the necessary facilities, provide residences and pay salaries for teachers.

The British did not succeed in creating a balance between academic and technical education. However, the rudimentary technical education provided the students like weaving, shoemaking, clay modelling, embroidery, agriculture (gardening) blacksmithing, and plumbing led to development of the creativity of students resulting in the creation of self-sufficient, hard working and productive locals. It was from this type of education that the British Administration secured the necessary skilled and semiskilled manpower, which consolidated its rule.

In addition, the British schooling was not only the cause for the emergence of diversified manual (skilled) labourers but also brought about the swelling of para-professionals who could serve the British Administration. They selling their manpower cheaply and were the backbone of the British rule. The locals who were working under the British rule were able to develop its consciousness by amassing the necessary experiences. Through the co-operation of the British Administration, they have gained the opportunity of upgrading their educational level through extension programme. This led to the emergence of conscious intelligentsia. After the withdrawal of the British from the territory, this intelligentsia was able to administer it, even though at last were somehow unable to challenge the intrigue of Ethiopia to annex Eritrea.

Finally, British schooling in Eritrea intensified the virtue of hard work and educational awareness and developed the political consciousness of the local people that led them to the formation of political movements and parties towards the end of British rule.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

Education in the broadest sense is a life long process of learning: of searching for a better understanding of the world and learning to operate in it. Although there were variations between different indigenous communities, education in pre-colonial Eritrea was generally part of the every day life. It was not the responsibility of a specialist labour force, teachers, rather every adult had the responsibility, to teach any child.

The roles and skills of adult society were learned through stories, riddles, poetry, and memory tests, as well as through traditions of song, dance, and games. Transition to adult status was often accomplished by imitation ceremonies, stressing attitudes of solidarity and co-operation. In the main, the differentiation of adult roles was along sexual lines. Skills passed from father to son or from mother to daughter. Special skills as blacksmithing, pot making, embroidery, hair-plaiting, clay modelling or healing, were monopolised by particular clans and passed on by apprenticeship of younger members of the family.

Social cohesiveness, the transmission of many useful skills from one generation to the other, and the creation of a sense of history and identity were some of the contributions of traditional African education. Likewise, through experiment and observation, Eritreans, then have developed skills suited to their circumstances, however, illiteracy and superstition undoubtedly confined innovation.

Much of value in African cultures has been destroyed or lost, but it is also true that many values and ways of communication persist. Some should have a place in building the future, while other values are changing. The changes came to existence with the entrance of missionaries and the colonisation of the country.

African societies like many others had their indigenous systems of education for the transmission of values, skills and attitudes to the on coming generation. Overtime, the indigenous systems were joined by the Islamic and Christian types.

Traditional education in Eritrea was conducted under the control of the Coptic Church and the Mosque, spreading their own religion respectively. Their teachings depended on the scriptures, the Bible/ the Qur'an. The Church, the Mosque, convents and monasteries were the main areas where teaching took place. They were teaching the word of God/Allah. In addition, schools were also involved to a certain extent in the teachings of social ethics. The system of learning was based on rote- memory and recitation. Its main aim was to produce submissive and obedient people to serve the Lord and the ruling class. Further it was also aimed at producing people to preach and extend their religion. These two great institutions have dominated education in pre-colonial Eritrea.

The traditional schools have played great role in training the necessary work force for the existing ruling class in the form of judges, secretaries. etc. Traditional education was succeeded by missionary education. The Catholic and Swedish missions were the main group in which they embraced different groups. They established schools in the rural areas as well as in towns and cities of Eritrea, providing religious and secular education. They were not limited only in school but were also active in helping the inhabitants in keeping their health, nurturing the orphaned and the needy (Pugliesi, 1953:111). The Swedish and the Catholic missions have laid the foundation for modern schooling. This took place by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were not confined in the provision of academic knowledge but were also involved in different skill and technical education like typing, printing etc. developed philological studies encouraged participation of females in schools, and published a number of books in the vernacular languages such as Tigrigna, Tigre and Kunama. However, the missionaries were collaborators of colonial rulers. The Catholic missions, in particular, had occupied a significant position in the colonisation of Eritrea by Italy.

The Catholic missionaries through Father Guiseppe Sapeto, bought a piece of land in Assab in 1869 and transferred its control to the Italian government in 1882. This action encouraged Italy to make further expansion for the total colonisation of the territory in 1890 giving its present name as "Eritrea." The main aim of colonising Eritrea was for the sake of getting markets for its manufactured goods, cheap manpower, and raw materials for her domestic industries (Paice, 1994:22). During the colonial period Eritrea served Italy as a settler colony as well as a launching pad to further expansion to Ethiopia.

The schooling started by the missionaries became more formalised by the Italians. The Italians did not start schooling instantly as they colonised the territory. It was later in 1909 that the Italians designed education of separate curriculum based on racial discrimination for Italian nationals and locals. That is, it was based on colonial schooling. Italian education had two main functions:

- to impart the skills, training and habits needed in the economy for the production of goods and services aiming at producing mechanics, technicians, interpreters etc.,
- to impart the cultural, moral and behavioural values of the society, notably appropriate attitudes of respect for the rulers, their institutions and their agents.

As a result, Italian schooling in Eritrea was limited to grade four only was mostly concentrated in the towns and cities. Villages and females were denied access to schooling. Italian schooling was composed of two main concepts the first one to instil in its subjects peoples devotion to Italy and a respect for Italian civilisation. Schools' main target was to train the local people for military purposes. The locals were trained as interpreters, clerks, telegraph operators, typists and to become troops. In short, native schooling served a political purpose. At that time, education in government schools was provided for the sons of traditional chiefs, notables, and well to do persons and was given in the Italian language. The textbooks were expensively produced and were written in Italian and glorified the "Duce"(Mussolini) on almost every page. Military service was lauded. Boys were encouraged to become "little ballila" (soldiers) of the Duce, the Fascist salute was compulsory and at morning hoisting of the Italian flag, Fascist songs were sung.

The second purpose of Italian schooling was the achievement of manual labour. This was aimed at producing as much as skilled and semiskilled cheap manpower for the Italian agricultural and industrial firms in Eritrea. In general, Italian schooling emphasised loyalty to the Italian State, the Italian flag, and the virtue of obedience to white supremacy. Accordingly, Andrea Festa, an Italian school director clarified the aims of schooling was, “to make the child conscious propagandist of Italian civilisation and so to proselytise the parents, to inform the native child of Italy’s ancient and present glory and greatness, so the child might become ‘a conscious militia man’ under the protection of the Italian flag, and to give him a knowledge of hygiene, geography, and history” (Teclehaimanot, 1996:4-5).

Though this was the general situation, the number of schools for the locals were very few in number in comparison to the Italian nationals. Towards the end of Italian colonial period there were about 6 native government schools. After evaluating the capability of natives, the Italians suppressed the natives’ needs for learning and indicated that the locals could gain by imitation from the Italians.

As a result the number of the native students was very low. In the period 1927-1928 only there were 3,656 pupils, in 1938- 1939 there were about 4,177 pupils. Due to the start of the Second World War in 1939 schools began to be closed so the number of pupils became even worse than before (Teclehaimanot, 1996:7).

Concerning teachers, with the exception of the language teachers, the teaching staff was composed of Italians. They were majority of Italians, nuns and a small number of local teachers. Students who completed the primary education were recruited as teachers without any kind of training.

In one way or the other, Italian schooling was a starting point for modern education in Eritrea, and the individuals who attended Italian schooling in the later period became the first modern elites particularly those who completed fourth grade. They achieved higher positions in the succeeding years.



The British came to Eritrea as members of the Allied Powers. They defeated the Italians in 1941 and were expected to support in the creation of an independent Eritrea by the locals according to the promise they made to the local people. But in contrary, the British began settling a situation which could fulfil their ambition, possibly to gain complete control of the territory if not include part of it into the already established colony of the Sudan as they had the plan of partitioning it between Ethiopia and Britain.

With the complete defeat of the Italians, the British set up their state apparatus known as the British Military Administration in Eritrea in 1941. They denied the local people their right to self-determination. A period of temporary rule was given to them from 1941 to 1952. They were endowed with the right of a caretaker and maintenance keeping the status quo and to prepare the territory to self rule by the Hague Convention of 1907. As a result they began to administer the territory in opposition to what the local people hoped and not according to the responsibility that the League of Nations gave them. But they were acting as colonial rulers at times.

As part of the British Military Administration, either to provide the necessary know how of combating illiteracy and enable the local people advance in education or to divert their attention against their exploitation and oppression, the Education Department was set up on 1 August 1942.

The British designed a policy through which they could underpin the overall policy. The main objective of the British was to make British language and culture dominant in order to create the necessary English speaking personnel from the locals. Their main strategy was to consolidate British supremacy in the zone.

To implement their objective, the British Administration set schooling in Eritrea consisting of academic and technical subjects. The school system was divided into two major parts: a primary level of four years and a middle level of the same length. At the middle level, boarding was provided for students from distant areas. The academic year lasted from September to June, divided into three terms (Taye, 1991:51-52). In addition to these

schools, a school for young lawbreakers (delinquents) was in operation at Adi Ugri. Adult education was also provided by the English Institutes set up in the main towns, while local teachers were engaged in sharing their knowledge by teaching reading and writing in their assigned rural areas.

Subjects taught in the two levels included both theoretical and practical ones. English, arithmetic, geography, general knowledge, science, history, language and song, constituted the major theoretical courses. In the case of practical subjects- shoe making, weaving, blacksmithing, woodwork, knitting, embroidery and gardening are worth mentioning.

To facilitate the learning situation, the British imported Arabic teachers and textbooks from their former colonies, Egypt and Sudan. In the case of providing Tigrigna books, they encouraged local scholars to print and translate from English and Arabic books. The medium of instruction was Tigrigna, Arabic, and later Kunama at primary level and English at the middle and upper levels.

The British were not generous enough to allocate huge amount of expenditure for education. They wanted their name to be respected by instigating the local people to carry all the onuses for the advancement of education in Eritrea. As a result, the locals constructed a lot of schools, paid the salaries of teachers and provided their residences. The annual educational expenditure was minimal.

The sojourn of the British in Eritrea being very short, they started the secondary education but time did not allow them to further its advance. So secondary education was almost non-existent. However, they gave bursaries to a very few students to attend at the Comboni College Secondary School in Khartoum (Teclehaimanot, 1996:15). Similarly, to upgrade the level of teachers, a Teacher Training College was opened in Asmara in 1946. Teachers were also sent to the United Kingdom for further training.

In general, schooling during the British, gained ground that about 100 primary schools, 14 middle schools and one secondary school were opened to enhance schooling (Gottesman,

1998:79). There were an estimated student number of 13,200 by 1951 one year before their evacuation. However, the British failed as Mebrahtu (1992:8) claims in “creating a balance between the theoretical and academic education and allocating more finance to education commensurate with the growing public demand.”

To sum up, the development of Eritrea is one more example of how much can be accomplished with the little resource that exist and in a short space of time. One important thing worth mentioning is beginning at the level of the people and utilising the materials at hand. Most of all, it assured that one can improvise creatively while doing tenaciously to principles which are basic. The utilising and training of Eritrean educators, in providing textbooks in Tigrigna and Arabic, the instructional languages at the primary level, and appointing dedicated local education inspectors who, in one way or another played a significant role in selling modern education to the Eritrean people should be of great credit. The British educational system has unforgettable contributions in enhancing the dignity of hard work, educational awareness, and political consciousness of the Eritrean people.

Finally I would like to conclude my investigation with the comment of Harber (1997:112) “though resources for education, including trained personnel, are meagre and insufficient and problems abound, it is to be hoped that the same sacrifice, perseverance, and discipline that eventually won the war against a militarily much stronger enemy can be used to build lasting education for democracy in Eritrea.” The investigation being at an initial stage could have its contribution and can be an insight for further study.

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## INTERVIEWS



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## Transcription

### I 1

Interviewer - Fessahazion Tewelde

Interviewee - Kegnazmatch Asfaha Kahshai.

Date interview conducted- 20 December, 1999

Place of interview conducted - at the interviewee's residence Asmara.

Interviewer- What was the nature of the provision of schooling in Eritrea prior to the British?

Interviewee- Before British Military Administration, schooling was in Italian in urban centres from first grade to fourth grade. The subjects taught included Arithmetic, General Knowledge, Geography, History and English.

Interviewer- How do you find the provision of schooling of the British in comparison to their predecessors?

Interviewee- Italian and British schooling were quite different to each other. During the Italian period, schooling was only concentrated in the urban centres whereas British schooling expanded even to the rural areas to a large extent. Schooling started in 1943 in Tigrigna and Arabic.

Interviewer – So many people claim that British schooling was better than that of the Italians. If it was so, what was its excellence? What is your comment on this?

Interviewee- The difference is in such a way that Italian schooling was aiming at training The natives in the Italians language in order to enable them

serve the Italian Government as interpreters, clerks, secretaries, etc., while British schooling Was meant to civilise and develop the society and above all, teaching was conducted in the vernacular languages, Tigrigna and Arabic according to The choice of the local people. They were not imposed like the Italian language.

Interviewer- Was the British schooling related to the real life situation of the Eritrea society?

Interviewee- As I earlier explained it, the aim of schooling was for knowledge sake and Development of the society. People were taught in their own language, which gave them good understanding of what they learned about.

Interviewer-What policy did the British design in the provision of schooling? How was It related with the over all colonial policy in Eritrea?

Interviewee- To my understanding British schooling was not based on colonial principles because the British were administering the country temporarily. They had no political aim beyond providing education unless it was a hidden agenda Either they were doing it to get popularity or to calm down the people. They were only paying salaries for teachers and providing teaching facilities. Everything was left for the teachers to do their share in enhancing schooling

Interviewer- What subjects were taught in British schooling?

Interviewee- Arithmetic, Geography, History, General Knowledge and English as a subject.

Interviewer- How was the recruitment of teachers taking place? What kind of training were they getting?

Interviewee- Teacher training did not exist during the Italian period. It came into being during the British. Former Italian soldiers and teachers were summoned and were given two weeks training and assigned to teach. Later the training continued in the form of three weeks, one month, three months, six months and one whole year gradually. In addition a general meeting of staff of the whole country was taking place for about a whole month during the summer vacation, where exchange of experiences and model classes were conducted. During the training, trainees were studying pedagogy, Arithmetic, English, History, Geography, Science and physical education.

Interviewer---How was the chance of access to British schooling in Eritrea? Which regions were having more chances?

Interviewee—Access was equal for all especially for those who constructed schools and ask for teachers. But limitations were still having pressure in restricting the number of students to accept, that is, the number and the size of the rooms were limiting factors.

Interviewer—What problems were the British facing in the provision of schooling?

Interviewee---During the Italian colonial period, construction of schools, providing teachers and supply of textbooks was the concern of the government. During the British, the problem was mainly dealing with the textbooks. As a result of this the problem started to be solved with time when the inspectors like Memhir Yishak Tewoldemedhin and myself and some other dedicated teachers began to publish Tigrigna books with the encouragement of the Education Department. In the case of Arabic textbooks, they were imported either from Egypt or Sudan or from both. In the case of schools, it was the responsibility of the people to construct. In the towns such as Asmara, Adi Ugri, Keren, Decemhare etc what was expected from the population was nothing but to co-operate with the Education Department plans. One

important factor that enhanced schooling during the British, which was not existing during the Italian period was the presence of school committees. The school committees were striving to solve the different problems that the teachers were facing. They were the upper hand of the Education Department.

Interviewer---What was the condition of the infrastructure at the time of the British rule? Was it having a hindering or influencing factor?

Interviewee There was no problem of transportation. Government trucks transported every school material. In case of emergency, dispensaries were giving the necessary aid. Sometimes hospitals were also providing free medical services for teachers and students.

Interviewer Were people in opposition to British schooling? If they did, why?

Interviewee---At the very beginning, the people have shown strong opposition because the medium of instruction was Tigrigna, the language which they know and speak. Besides they considered that Tigrigna could not serve as liturgical language as Ge'ez and for praising of higher officials in government offices. Not only this, Tigrigna was also considered as the language of the Protestants because they were preaching in Tigrigna unlike the Coptic in Ge'ez. In addition Memhir Isaak Tewoldemedhin, the first national educational inspector was a protestant so the Coptic Christians became alarmed that their children would be converted to Protestantism. Let me tell you about what I faced in Adi Quala. I was first assigned to teach in Italian but later I was made to teach in Tigrigna. The people rushed for registration in huge number. However, the chairman of the school committee being surprised began to undermine the people's activity and said, "the teacher is the one whom we knew before the teaching is going to be conducted in Tigrigna and not in English or Italian." With this the

people were dispersed and registration was interrupted with the exception of few people. After this I reported to the District Education officer that the school committee had never visited the school. As a result the education officer blamed of not co-operating with the teacher. Soon the chairman and his men came and supervised the activities of the school. I briefed them how the students were following, listened songs which were having political as well as national feeling and express virtue of hard work etc. in Tigrigna. The chairman regretted and wept for his past actions and convinced and began to develop interest to learn in their own language.

Interviewer— In whose hands was provision of schooling during the British rule?

Interviewee It was under the government, the missionaries and individuals. The government was supplying teachers, the missionaries were also teaching secular side by side with their religious activities whereas the individuals were the “debteras”(learned men) who were engaged in religious activity in the convents.

Interviewer What measures were taken by the British different from that of the Italian schooling to enhance the provision of schooling?

Interviewee Schooling was operating both in Tigrigna and Arabic languages. schooling during the Italian rule was limited up to fourth grade while the British schooling was upgraded to eighth grade. Bet Ghiorghis was the first middle school in Asmara followed by Adi Ugri, Keren, Decemhare, Massawa and Adi Keih. Later secondary school was also opened towards the end of the British rule. Scuola Vittorio Emanuele III was the only secondary school. Above all Girls' schools were opened which were absent in Italian schooling.

Interviewer Did any kind of division between Moslems and Christians exist?



Interviewee The British made Tigrigna as the medium of instruction at first. However, the Moslems, in the name of helping them in the use of the Koran, demanded Arabic to be the medium of instruction in their own locality namely, in the Western lowlands and along the Red Sea coast. The Moslems regarded Arabic as the language of Islam only. Their demand was accepted. This was the evil of the British.

When I was appointed the inspector of Akele Guzai, in Mendefera, the government school was serving both the Christians and the Moslems. The school, which was constructed by Grazmatch Abdella Gonafer, was in the service of Moslem students only. Finally this made me immersed in deep thought that these innocent Christians and Moslems being brothers and sisters and citizens of the same country were divided. In our school age this kind was not existing because we were attending in the same school and learning the same language. To avoid such evil measure, I attempted to assign a Tigrigna teacher.

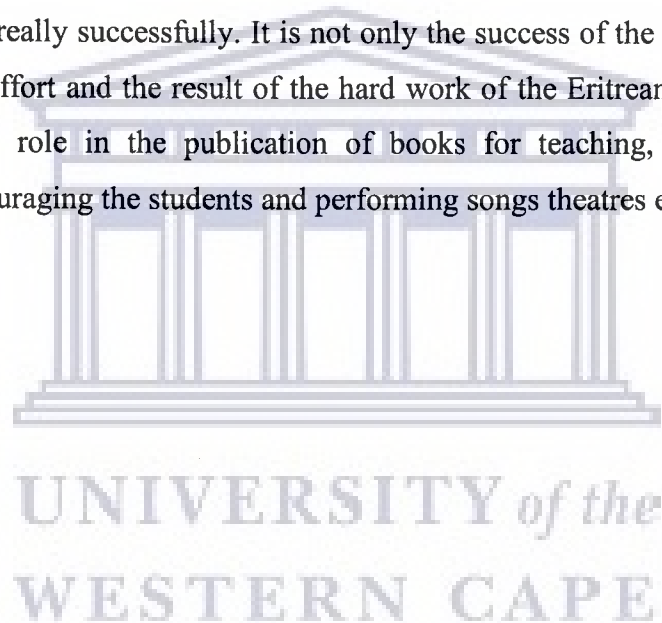
In another case, the Governor General of Eritrea, Brigadier Drew and I were in a visit to Senafe coincidentally. In the school there were two classrooms which were used by the Christians and the other by the Moslems. The Governor General supervised the Tigrigna class and asked them to read. Next he observed the Arabic class and asked them to read. He was satisfied with the situation. In the Arabic class, he asked the student, what language they speak at home. The student replied "Tigrigna." If you speak Tigrigna at home, why are we teaching you Arabic here?, asked himself. He then concluded at last by saying "I think we are making a wrong policy."

Another case in Adi Guadad, five kilometres to the south of Asmara, there was one school constructed by both the Christians and the Moslems. At the close of the scholastic year, the Governor General of Hamasien district Director of Education Department and I as an inspector attended on the

occasion. One chief from the Moslem community forwarded a question why a teacher was assigned only for the Christians neglecting the Moslems. I interpreted the question to the Governor General and he replied to him by asking what language they speak at home. The man replied, "Tigrigna." Then the Governor General gave a clear-cut answer that they have no right to claim whether they like it or not and insisted that they should learn in Tigrigna. So the British might have a political mission of dividing the people whether purposely or unknowingly.

Interviewer    What are the effects of British schooling?

Interviewee    It is really successfully. It is not only the success of the British but it includes the effort and the result of the hard work of the Eritrean teachers who played great role in the publication of books for teaching, agitating the people encouraging the students and performing songs theatres etc.



## I 2

Interviewer- Fessahazion Tewolde

Interviewee- Memhir Misghina Yishak

Date of interview conducted- 15 January, 2000

Place of interview conducted-at the residence of the interviewee, Asmara..

Interviewer What was the nature of the provision of schooling in Eritrea prior to the British?

Interviewee If schooling was existing before the British it was in Italian. When the Italians occupied Eritrea, they had no interest to train the natives. Even though they controlled the country before 1900, schooling did not start even after twenty years. They were only engaged in consolidating their position as well as their military power. Almost up to 1930 there were no schools where Eritreans could attend. Later, however, new schools started to appear in different parts of the country (urban areas) like Scuola Vittorio Emanuele III in Asmara, San Giorgio in Adi Ugri, Salvago Raggi in Keren, San Michelle in Segeneiti, etc. Even in these schools the Eritreans were not getting basic education which can enlighten and help them in their daily life but were trained as interpreters, clerks, secretaries, etc., to assist the Italians in communication with the Eritrean people. The Italians were not having deep interest in teaching the Eritreans because they wanted to oppress and exploit the Eritreans so as to be ruled submissively. They did understand that if they are taught they would be conscious and struggle for their rights and self-determination which is a natural phenomenon of subject nationalities. When the invasion of Ethiopia started in 1935, the schools were almost all closed to serve as hospitals for the wounded soldiers. Besides government schools, great role was played by the mission schools. In the Catholic missionaries, seminary schools were also training students for priesthood but some of the trainees were deserting because they were registered just for the sake of

gaining knowledge. The Swedish mission schools were also having their share but due to the start of the Second World War they were closed. till the coming of the British schooling was run mostly by the nuns.

Interviewer—How do you find the provision of schooling of the British in comparison to their predecessors

Interviewee As soon as the British came, the important thing which they introduced was education. They were interested to expand schooling in the whole of Eritrea even though they did not develop the infrastructure. They were persuading the people to learn. The people were asked to provide buildings for schools, which was a good start made by the British. The British called on the people who were teaching under the Italians and began to organise them to start teaching. In this way British schooling came into existence in Eritrea. Short training courses were given to the teachers. British schooling encouraged the people to learn by their own language. Agitation was made to the population both in the rural and in the urban to send their children to schools. Students were provided with uniforms, exercise books, books, pens, pencils etc., as a means of encouragement. We the then teachers were sent to the rural areas to implement two missions, one to propagate the people to send their children to school and the second one was to perform our teaching responsibility.

Interviewer— So many people claim that British schooling was better than that of the Italians. If it was so, what was its excellence? Would you please comment on this?

Interviewee If it is in comparison with the Italians, yes it was. The British were guiding, propagating and helped to provide schooling to Eritreans by Eritreans in their own language without any exploitation and oppression to enable the Eritreans keep their identity, know their culture and flourish their language etc.,

whereas the Italians taught Eritreans to make them subservient. Schooling was given not in the vernacular but in Italian.

Interviewer Was the British schooling related to the real life situation of the Eritrean society? Interviewee Schooling was not expected to bring radical change instantly to Eritrea, it was only laying a foundation for the change to come in the future.

Interviewer What policy did the British design in the provision of schooling?

Interviewee British policy was a bit different from the Italian policy or aim. That is, the Italian policy was to make Eritrea a settler colony of Italy. Italy set up every infrastructure, not for the benefit of the Eritrean society but it was setting up the preconditions for the Italian settler population. The British were imposing the natives to learn, to be self-reliant and self-governing but did not construct schools, they were only using the old warehouses and military installations of the Italians. The British are cunning people. They might have been insisting the people to open schools not for the good of the people but only to get popularity. In fact, the people succeeded and get use of it. Besides, the British also knew that they would not stay for long in Eritrea first because their stay was only for a period of ten years. Secondly after the Second World War, African colonised societies were struggling to get their independence from British rule so the chance of staying in Eritrea was very dim.

Interviewer—What subjects were taught in the British schooling?

Interviewee---Arithmetic, General Knowledge, Moral, English, Geography and History was taught. All the subjects were taught in either in Arabic or Tigrigna depending on the locality. Besides, handicrafts from different materials were also made. From soft- type stones, clay etc., models of different animals and chinks were carved out. With the setting of committees

well-organised curriculum was established to create uniformity among the schools in which students were supposed to take general examination at the end of the fourth grade.

Interviewer— How was the chance of access to British schooling in Eritrea? Which regions were having more chances?

Interviewee Due to earlier constructed schools, warehouses, and military installations of the Italians, at first the schools were concentrated mainly in the urban areas. However, the rural areas also started to construct their own schools and soon a number of schools were in function leave alone in corrugated houses but also in huts, “hidmos” i.e. traditional earthen roofed houses.

Interviewer—What problems were the British facing in the provision of schooling?

Interviewee---It was only minimal. When schooling started and began to make a good progress, the Ethiopian government started a campaign of weakening education in Eritrea by making a call for Eritrean teachers to come to Ethiopia and teach there. The aims were one to get supporters from among the Eritreans themselves in their future plan of unifying Eritrea with Ethiopia to secure control of the Eritrean ports. The second aim was they had faced a great loss of educated personnel after the invasion of their country by Italy so to compensate.

Interviewer In whose hands was provision of schooling during the British?

Interviewee The Italian schools have continued as before. The government having their own budget and providing teachers ran the government schools. The British period was short. The period of schooling at this time was no longer

than seven or eight years. Due to lack of the conscious of the population compulsory education did not exist. It was only free schooling. After completing elementary schooling, middle schools were opened and boarding schools were opened for students from distant places. Only one secondary school was opened towards the end of the British rule.

Interviewer—By around 1946 political parties were appearing, didn't they create any hindering factor in schooling?

Interviewee- Not this much. They didn't create any obstacle in the process of schooling. In some instances teachers who were sympathisers of the Ethiopian government were agitating in favour of Ethiopia. However, it did not create any hardship. Students were having strong feeling of nationalism.

Interviewer—In whose hands was the construction of schools during the British?

Interviewee—Totally it was in the hands of the population in general, and in the villagers in particular. In the towns the government was only maintaining the warehouses, military installations and other edifices and changed them to schools.

Interviewer—What are the effects of British schooling?

Interviewee—British educated people through education and individual efforts have become the source of manpower as government employee. In most case teachers became very successful to acquire promotion in the later history of the country. Others also have contributed a lot particularly during the Federation period (1952-1962) and later after annexation (1962 onwards). The desertion of teachers either for promotion or leaving for somewhere made the teaching profession face a serious

problem at last.

Interviewer—How were teachers trained?

Interviewee—At the beginning, the training was given only for two weeks, then three weeks and later was elongated to one-month course. By 1946, the training became six months, at last it was made a one-year course. In addition to this, every summer vacation, a general staff meeting was held every year for about a month. Evaluation as well as exchange of experiences was taking and model classes were conducted. By general discussion and agreement new technical terms as well as new vocabularies were invented. Towards the end of the British rule those who were recruited as teachers after completing seventh and eighth grade of British schooling were having a good knowledge due to the good base they have acquired.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with six columns and a pediment.

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### I 3

Interviewer- Fessahazion Tewolde

Interviewee- Memhir Semere Habteselassie

Date of interview conducted- 27 January 2000.

Place of interview conducted- at the Eritrean Teachers' Association Asmara.

Interviewer—What was the nature of the provision of schooling in Eritrea prior to the British?

Interviewee— Italian schooling did exist. It was given from 1—4 grades only concentrated in urban areas like Asmara, Decemhare. Mendefera (Adi Ugri), Keren, Massawa etc.

Interviewer— How do you find the provision of schooling of the British in comparison to their predecessors?

Interviewee—British schooling was in a better position. When the British came to Eritrea in 1941, they agitated the district officers and urged them to select a central place under their administration to erect a school serving for about 15 to 20 villages. I myself at that time was a first grade student and joined at Sheka Wedi Bisrat which was under the mislene, Azmatch Berhe Ghebrekidan. The British started as a result schooling in rural for the first time.

Interviewer—So many people claim that British schooling was better than that of the Italians. If it was so, what was its excellence? Would you please comment on this?

Interviewee—The Italians were giving a number of subjects, which were not this

much helpful for the students. However, during the British the subjects included reading, arithmetic, writing, General Knowledge, Geography, History and English were taught as a subject.

Interviewer Was the British schooling related to the real life situation of the Eritrean society?

Interviewee As a student of that time I have found it very useful. The subjects taught were not more than five up to grade six and seven. In addition vocational subjects like carpentry, weaving, basketry, and shoe making, etc., were given. The end products of all these subjects were all gathered and were sold at the closing of the scholastic year to the parents and other interested people. The incomes were used for repair, expansion of the school building and to buy raw materials for the students. This did not benefit the students only but also helped them gain experience and upgrade their ability as well as leading their own life successfully.

Interviewer—What policy did the British design in the provision of schooling? How far was it related with the overall colonial policy in Eritrea?

Interviewee—The British were interested in improving the society. They had the intention of developing (“civilising”) the society only because they were administering the country as a caretaker and maintenance only. Leaving their entire evils aside, the British were aimed at changing or modernising the society. Albeit they could have hidden aims, they did not attempt to instil new policy against the interest of the people. To up grade the knowledge (i.e. English language) of their staff, they opened English Institute schools. They supplied them with books like Essential English Book II III, IV, and I. Its main objective was to facilitate the British rule in Eritrea by getting the

necessary work force from among the population.

Interviewer—What subjects were taught in the British schooling?

Interviewee—English, Geography, History, Arithmetic, and General Knowledge.

In elementary schools all subjects were taught either in Tigrigna or in Arabic, according to locality needs, for example, in highland Eritrea Tigrigna and in lowland Eritrea Arabic were chosen.

Interviewer—How was the recruitment of teachers taking place?

Interviewee Teachers were getting very short training courses at the very beginning. Later they were improved. The British were recruiting from among the people who gained Italian education, soldiers, and others who were teaching in the Italian schools. Before anything else the British began to search a person who can help them in organising and starting schooling. They succeeded in getting information that Memhir Yishak Tewoldemedhin was the right person for this post. Memhir Yishak was a well experienced man who had been educated at the American University of Beirut and who was in the service of the Swedish mission during the Italian rule but later when the mission schools were closed by the Italians, he was engaged in agricultural activity of his own. He was made assistant to the Director General of the Education Department as the first native inspector. He was a very inspired person that he enabled the British to provide training courses for teachers, prepare teaching materials and text books for different subjects.

Interviewer— How was the chances of access to British schooling in Eritrea?

Which regions were having more chances?

Interviewee— Access was not at equal levels in British schooling in Eritrea. There were so many restrictions such as consciousness of the mass, the size

of the school (the more classrooms the greater was the number of the students) and the nature of the regions, i.e., lowland or highland areas,-highland areas had stable settlement whereas the lowland areas were nomadic which faced loss of students at different periods of the years. In general there was no even distribution of schools. The financial strength of the local people was also another determining factor.

Interviewer—How were students selected to join schooling?

Interviewee First the size of the school was one means of limitation, the second point the number of villages and the size of the population they contain was another factor. Due to this the student population was not this much serious problem at first. But in case it rose up, the use of balloting was taken as the right way of giving precedence for interested students.

Interviewer---What problems were the British facing in the provision of schooling?

Interviewee—Shortage of teachers and disturbances made by the sympathisers of the government of Ethiopia around the borderlines, i.e., plundering and pillaging led to dispersal of the population were causing interruption of schools.

Interviewer—What was the condition of the infrastructure at the time of the British rule?

Interviewee—With the exception of the infrastructure laid by the Italians the British have done nothing at all. Some of the good activities of the British if necessary to mention –insisted to take care of wounded animals if they didn't farmers punished, to terrace the fields and were encouraging afforestation.

Interviewer In whose hands was provision of schooling during the British?

Interviewee Well, it was under the British as its name clearly expresses. Catholic missions were still functioning in various areas of the country.

Interviewer What measures were taken by the British different from that of the Italian schooling to enhance the provision?

Interviewee—Italians were not enforcing the people unlike the British to send their children to school. The British were supplying all the necessary materials for the students.

Interviewer— Arabic and Tigrigna were used as media of instruction in different schools and regions. girls. Inter-school competitions were conducted between the schools throughout the territory which was concluded by an annual festival in Asmara presided over by the Chief Administrator of the territory in the award of a cup (Taye,1991:55). These sport activities enabled the students and teachers to know each other, their territory, culture, languages and enhanced the exchange of experiences besides keeping their body,healthy and strong and in good posture. Didn't they act (create) as divisive factors among the population?

Interviewee No. because, the British have solved it wisely. These languages were applied only from 1---4 grades, the subjects were translated into Arabic and Tigrigna. In the middle school (5—8) English was used as a common language replacing both subjects.

Interviewer How do you find the curriculum of British schooling?

Interviewee As students we were not in the position of evaluation. That was the concern of the teacher. But we find it very good. It was depending on

memorisation, which was helping the student to know more vocabularies and enable to identify different types of sentence construction.



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**MEMORANDUM**



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Education

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# MEMORANDUM

FOR  
ERITREAN TEACHERS

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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION  
ERITREA

MARCH  
1946



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# MEMORANDUM

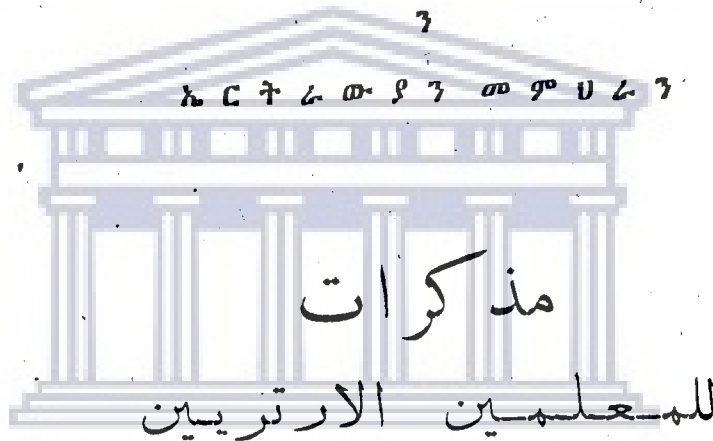
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ERITREAN TEACHERS

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## P R E F A C E .

This booklet contains sixty hints to teachers who must not treat it as something to be read and then put away. It must be kept permanently inside your class register and must be referred to on numerous occasions so that you may reassure yourself that none of the errors is being committed and that the good advice has not been forgotten.

These sixty points are by no means exhaustive but constitute only the more important things to remember in your work. It is hoped to print further hints later.

Please treat the booklet as your most precious possession. When the advice no longer applies to your teaching, then you may be sure that you are well on your way towards becoming a first-class teacher. But remember that the art of teaching is a difficult and complicated one, and that there is always something more to learn.

I shall be very glad to receive criticism of these hints with ideas you may have for a further series.

H. F. KYNASTON-SNELL,  
Major,  
Education Officer.

Asmara, March, 1946.

## HINTS TO ERITREAN TEACHERS.

### I. — Preparing for the lesson.

1. School must begin punctually at the hour stated on the time-table. If pupils come late it must be explained to them (and to their parents) that they are losing valuable instruction. Teachers must see that their lessons begin and end at the proper times by reference to their watches.
2. Do not disturb the lesson to ask a late-comer the reason for his lateness. Such a boy can take his seat and be questioned afterwards.
3. Always distribute necessary materials at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. This is best done by a monitor chosen for his good work. Thus when the pupils come into the classroom they will find pencils, exercise-books and texts all ready for the complete session.
4. Be careful to see that the blackboard is not too far from the pupils. It should therefore stand about two metres from the front row and be placed so that all may see without straining the eyes. Also see that there is not an open shutter or door in the way.
5. Some pupils may suffer from weak eyes and therefore find it difficult to see what is written on the blackboard. Watch them for eye strain; and move to the front of the class any who, for example, screw up their eyes. Therefore, do not allow tiny writing on the board.
6. Always see that the blackboard is well cleaned for the beginning of every lesson. It should be washed with water at least once a week.

### WESTERN CAPE II. — Use of the Abacus.

7. When a pupil is called to work a sum at the abacus, he must stand behind it so that the class may watch the operation.
8. Do not normally use the bottom two lines of the abacus as the children towards the back of the class will not be able to see what is going on.

### III. — Use of the Blackboard.

9. Pupils write from left to right in Tigrinya and Kunama (right to left in Arabic) in their exercise-books; the same should be done on the blackboard so that it always looks neat and orderly. Adopt the same practice with figures and sums.
10. The blackboard must stand with the light falling upon it. Also remember that light must come from the left of the pupils as they sit in their desks.
11. Small children will often try to write too high with their arm outstretched. They should write at the level of their eyes, and if necessary the blackboard can be lowered for them.
12. In the case of writing on the blackboard, do not rub out words, sentences, figures or sums immediately the pupil has finished. Backward children can be made to repeat such work. Also, when the blackboard is covered, all the work can be used for revision, and then rubbed out for fresh work to be done.
13. Many children find it more difficult to write on the blackboard with chalk than in the book with the pencil; therefore blackboard work is sometimes untidy. Instead of the teacher always criticising let the pupils help — for example he says: "Is that a good 5? What is the matter with it? Yes, the top stroke is not straight". Thus the children are trained to watch for imperfections.
14. If the class is waiting whilst you are writing something on the blackboard, then read as you write or make some comments so that the attention of the pupils is kept.

### IV. — Pictures and Maps.

15. Maps and pictures should be hung on the walls level with the children's eyes so that they can point out and read in comfort.
16. Maps should be hung on the wall facing the class so that pupils do not have to turn their heads when reference is made to them during a lesson.

### V. — Discipline and Conduct.

17. When a pupil has answered his question, he resumes his seat without waiting to receive that instruction from the teacher.

18. When it is necessary to admonish a pupil, do it quietly and privately without disturbing the whole class. Often a movement of the hand or a severe look with the eyes is sufficient.
19. All questions must be answered with the hand raised and not with "I, I". There must be only one voice at any moment in the classroom, either that of the teacher or of one single pupil.
20. The teacher must always be friendly and kind and patient, he must reward good work with a word of praise, not forgetting the backward pupils who are trying to make progress although they may remain backward.
21. Remember that a smile produces a smile. Attendance will improve if the child realises that to learn is a happy process.

#### VI. — Record of Daily Work.

22. In the same way as a teacher's diary is a record of his daily work, the exercise books of a pupil must constitute a similar record. Work in the exercise book must be headed with the date and no day must pass without some written work in letters and in figures.
23. At the end of every morning or afternoon session, each pupil must be able to tell his parents exactly what he has added to his knowledge — e.g. "Today I have learned the seventh letter of the alphabet", or "Today I have been told about the chief towns of Eritrea".

#### VII. — Care of Books.

24. All text books are to be carefully examined to see that they are kept clean and are not torn. Every one must have a paper cover for protection.
25. Text books must not be doubled back as this breaks the stitching or the clips. Some of our clipped texts have to be held open with the hand.

#### VIII. — Errors to avoid in Teaching.

26. Teachers very frequently concentrate on the boys in the front row, and neglect those sitting at the back. Distribute your questions equally over all the pupils.
27. Always give your question before indicating the pupil who is to answer. Then wait for a couple of seconds before pointing. If you indicate the pupil before asking the question, then probably the others will not bother to prepare the answer.

28. Do not concentrate on one pupil for a number of answers, but ask for answers from all over the class. If you are not sure if everyone has contributed something, then ask — "Who have not yet answered, or read?"
29. Be careful to see that you do not shout. A noisy teacher will produce a noisy class. Control your voice so that it reaches the back of the class but so that it does not fill the room with sound.
30. The teacher must face the class, for the pupils want to see him when he is speaking, in the same way as people watch the screen at the cinema.
31. The teacher must speak to the whole class and not to individual pupils. It is not necessary to walk over towards the pupil who is answering.
32. Always indicate clearly the pupil who is to answer as sometimes two boys stand up together. Point clearly with your finger, or better, call the pupil by name. It is not necessary to call "YOU".
33. When a pupil gives a reply in class all the others should be able to hear without difficulty. Children learn a great deal from one another's replies. They must be taught to speak clearly and not to mumble.

#### IX. — Maintaining Interest.

34. A pupil who gives a wrong answer or who fails to answer at all must not be abandoned. The correct answer should be given by another pupil, and then the teacher returns to the first who should repeat that answer. Never leave a pupil in ignorance.
35. An alternative is to ask the class — "Who knows?". This will help to keep the pupils on the alert.
36. In the case of an answer which is going to be lengthy, or of a demonstration in Geography, for example, which involves the movements of the arms, do not let the pupil remain in his seat but bring him to the front of the class so that all may watch.
37. Where little problems are given in oral arithmetic (for example: "Oranges are 2.50 a Kilo. I buy three kilos. How much do I pay?") allow the pupils to compose some themselves. It helps to maintain activity and interest, and it flatters them to help the teacher in his work.

38. Even in the middle of a long sum on the blackboard, change the pupil, otherwise the others will get tired of watching.
39. Use repetition in chorus very sparingly. When all the pupils are repeating work together it is difficult to distinguish what they are saying. Chorus work is best used only as a means of awakening the class if it has become a little inattentive.

#### X. — Writing.

40. During written work the teacher should walk round the class to see that good work is being done. Do not allow a pupil to make an entire line of poor work, but stop him after two or three examples of a letter or a figure, correct it and then let him continue.
41. All letters and figures must be made to stand on the lines on the exercise-book.
42. The teacher must be careful to see that his own writing on the blackboard and in the pupils' exercise-books is of the same high standard which he expects from the children.
43. For the first year in school, each lesson should generally be divided thus: two-thirds oral work with the use of the blackboard and one third written work at the end in the exercise books.

#### XI. — Reading.

44. Reading is often monotonous — all on one note. Teach the pupils how to modulate their voices, rising and falling, with expression when they are reading conversational passages. "Good morning, Mr Lion," said the mouse. "How are you?" should be reproduced with the intonation which we use when speaking to one another normally.
45. On no account allow pupils to sing-song the seven vocalisations of Tigrinya letters, or to raise their voices on the 6th — "sadès".
46. Do not allow one pupil to read more than two or three lines in a book, but change the reader constantly so that during any lesson all pupils shall have read something.

47. It is the same with the answering of questions. Teachers must be careful to see that every pupil has answered at least once in every lesson. A pupil who has been asked nothing will be discouraged and feel neglected.
48. Let the pupils repeat in their own words passages which they have read in their text-books or the subject of lessons. Teachers should remember that learning by heart does not necessarily mean that the passage memorised is understood.
49. Dialogues should be constructed from as many passages for reading as possible. These dramatisations should not be composed by the teacher but should be the work of the pupils, with corrections and improvements made by the teacher.
50. When a pupil stands to read from a text he should hold the book level with his eyes and at a distance of about 30 centimetres. If he finds this uncomfortable, then there is probably something wrong with his eyes and the advice of the doctor should be sought.

## XII. — Arithmetic.

51. When the pupils begin addition and subtraction, do not merely give plain figures (for example, 2 plus 5, 9 minus 4) but make simple problems — "If Zeggai has two pencils and Tesfai three, how many have they together?" — "Ibrahim has five shillings and gives two shillings to Abdu. How many has he left?"
52. Problems in arithmetic should always refer to objects with which the pupils are familiar — e. g.: eggs, goats, bags of charcoal, abugiadid, dum-nuts, camels.
53. See that figures are made strictly according to the figure chart; the bottom stroke of "2", the strokes of "4" and "7" should all be straight. The figures "6", "8" and "9" must be made without raising the pencil from the paper.

## XIII. — Backward Pupils.

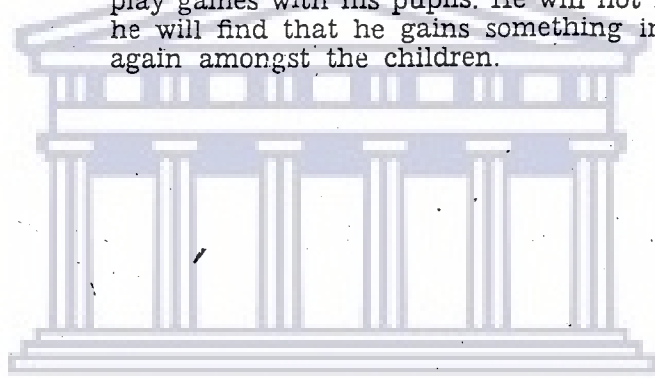
54. If you have backward children in the class, do not let them feel that they are neglected, or allow the others to show contempt for them. Every now and again give them an easy question or make them repeat the answer of another pupil; then they will have the satisfaction of having contributed to the lesson.



55. Backward pupils may be given individual attention whilst the better ones are doing some written exercise. If they are kept behind after school to do extra work or for extra explanation of work which they have not understood, then they must not be made to feel that this is a punishment.

#### XIV. — Physical Training.

56. Never repeat an exercise in drill more than three times.
57. There should be a slight pause between each exercise, and between each part of an exercise. If you use a whistle, do not blow it too rapidly.
58. Watch to see that each child is doing the exercise properly. If necessary the rest of the class must wait while you correct as quickly as possible individual errors.
59. Always demonstrate yourself first how an exercise is to be done.
60. Each physical training period should end with a simple game. Teach as many of these as you can. Let the teacher play games with his pupils. He will not lose his dignity but he will find that he gains something in becoming a child again amongst the children.



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**TABLES**



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Italian Elementary and Secondary Education  
(December 1942).

	Number of Schools		Number of Pupils		number of Teachers	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Liceo-Ginnasio	-	2	-	260	-	20
Scuola Media	-	1	-	750	-	42
Instituto Magistrale	-	1	-	40	-	7
Instituto Tecnico	-	2	-	150	-	20
Asmara-Elem	4	-	2300	-	60	-
Nefasit	1	-	15	-	1	-
Sciumagale	1	-	15	-	1	-
Embatcalla	1	-	20	-	1	-
Decamare	1	-	470	155	11	6
Massawa	1	-	65	-	3	-
Adicaieh	1	1	90	30	3	1
Senafe	1	-	150	-	5	-
Tessenei	1	-	50	-	2	-
Seganeiti	1	-	20	-	2	-
Adi-Ugry	1	1	115	30	5	1
Adi-Quala	1	-	15	-	1	-
Keren	1	1	100	35	3	2
Total	16	10	3425	1450	98	99

Source: S.H. Longrigg, Occupied Enemy Territory Administration of Eritrea, Asmara, Half-yearly Report IV July to December, 1942, Appendix C.

## Eritrean Elementary Education(December 1942).

Division	No. of Schools	Pupil	Teachers	Nationality of Teachers	Medium of Instruction
Acria (Asmara)	1	350	7	Eritrean	Tigrigna
Vittorio Emanuel	1	100	4	Eritrean	Tigrigna
Decamare	1	80	2	"	"
Zazega	1	80	2	"	"
Coazien	1	40	1	"	"
Gescnascim	1	40	1	"	"
Adi-Yohannes	1	40	1	"	"
Himberti	1	40	1	"	"
Massawa	1	80	2	Sudanese	Arabic
Adicaieh	1	80	2	Eritrean	Tigrigna
Seganeiti	1	40	1	"	"
Adi Ugri	1	80	2	"	"
Adi Quala	1	80	2	"	"
Arresa	1	40	1	"	"
Keren	1	160	4	"	Arabic
Agordat	1	80	2	Sudanese	Arabic
Tessenei	1	40	1	Sudanese	Arabic
Barentu	1	40	1	Sudanese	Arabic
Assab	1	40	1	Sudanese	Arabic
Total for Eritrea	19	1530	38	=	=

Source: S.H. Longrigg, Occupied Enemy Territory Administration of Eritrea, Asmara, Half-yearly Report, IV, July to December, 1942, Appendix C.

Time Allocation by Subjects  
Programme of studies in Primary Schools of Four Year Course

( Hours per week, by year )

Subject	Grades ( Years )				Remark
	1	2	3	4	
Reading	2 ½	-	1	1	
Writing	2 ½	2 ½	1	1	
Drawing	1	1	1	2	
Handicraft	1	1	1	2	
General Knowledge	1	1	2	4	
Singing	four songs	five songs	all songs	school songs	There was a text of songs
Arithmetic	5	5	5	6	
English	*	*	*	*	English was offered in all grades but the time was not indicated.
Geography	-	1	2	5	
History	-	-	1	2	
Grammar	-	-	1	2	
Language	-	2 ½	-	-	
Education ( Civics )	-	-	-	1	
Science	1	1	3	4	

Source: - Taye Adane, *A Historical survey of State Education in Eritrea*, 1991: p.53.

**PHOTOGRAPHS**



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### Agriculture education

Source: -Mehari Woldemariam *Timhirti Ab Eritra (Education in Eritrea)*, 1997. p.27

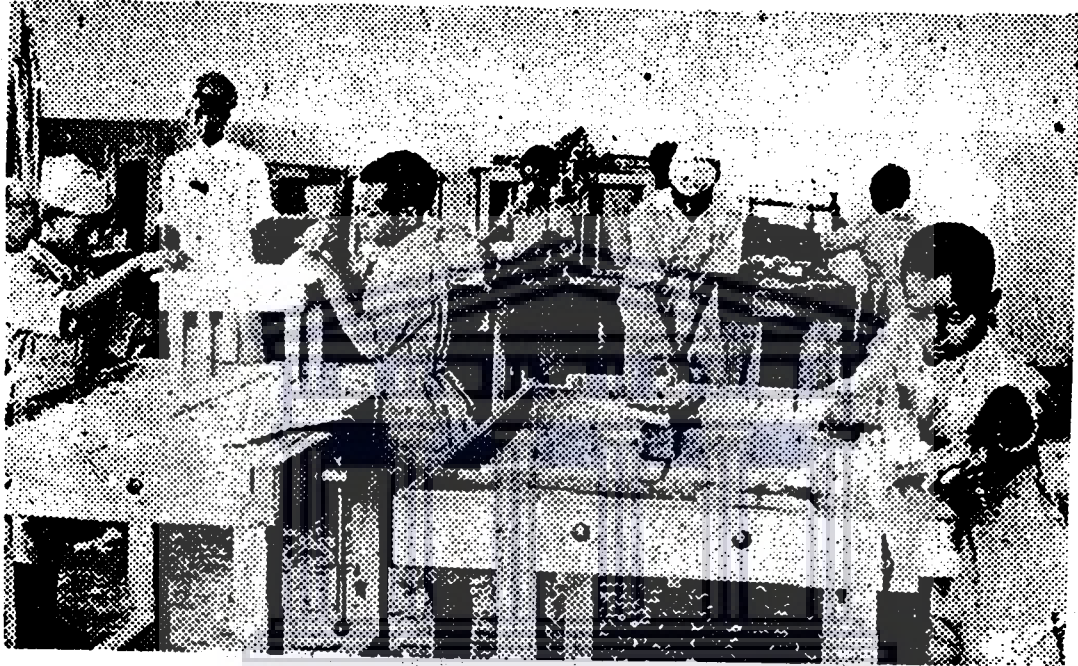


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### Blacksmithing

Source: -Mehari Woldemariam *Timhirti Ab Eritra (Education in Eritrea)*, 1997, p.29





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### Carpentry education

Source: -Mehari Woldemariam *Timhirti Ab Eritra (Education in Eritrea)*, 1997.p.30.



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### Weaving education

Source: Mehari Woldemariam Timhirti Ab Eritra (*Education in Eritrea*), 1997.p.28.



The school buildings were usually modest structures (Makerka, Eritrea).

The Adi Caiech school for both boys and girls was built entirely through local voluntary subscriptions.



Spinning and basketmaking class at the Asmara girls' school. They prefer to sit on the floor.



Classroom in the village of Merrara. Three girls are in this group, two on the left, one in the center foreground.

Source: - H. B. Allen, *Rural Reconstruction in Action*, 1953, p.76.