

The Rhinoceros-Horn Beakers of Menelik II of Ethiopia: Materiality, Ritual, and Kingship

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Three rhinoceros-horn beakers, now held in storage at the Smithsonian Institution, were the most valuable gifts among many given by Menelik II, emperor of Ethiopia (1889–1913), to the United States ambassador (Herman) Hoffman Philip between 1909 and 1910. Ethiopia, surrounded on all sides by colonial powers, sought the United States as an ally to uphold its independence, while the United States was interested in opening Ethiopian markets to manufactured cotton. This article reconstructs both the ideology and diplomatic intent of this encounter through the gifting of the horn beakers. Since rhinoceros horn was considered medicinal in Ethiopian pharmacology, the cups demonstrate both the emperor's concerns with being poisoned and, by proxy, the symbolic health of the diplomatic encounter. The cups are also situated within the imperial banquet to serve honey wine. I hereby illustrate that the use and display of the beakers in this setting were allegories for Ethiopian imperialism and historicism, enacted through the mechanism of stacking and distributing the cups among the invited guests.

Christmas 1948

“Christmas 1948” was the subtitle (Herman) Hoffman Philip, former United States consul to Ethiopia, gave the memoir of his 1909–10 diplomatic posting there.¹ This curious subtitle to the more aptly named “Abyssinian Memories” speaks to what Hoffman Philip deemed most memorable in his short stay in Ethiopia—an exchange of gifts, akin to Christmas, with the emperor and empress of Ethiopia. The pageantry of the “Christmas-like ceremony”—the procession of wrapped presents borne by armed and mounted guards to the enthroned emperor (fig. 1), the queen’s alleged consternation at the gifts, and



Fig. 1
Menelik II enthroned
in coronation garb,
1903. Selassé and De
Coppet, *Chronique du
règne de Ménélik II*,
vol. 2, pl. 50. Photo by
Secondo Bertolani.

the ceremonial unwrapping wherein “the floor of the pavilion was almost kneedeep in masses of tissue paper”—points to the importance of this gift exchange to both the court and Hoffman Philip’s own memory.² While throughout his stay in Ethiopia Hoffman Philip received many gifts in addition to those from the event he describes in his memoir, the ambassador himself gave “a framed picture of the President, a gold-mounted rifle, a gramophone, and a book of photographs of [US] warships.”³

Despite the fact that Hoffman Philip’s tenure as envoy to the court was short and marred by repeated illnesses, the collection of gifts he received was vast and remains a largely unpublished treasury at the Smithsonian Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland.⁴ Aside from an inventory published in 1911 and a George Washington University seminar paper, this collection of treasures has not been thoroughly studied. Public display is limited to a

liturgical crown and a genre painting in the ongoing *African Voices* exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.⁵ Walter Hough, curator of ethnology at the Smithsonian Museum in the early twentieth century, however, noted their importance, stating upon their acquisition:

Material from Abyssinia is exceedingly rare, and the collection of Mr. Philip, probably the first that has been brought to [the United States], is interesting on account of the survivals which it exhibits from the ancient culture of northern Africa, the neighboring Asiatic continent, and eastern Europe.⁶

Despite the fond retelling of the gift exchange in Hoffman Philip's memoir, his early writing speaks to ambivalence, if not outright hostility, toward the collection. In a letter written from the Sublime Porte in 1910 about his recent donations to the Smithsonian Institution, Hoffman Philip wrote:

I had not time or opportunity during my limited residence in Abyssinia to collect with much purpose. My idea was to secure as many articles of "luxe" as possible, but I soon found out there is not much of real interest to be had. The Abyssinians are practically without arts or ambition in that direction, apparently.⁷

The pieces, however, tell a different story. The objects of "luxe" described in the consul's letter were largely diplomatic gifts, not assembled personally, while many of the other treasures that Hoffman Philip purchased were items of daily use, such as a heavily worn adze and water pipe, that point toward an ethnographic impetus.⁸

At the time of Hoffman Philip's posting, diplomatic relations between the United States and Ethiopia were young, having only been established in 1903. Despite this, Ethiopia had already developed a taste for American mass-produced cotton cloth. According to the ambassador, the "weight and durability" of *Amerikani* cloth was renowned in Ethiopia and valued as a far cheaper alternative to "laboriously woven native cloth."⁹ Manufactured cotton was used to make the ubiquitous cotton wrap (*shamma*) of the highland peoples.¹⁰ At the time of Hoffman Philip's posting, however, the United States, which had virtually monopolized textile imports to Ethiopia, had begun losing out to the cotton industries of Italy and Japan.¹¹

Ethiopia had a far more vested interest in the success of their nascent relationship with the United States. The Ethiopian empire, as the only remaining independent African state at the time of Hoffman Philip's posting, remained in a tenuous situation with the neighboring colonial powers of France, Italy, and Great Britain.¹² Reigning emperor Menelik II's (1889–1913) conquests and his empire's independence were largely due to his skillful management of foreign relations.¹³ Menelik's court was filled with European advisors; his imperial conquests were lubricated with French rifles and Russian artillery; and overseas goods were brought into the land-locked state through a joint Franco-Ethiopian railway project.¹⁴ Well-known even today, Menelik was responsible for



Fig. 2
Rhinoceros-horn
tej cup. 8.6 cm tall,
8.9 cm diameter.
Department of
Anthropology,
Smithsonian
Institution, E261844.
Photo: Lucia RM
Martino.

Fig. 3
Set of two
rhinoceros-horn tej
cups. Smaller cup:
8.9 cm tall, 9.5 cm
diameter; larger cup:
8.9 cm tall, 10.2 cm
diameter. Department
of Anthropology,
Smithsonian
Institution, E326751.
Photo: Lucia RM
Martino.



an unprecedented period of imperial conquest, diplomatic overtures, and state building, including the establishment of the state's first permanent capital: Addis Ababa.¹⁵ Menelik's state building was so successful that today, territorially, federal Ethiopia still follows the boundaries of his empire.¹⁶ The colonial powers surrounding the empire were both a threat and a key to its survival. Diplomatic gifts were thus exchanged between Ambassador Hoffman Philip and the emperor to articulate their vital economic relationship and Ethiopia's status as an independent empire.

Gifts mean more than simply exchanged goods. We may understand Hoffman Philip's assemblage through the mode of exchange defined by anthropologist Marcel Mauss in his landmark study, *The Gift*.¹⁷ Mauss notes that when a present is given by one party to another, it is specially chosen, so that once it is "abandoned by the giver, it still forms a part of him."¹⁸ The gift exchanged thus forever memorializes both the gifter and the moment of exchange in the mind

of its recipient. The diplomatic presents exchanged by Menelik and Hoffman Phillip in 1908–10 can be understood in this manner.

The most materially significant among the many gifts acquired by the ambassador are three rhinoceros-horn beakers used to serve honey wine (figs. 2 and 3). Two of the cups are described in the Smithsonian's accession as "presents of the king's cup . . . by the King of Abyssinia to collector [Hoffman Philip]," while the single beaker is recorded as "presented to subjects who have met [the Emperor's] favor."¹⁹

In this article, I reconstruct both the ideology and diplomatic intent of Menelik through his gifting of the rhinoceros-horn beakers to Hoffman Philip.²⁰ Rhinoceros horn at the time was a sumptuary good, and its materiality was imbued with royal significance in Ethiopia, while its substrate was also considered curative in Ethiopian pharmacology. I thereby situate the cups within their social context, the imperial banquet, wherein they played a theatrical role in the serving of a honey wine called *tej*. I propose that the use and display of the cups in this setting functioned as an allegory for Ethiopian imperialism and historicism through the mechanism of stacking and distributing the cups among the invited guests.²¹

The Beakers

Given the survival status of the rhinoceros in the wild today and the illicit trade of its horn for use as objects in contemporary Yemen and Ethiopia, two of the beakers of note (catalogue no. E326751) are retained inside special storage units in the Museum Support Center (fig. 3).²² Despite their great material importance in the Smithsonian's collection, very little has been written on these objects. Generally, literature on East African rhinoceros-horn beakers consists of ethnographic accounts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, almost none of which are from Ethiopia proper but rather from territories further inland.²³ The only current literature is an article by food historian Thomas Guindeuil, who focuses exclusively on zebu-horn examples.²⁴

The cups accessioned as a pair (E326751) and the single cup (E261844) are truncated cones, squat and flaring upwards gradually from the base. Decoration is highly conservative: the only embellishments are two registers of incised lines at the top and bottom. The two smaller cups have three incised lines on each register, and the larger cup has three at the bottom and five at the top. While the single cup is quite immaculate, the pair appear heavily used and worn. Wear is indicated on the bases of the cups, which are chipped, have white abrasions, and are exceptionally flat—likely the result of repeated setting down upon a surface (figs. 3 and 4). The larger of the pair has much of its incised decorations filled with detritus, presumably from repeated handling, and the porous grain of the horn has darkened, giving it an aged patina (figs. 4 and 5). The smaller cup, interestingly, has a smooth slight indentation on the rim, likely from repeated drinking. The interior of the larger of the pair is chipped, but torquing scrapes on the inside indicate that it was possibly reworked at a



Fig. 4
Side view of larger cup. Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, E326751. Photo: Lucia RM Martino.



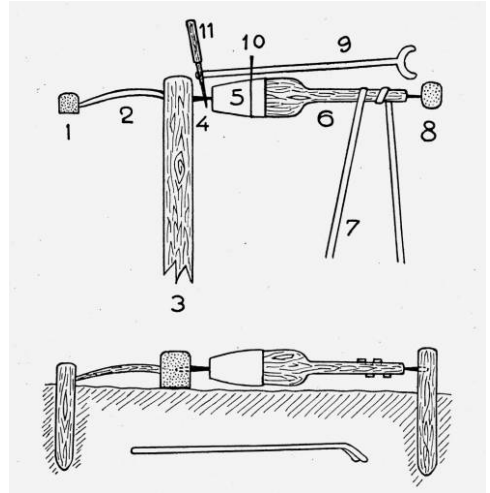
Fig. 5
Interior of larger cup. Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, E326751. Photo: Lucia RM Martino.



Fig. 6
Interior of cup. Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, E261844. Photo: Lucia RM Martino.

Fig. 7

Diagram and cross section of a cord-spun lathe for horn beakers. Key: (1) stake; (2) wedge; (3) moveable plank; (4) iron pivot; (5) horn beaker; (6) mandrel; (7) cord; (8) stake; (9–11) iron-tipped cutting tool. Source: Marcel Griaule, "Moules et tour à travailler la corne (Abyssinie)," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 11 (1941): 203, fig. 2.



later date (fig. 5). The smaller cup has these same scrape marks but underneath a cloudy patina, a phenomenon seen when items are repeatedly used to hold liquid and not cleaned properly.

The practically immaculate, singly accessioned cup (E261844), however, provides clues as to how it was crafted (figs. 2 and 6). This cup is described in Hoffman Philip's 1911 inventory as

[t]urned from a single piece of rhinoceros horn. . . . [I]t differs from ordinary specimens [bull horn] which have inserted bottoms. Such cups are usually presented to subjects who have met with his favor by the Emperor of Abyssinia.²⁵

Not a single chip or indication of use is evident on this beaker, and the aesthetic effect of the freshly cut grain of the rhinoceros horn gives it an almost frothy patina. Powdered horn can even be found inside at the very bottom of the cup, lending credence to the hypothesis that it was never used (fig. 6). Marks of manufacture are also directly observed. Corroborated by the inventory's use of the word "turned" in describing its method of manufacture and attested to by fresh-looking scrape marks on the interior of the vessel, the cup was shorn from a section of horn and then hollowed and articulated with the use of a lathe.²⁶ Evidence of a lathe is also indicated by a white abrasion on the bottom of the cup, in line with the markings of a mandrel or arbor clamp.²⁷ These evidential signs are also corroborated by a *chaîne opératoire* of horn beaker production in Ethiopia by ethnographer Marcel Griaule in the early twentieth century. Griaule records the use of a cord-spun lathe among the Gurage (fig. 7).²⁸ This artisanal method of turning requires an assistant to pull the cord to spin the lathe while the craftsman operates the cutting tool.²⁹ While cord spinning leaves both of the master's hands free to articulate the vessel, the resulting reciprocating movement of the lathe makes precise, symmetrical carving more difficult.³⁰ The even grooves on Menelik's beakers point to a certain virtuosity on the part of the artisan.

In the very bottom of the vessel's interior, the carving marks are less precise, and the torquing scraping appears to have involved more of a chipping motion. In contrast to the heavily worn pair of cups, this vessel also weighs more, owing to its shallower carving. This observation further supports the hypothesis that the well-worn cups were reworked, with their cavities becoming deeper and their walls thinner with each successive tooling. A long, scratch-like abrasion is found on the inner rim of the cup—a marking shared by all three vessels in the collection (to be addressed later).

The minimal design employed by the craftsman when creating the vessels leaves most of the beakers' bodies smooth and unadorned. This was clearly the craftsman's intent—to make the beakers' material rarity their primary aesthetic. As noted by Guindeuil in his study on zebu-horn beakers in French and Ethiopian collections, the morphology of the truncated-cone beaker served as a status symbol in both the north and south of Ethiopia from the sixteenth century onward, despite being somewhat displaced in the nineteenth century by glass flacons called *berelle* (e.g., fig. 8).³¹



Fig. 8
Ethiopian flacon (*berelle*), inscribed: *Negusa Nagast Menelik* (Emperor Menelik), late 19th–early 20th century. Glass and gold paint, 22 cm tall. Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, Germany, 90-313023. Photo: Marietta Weidner.

Despite Ethiopia's being a state in Africa, wild rhinoceroses had been hunted to extinction in the Ethiopian empire's heartlands by the nineteenth century. A British traveler of the mid-nineteenth century, who came to Ethiopia for the explicit purpose of big-game hunting, reported that wild rhinos were rumored to live only in the empire's far-western province of Kassala (now in Sudan) and were extinct everywhere else.³² Thus, the horns used to make these cups were likely imported from the African hinterlands surrounding the empire or even from India.³³ Menelik claimed rhinoceros horn as royal tribute from his subjects, and so the beakers' materiality affirmed their kingly connotations.³⁴ Accordingly, rhinoceros horns were called "king's cup[s]" in the Smithsonian's accession files.³⁵

The natural patination of rhinoceros horn, alternating in color from dark brown to yellow and featuring a variety of growth patterns created during the lifetime of the animal, also adds to the beakers' mystique. In the case of the rhinoceros-horn beakers accessioned by Hoffman Philip, the central, unadorned registers framed by the incised bands display the royal materiality of the rhinoceros horn to full effect. Humbler zebu-horn beakers (known in Amharic as *wanča*) illustrate this same material focus.³⁶ A large zebu-horn cup from the Musée du quai Branly, for example, has barely any articulation: just two narrow, incised bands run along the rim and around the base (fig. 9). The naturally twisting growth patterns, the variegation, and the size of the bull's horn serve to represent the wealth of the cup's owner through its materiality.³⁷ Horn speaks as horn.

Rhinoceros-Horn Beakers as Medicine

The great reputation of rhinoceros horn was not altogether due to its enigmatic aesthetic qualities or its difficult sourcing but rather to its alleged curative properties. Indeed, medicinal uses of horn appear frequently in Ethiopian texts. A medical textbook compiled from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Amhara indigenous pharmacology records the plethora of healing applications of horn in highland Ethiopia.³⁸ For hyena bites, the author, Gerazmach Gebrewalde, prescribes drinking herbal medicine through a black *wanča* (horn beaker), while carbonized horn is said to treat heart disease, and the hanging of a horn in front of the uterus is recommended for preventing miscarriages.³⁹ The apotropaic properties of horn even extend outside the confines of the body: by hanging a red bull's horn filled with river rocks over a doorway, thieves can be deterred.⁴⁰ However, the iatric properties of horn are conspicuously absent from the two most widely copied Ethiopian medical texts, the *Mashafa Faws* (Book of [spiritual] medicine) and the *Mashafa Falasfa Tabiban* (Book of wise philosophers).⁴¹ As translations of medieval Melkite Arabic texts, these books were largely for clerical use and lack the localized belief systems of Gebrewalde's compendium. Belief in the curative properties of horn also remained constant in neighboring regions. The Fur of Sudan, for example, as recorded by British ethnographer R. W. Felkin, used "cups made of rhinoceros horn . . . to detect poison in water, wine or beer, the fluid changing colour; to give one of these cups to a friend is the highest honor that can be paid to him," and as late as



Fig. 9
Ethiopian *wanča*,
before 1890. Zebu
horn, 28.5 × 10.7 ×
10.7 cm. Musée du
quai Branly, Paris,
71.1890.28.8. © RMN-
Grand Palais / Art
Resource, NY. Photo:
Jacques Chirac.

1941, rhinoceros-horn shavings were mixed with milk in order to cure snakebite in Sudan.⁴²

Why, then, did Menelik explicitly gift items of medicinal use? When greeted by the emperor in 1909, Hoffman Philip noted that Menelik “had lost much of the vigor that had distinguished the earlier years of his reign.”⁴³ In fact, the king had been declining in health precipitously since 1896—possibly due to a dormant case of syphilis made worse by a stroke in 1908.⁴⁴ Chris Prouty notes that Menelik may even have hinged his later foreign policy on which countries were at the forefront of Western medicine.⁴⁵ In the period of Hoffman Philip’s stay, Menelik’s foreign *chargé d’affaires* was also his personal physician.⁴⁶ In his

weakened state, Menelik harbored immense paranoia about being poisoned. Menelik's royal taster was deemed so important that he was given the title of *Ras* (Lord).⁴⁷ Menelik also employed a special bakery in his palace, Great Gebbi, where carefully chosen bakers "wore special white clothes, cleaned daily, made from cloth received four times a year" in order to reveal any impurities in the cooking process; in off-hours, the bakery was locked and guarded by armed sentries.⁴⁸ Menelik also took the most extreme precautions with dairy products, allowing only one "trusted woman" to prepare his butter, milk, and cheese.⁴⁹

Indeed, Western visitors noted this intense suspicion on the part of Menelik toward foodstuffs in their sojourns in the kingdom. Robert Peet Skinner, the first US consul to Ethiopia, recalled that during the royal banquet, Menelik had servants pour drops of *tej* onto the palms of their hands repeatedly before pouring it for the emperor to show that it was not adulterated.⁵⁰ Lord Edward Gleichen, during his brief diplomatic engagement with Menelik in 1897, noticed that a female attendant at a banquet took a piece of "meat in her fingers, . . . sliced it up with a clasp knife, and [ate] a small piece with some soaked bread to show that it contained no poison" before serving the emperor.⁵¹ After a banquet in 1902, Menelik was quoted as asking the British delegation in attendance about the "discovery of anti-venine as an antidote to snake-bite."⁵²

Thus, while there is no direct evidence that rhinoceros-horn beakers were used in an alexipharmic manner in the court of Menelik, the fact that their material was considered curative and that the ailing emperor was preoccupied with being poisoned strongly suggests a link. The gifting of these cups to Hoffman Philip and, by proxy, to the United States therefore suggests that the substance was not only of royal materiality but also curative.

Menelik's Rhinoceros-Horn Beakers as Ritual and Political Devices

While the materiality of the horns appears to have been loaded with curative meanings in the court of Menelik II, I argue further that the liquid the cups served and the banquet context they inhabited illustrated kingship on Ethiopian terms, through the performativity of stacking and distributing the cups among invited guests.

Tej, or honey wine, which the beakers were meant to hold, is an alcoholic drink similar to mead but stronger and unique to highland Ethiopian foodways.⁵³ *Tej* is created through the mixing together of cold water and raw honey with crushed twigs and leaves, which is then left to ferment. Depending on the quality of the liquor, it is stored for six to twelve months before it is drunk.⁵⁴ The resulting brew is an opaque, dark-yellow liquid.

Although special bars called *tej bet* (literally, "mead house") can be found across urban areas of contemporary highland Ethiopia serving all social classes honey wine, in the time of Menelik II the substance was highly regulated.⁵⁵ Like purple-dyed *shammas* and red umbrellas, *tej* (unlike the similar but more

common beer, *t'alla*) was a sumptuary good that up until the mid-twentieth century could only be consumed by the royal family.⁵⁶ Menelik, as part of a general centralization of power, established the country's only *tej* distillery in his palace. Here workers made two kinds of *tej*, one for noblemen and one to be distributed to commoners.⁵⁷ As noted in primary sources from the period and in accession records of similar objects held at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, *tej* was traditionally contained in horns, predominantly zebu horns but in the case of the king's wine, rhinoceros horns.⁵⁸ The relationship between the substance and its container is so entwined that units of *tej* are even called "horns."⁵⁹

Royal *tej* was a common welcoming gift, served from horn flasks to esteemed guests of the court. Hoffman Philip mentions repeatedly being served the beverage at the banquets (*geber*) he attended in Ethiopia.⁶⁰ He writes that upon his arrival in Harar:

The governor provided us with an excellent luncheon, with which was served a dark and pleasant wine that had the flavor of old port. This was our first experience with the national Abyssinian beverage known as *tedj*, made from distilled honey.⁶¹

In a description of a banquet in Addis Ababa, the ambassador notes that his meal was "washed down with beakers of *tedj*, which was passed constantly along the tables."⁶² After his Ethiopian sojourn, Hoffman Philip, like other European travelers before him, may have viewed the cups and remembered the smell and taste of the wine, and more important, the image of the king whose court produced and served the drink. Though by the late nineteenth century imported glass flacons called *berelle* had become commonplace for serving *tej*, horn cups remained preferred in banquet settings. In the 1901 travelogue of Hugues le Roux (Robert Charles Henri le Roux), soldiers of Menelik adamantly rejected the use of *berelle* at a banquet in favor of horns.⁶³

The cups, despite their conservative decorative schemas, had a more substantial presence at the banquets of the Ethiopian monarchs owing to their manner of display. Attested to in a few travel accounts, the vessels were fitted together to form a horn shape during the banquet, evidence of which is observed in the wear patterns on the objects themselves. Percy Horace Gordon Powell Cotton, a British big-game hunter who traveled in Ethiopia a decade before Hoffman Philip, described a royal banquet: "The bread-baskets were borne away to be replenished, the *Tej* horns fitted into each other and carried off in piles resembling great tusks, and in an incredibly short space of time all was rearranged."⁶⁴ Lord Gleichen, in his own memoir of a *geber*, corroborates this practice:

Each guest was provided a large horn tumbler filled to the brim with *Tej*: in less than a quarter of an hour the meal was over, the empty *Tej* tumblers were fitted into one another, and removed to the servants platform to be refilled; and at a sign by the master of ceremonies, the guests filed out.⁶⁵

The cups given to Hoffman Philip preserve evidence of the horn-shaped stacking, as all three vessels share the same long scratch-like abrasions on their inner

rims. The fact that the unused cup in the collection shares this same mark is proof that the beakers were stored in this manner. The scratches are in line with damage to hard surfaces, which occurs when things are repeatedly fitted together and then twisted apart. While Horace Cotton likely made note of this practice because he was seeking rhinoceroses to hunt, the fact that the horn beakers he observed were stored and displayed as a reconstructed horn adds a dynamic new dimension to both the presence and function of these cups in Menelik's court. The reconstruction of a whole rhinoceros horn through the stacking of cups is conjectured as an aesthetic self-referentiality for the substance's origin, already attested to in its sparse decorative schema. The implications of the display of the horn as composed of many beakers before the banquet has a historical precedent, however, since the thirteenth-century Ethiopian text, the *Kebra Nagast* (The glory of kings), regards horns as symbols and instruments of kingship.⁶⁶ Menelik II, whose court chronicle begins as a "sequel" to the *Kebra Nagast* and whose throne name designated him as successor to the apocryphal son of Solomon and Sheba, was known to invoke this symbolism to further his own political goals.⁶⁷ As argued by Donald Crummy, Menelik practiced "neo-Solomonic" rule, following kingly decorum from the *Kebra Nagast* rather than from his predecessors in the *Zamana Masafint* (Era of princes), where the kingdom lacked central authority.⁶⁸ This text relates that King Solomon and Sheba had a son by the name of Menelik (Menelik II's namesake), who moved the house of Israel to Ethiopia and thus started the divinely ordained Solomonid line of Ethiopian (Amhara) kings.

The symbol of the horn in the text appears during the apocryphal anointing of David, the father of Solomon:

And David said, "But the beloved is like the son of the unicorn"; and again he said, "And the only one from the horn of the unicorn." And second he said, "And let him be exalted like my horn, like that of the unicorn." The "Horns" mean the kingdoms of the world; and he said, "'Unicorn' means he who is over his kingdom that no one can resist, because he is the ruler of kings; he will destroy what he desires and he will place as governor whom he desires." Likewise David said, "And from our honored horns you will delight more than those that were said to be the most glorious kings," that is to say, "Rejoice in your glory!"⁶⁹

Thus, the horn, which by definition came from the head of the rhinoceros, is used as a metaphor for the singularity of divine kingship shared by the house of Israel and Menelik II's own Solomonid line.⁷⁰ The telling language found in the *Kebra Nagast*, such as the statement "The Horns mean the kingdoms of the world; and . . . unicorn means he who is over his kingdom that no one can resist, because he is the ruler of kings," lends credence to this worldview.⁷¹ In the banquet hall, the cups were distributed from a podium called the *manbara Dawit* (throne of David), and each event thereby became a re-creation of Solomon's anointing as outlined in the text.⁷²

This distribution of beakers from a single unit (the reconstructed horn) to honored guests and subjects thus functions in the manner of a *corpus mysticum*

(mystical body). The entirety of the horn as the head (the king) becomes the body (the subjects) through the distribution of the cups. The “breaking” and subsequent distribution of the pieces of the horn is analogized with the universality of Menelik’s empire: the distributed beakers will all return to the reconstructed horn of the king and vice versa. The act of dividing a horn into pieces to be distributed among guests can therefore be seen as a metaphor for this empire: the guests each receive an identical cup, shorn from the same horn.⁷³

Nearly every European traveler’s account of the court of Menelik II includes the experience of the royal banquet with *tej*, fulfilling the social function of “drinking together” and feasting within the setting of Ethiopian royalty. Anthropologist Kaori O’Connor states that societies the world over that engage in ritual feasting do so in order to “display . . . hierarchy, status and power including gender distinctions . . . the negotiation of loyalty and alliance,” and “the creation and consolidation of community and identity through inclusion and exclusion.”⁷⁴ The feasting to which Hoffman Philip was invited exemplified all of these traits. Emperor Menelik, while eager to court the United States and other European powers as allies, maintained his hierarchy through the use of a separate eating area from the rest of the diners (shielding the more human aspects of eating, unworthy of a king, from the sight of his subjects).⁷⁵ However, he also consolidated his supporters through the serving of *tej*, which invited an elect crowd. The presence of the king himself, albeit removed, made the experience all the more special.⁷⁶

This, however, was all an elaborate display. As both parties knew, the real power lay with the US government, whose relative neutrality in African affairs meant for Menelik a possible bulwark against new colonial incursions.

Conclusion

The three rhinoceros-horn beakers, as they lie in storage in Maryland, untouched and practically intact, provoke interesting observations when viewed as part of Hoffman Philip’s collection. The gifts of Menelik II, including the rhinoceros-horn cups, are entirely composed of conspicuously expensive and rare items. It does not take much imagination to see that these works were curated to define the imperial image Menelik II’s court wished to export to the United States, a country it hoped would make a useful ally.

Supplementing Hoffman Philip’s account of his Ethiopian “Christmas” with the gifts he actually received, we may reconstruct the ideological motives of Menelik’s court. Looking again at the unadorned central register of the beakers, we may now see images as strange and diverse as Menelik’s own ecumenism, irredentism, historicism, repast, and hypochondria. We see also an empire grappling with embedded indigenous traditions, sumptuary laws, and ordained kingship but also with nineteenth-century mores of modernity. Yet in the Smithsonian, for conservation reasons, the ambassador’s collection has become interspersed both with individual donations of sometimes equally rare objects and with ethnographic and tourist crafts as well, such as baskets and terracotta

figures that were accessioned in the 1970s. While this new organization is important for the long-term care and storage of the objects, the evident scattering obfuscates the royal majesty and diplomatic message of Menelik's gifts. What remains is Hoffman Philip's biography describing the court of Menelik II. Self-published and limited to 175 copies, it exists as the only concrete testament to this all but forgotten diplomatic encounter.

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1 (Herman) Hoffman Philip, *Abyssinian Memories (Christmas 1948)* (Santa Barbara, CA: privately printed, 1948). The memoir was first published in 1944 in the Yale University Alumni Magazine.

2 *Ibid.*, 19.

3 *Ibid.*, 17. Gifts made from exotic animals included, among other things, a hippo-skin lariat and some lion-skin headdresses.

4 Walter Hough and Hoffman Philip, *The Hoffman Philip Abyssinian Ethnological Collection* (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1911). For the full inventory, see: <http://collections.mnh.si.edu/search>. Gifts of exotic animal products may be a type of antique revival, as the Aksumite court was known to keep a well-stocked bestiary allegedly to show the emperor's dominion over man and beast alike; see Yuri M. Kobishchanov, *Axum*, trans. J. Michels (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 202–3.

5 "Ethiopian liturgical crown, Church of St. George" and "Battle of Adowa," http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=record_ID%3AAnmnhanthropology_8378152&repo=DPLA; <http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/31b73eac0-c2e1-4c7a-b46e-f0020971ee3b>. Several paintings from the collection were previously displayed in a special exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, *From Monastery to Marketplace: Tradition Inspires Modern Ethiopian Painting*, February 8, 2002–October 27, 2002.

6 Hough and Hoffman Philip, *Hoffman Philip Abyssinian Ethnological Collection*, 265.

7 Hoffman Philip, letter to Mrs. Stevens, July 15, 1910, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Museum Support Center, Suitland, MD.

8 For introductions to ethnographic collecting, see Laura Franey, "Ethnographic Collecting and Travel: Blurring Boundaries, Forming a Discipline," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2001): 219–39; and Johannes Fabian, "On Recognizing Things: The 'Ethnic Artefact' and the 'Ethnographic Object,'" *L'Homme* 170 (2004): 47–60; for private collections more generally, see Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Pittsburgh, PA: Periscope, 2009).

9 Hoffman Philip, *Abyssinian Memories*, 17.

10 *Ibid.*

11 David Shim, "Relations between Ethiopia and the United States," in *Les relations entre l'Éthiopie et les nations étrangères: Histoire humaine et diplomatique (des origines à nos jours)*, ed. Lukian Prijac (Berlin: Lit, 2015), 259–60.

12 Ethiopia, despite maintaining its independence from Italy after the battle of Adowa (1896), remained surrounded by British, French, and Italian colonies. Territorially Ethiopia maintained strategic depth through the Ogaden region; see Edward Keller, "The Politics of State Survival: Continuity and Change in Ethiopian Foreign Policy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 489, no. 1 (1987): 80.

- 13** Richard Pankhurst, "Menelik and the Utilization of Foreign Skills in Ethiopia," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1967): 29–86; George Sanderson, "The Foreign Policy of the Negus Menelik," *Journal of African History* 5 (1964): 87–97; Harold Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 135–73. For a complete overview of Ethiopian foreign relations, see Prijac, *Relations entre l'Éthiopie et les nations étrangères*; Richard Caulk and Bahru Zewde, *Between the Jaws of Hyenas: A Diplomatic History of Ethiopia, 1876–1896* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002); and Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976).
- 14** For French involvement, see Lukian Prijac, *Lagarde l'éthiopien, le fondateur de Djibouti (1860–1936)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012); and Simon Imbert-Vier, *Tracer des frontières à Djibouti: Des frontières et des hommes aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Paris: Karthala, 2011). For Russian involvement, see Catherine Von Raesfeldt, "Les relations entre l'Éthiopie et la Russie (de 1370 à 1917)," in Prijac, *Relations entre l'Éthiopie et les nations étrangères*, 301–79; and Richard Pankhurst, "The Russians in Ethiopia: Aspirations of Progress," in *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters*, ed. Maxim Matusевич (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007). For the Franco-Ethiopian railway project, see Rosanna Van Gelder de Pineda, *Le chemin de fer de Djibouti à Addis-Ababa* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995).
- 15** Biographies include Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844–1913* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); and Chris Prouty, *Empress Taytu and Menelik II: Ethiopia 1883–1910* (London: Ravens Educational & Development Services, 1986). For Menelik II's official court chronicle, see Gābrā Sellasé, Tāsfa Sellasé, and Maurice De Coppet, *Chronique du règne de Ménélik II: Roi des rois d'Éthiopie*, vols. 1 and 2 (Paris: Maisonneuve Frères, 1931).
- 16** Christopher Clapham, "Menelik II," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia*, vol. 3, ed. Siegbert Uhlig et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 926; on the foundation of Addis Ababa, see Peter Garretson, *A History of Addis Ababa from Its Foundation in 1886 to 1910* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000).
- 17** Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (New York: Norton, 1967); originally published as "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'année sociologique* 1 (1925): 30–186. For recent views of this seminal text, see Alan D. Schrift, ed., *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- 18** Mauss, *Gift*, 15.
- 19** Accompanying note, accession 111772 of rhinoceros-horn cups, October 2, 1930, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History; <http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/3bdcca4a7-9f0e-4084-bb02-31bb339b831c>. Because of their late accession, the cups were probably personal gifts from the emperor that were kept in Hoffman Philip's personal collection; Hough and Hoffman Philip, *Hoffman Philip Abyssinian Ethnological Collection*, 270.
- 20** For a similar studies of diplomatic gifts from independent kingdoms in Africa, see Christine Mullen Kreamer and Sarah Fee, eds., *Objects as Envoys: Cloth, Imagery, and Diplomacy in Madagascar* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2002), particularly "Gifts from the Queen" by Mary Jo Arnoldi; Joseph K. Adjaye, *Diplomacy and Diplomats in Nineteenth Century Asante* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); and Malcolm McLeod, "T. E. Bowdich: An Early Collector in West Africa," in "Collectors and Collections," *British Museum Yearbook* 2 (1977): 79–104.
- 21** The foundational source text regarding this activity is the *Ser'ata Gebr*, a text in old Amharic, likely from the fifteenth century, which outlines the duties of those involved in the royal encampment (including feasting). For a critical edition with apparatus, see Manfred Kropp, "The Ser'atā Geber: A Mirror View of Daily Life at the Ethiopian Royal Court in the Middle Ages," *Northeast African Studies* 10, no. 2/3 (1988): 51–87. While this text also mentions silver and gold beakers for the serving of honey wine, Kropp suggests they are actually horns.
- 22** Lucy Vigne and Esmond B. Martin, "Price for Rhino Horn Increases in Yemen," *Pachyderm* 28 (2000): 91–100; Esmond B. Martin, *The International Trade in Rhinoceros Products* (Essex, UK: Bowker, 1980).
- 23** R. W. Felkin, "Notes on the For Tribe of Central Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 8 (1885): 205–65; T. R. H. Owen, "A Few Cures for Snake-Bite," *Sudan Notes and Records* 25, no. 1 (1942): 137–38; Marcel Griaule, "Moules et tour à travailler la corne (Abyssinie)," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 11 (1941): 201–7.
- 24** Thomas Guindeuil, "L'ivresse et le flacon: Collections ethnographiques et histoire de la culture matérielle du boire en Éthiopie (XVIe–XXe siècle)," *Gradhiva* 20 (2014): 242–66; discussions of beakers as *objets d'art* are found in select museum catalogues, albeit briefly.
- 25** Hough and Hoffman Philip, *Hoffman Philip Abyssinian Ethnological Collection*, 270. Three "inserted bottom" examples are found in a vitrine in the museum of the Addis Alem Church, formerly the site of Menelik's summer palace, twenty-five kilometers outside Addis Ababa and built between 1900 and 1903. However, I suspect these cups are in fact made of zebu horn and not rhinoceros horn.
- 26** The Amharic verb ተነጠጠ (*tanattata*) interestingly means both to turn on a lathe and, more specifically, to articulate a beaker with three incised lines; Thomas Kane, *Amharic-English Dictionary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990), 1:1252.
- 27** Robert S. Woodbury, *History of the Lathe to 1850: A Study in the Growth of a Technical Element of an Industrial Economy* (Cleveland: Society for the History of Technology, 1961), 26–27.

- 28** Griaule, "Moules et tour à travailler la corne," 201–7. For a complete bibliography of the anthropological works of Marcel Griaule, see P. Champion, "Bibliographie de Marcel Griaule (ordre chronologique)," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 26 (1956): 279–90.
- 29** Griaule, "Moules et tour à travailler la corne," 203–4; Woodbury, *History of the Lathe*, 34–35.
- 30** Woodbury, *History of the Lathe*, 34–35; however, Griaule notes that the well-formed mandrels on Gurage lathes allow a faster rate of turning ("Moules et tour à travailler la corne," 204).
- 31** Guindeuil, "L'ivresse et le flacon," 242–66. While today the horn beaker has been replaced by glass bottles for the serving of *tej*, the truncated-cone beaker's form is maintained in the consumption of *t'alla/suwa*—Ethiopian beer.
- 32** Percy Horace Gordon Powell Cotton, *A Sporting Trip through Abyssinia: A Narrative of a Nine Months' Journey from the Plains of the Hawash to the Snows of Simien* (London: R. Ward, 1902), 482. See also Girma Kebedde, *Environment and Society in Ethiopia* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- 33** Lucy Vigne and Esmond B. Martin, "An Historical Perspective of the Yemeni Horn Trade," *Pachyderm* 23 (1997): 33–34. Yet, Ethiopia was a transit hub for rhinoceros horn and ivory coming from inner Africa to Europe. Twelve hundred horns were estimated to have been exported from Borana province alone in 1907; see Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800–1935* (Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I UP, 1968), 371, 427, 437, 438–43.
- 34** Hugues le Roux, *Ménélik et nous: Le carrefour d'Aden; La route d'Addis-Ababâ; Je suis l'hôte du Négus; Vers le Nil bleu; France et Abyssinie* (Paris: Nilsson, 1902), 162.
- 35** See note 19 above; Hough and Hoffman Philip, *Hoffman Philip Abyssinian Ethnological Collection*, 270.
- 36** The largest collection of beakers—all of which are from bull or buffalo horn—are found in the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. Numbering some forty-five examples, these horn goblets were largely collected during French ethnographic expeditions; <http://www.quaibrany.fr/fr/collections/les-collections-de-reference/afrique.html>. Some particularly relevant examples are: 71.1890.28.6.1–2, 71.1890.28.8, 71.1999.13.29, 71.1961.86.13, 71.1961.86.14, 71.1961.86.15, 71.1961.86.17, 71.1890.28.13.1, 71.1890.28.9, 71.1890.28.12, 71.1931.74.2983, 71.1885.22.61.
- 37** Alemie Asresie and Lemma Zemedu, "Contribution of Livestock Sector in Ethiopian Economy: A Review," *Advances in Life Science and Technology* 29 (2015): 79–90.
- 38** For the Amharic original with the English translation, see Tsehail Berhane Selassie, "An Ethiopian Medical Text-Book Written by Gerazmač Gäbräwäld Arāgahāñ Dāga Damot," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1971): 95–180. A particularly pervasive trope in Ethiopian medical literature from the early twentieth century is the threat of *māgarāña*. This is a type of poisoning with various iterations. It was previously thought to be the work of demonic possession but is today identified as food poisoning. It is believed to occur when food or drink that is left out becomes inhabited by demons. See Stefan Strelcyn, *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts of the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine in London* (London: Wellcome Institute, 1972), 48; Marcel Griaule, *Le livre de recettes d'un Dabtara Abyssin* (Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1930), 143–44; BnF MS Ethio 589.
- 39** Selassie, "An Ethiopian Medical Text-Book," 132, 139, 145.
- 40** *Ibid.*, 128. A complementary practice of hanging mixed media ensembles to deter thieves, called *āālē*, is found among the Yoruba of Nigeria. See David Doris, *Vigilant Things: On Thieves, Yoruba Anti-Aesthetics, and the Strange Fates of Ordinary Objects in Nigeria* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).
- 41** For a critical edition of the *Mashafa Faws*, see Michael Kleiner, *Mashafa Faws Manfasawi: Die Ge'ez-Übersetzung des arabischen Kitab at-tibb ar-ruhani ("Buch von der geistlichen Medizin") des koptischen Bischofs Michael von Atrib und Malig (13. Jh.); Teiledition und Kommentar (2 Halbbände)* (PhD diss., University of Hamburg, 2000). For a critical edition of the *Mashafa Falasfa Tabiban*, see Carl Heinrich Cornill, *Mashafa Falsafa Tabiban: Das Buch der weisen Philosophen* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1875). It is unclear why applications of horn are not found in the publications of Menelik's court physician, Paul Merab. See his book *Impressions d'Éthiopie: L'Abyssinie sous Ménélik II* (Paris: H. Libert, 1921).
- 42** Felkin, "Notes on the For Tribe," 230; Owen, "A Few Cures for Snake-Bite," 138.
- 43** Hoffman Philip, *Abyssinian Memories*, 16.
- 44** Chris Prouty, *The Medical History of Emperor Menelik II, Emperor of Ethiopia (1844–1913): Case of Medical Diplomacy* (Pasadena, CA: Munger Africana Library, 1978), 14, 30.
- 45** *Ibid.*, 4.
- 46** *Ibid.*, 18.
- 47** A. K. Bulatovich, *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes: Country in Transition, 1896–1898*, trans. Richard Seltzer (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2000 [1900]), 231.
- 48** Marcus, *Life and Times of Menelik II*, 223; Livio Sacchi, *Architectural Heritage in Ethiopia: Two Imperial Compounds in Mekele and Addis Ababa* (Milan: Skira, 2012), 49–158. For studies of the Gebbi and related buildings, see Milena Batistoni and Gian Paolo Chiari, *Old Tracks in the New Flower: A Historical Guide to Addis Ababa* (Addis Ababa: Arada, 2004); and Fasil Giorghis and Denis Gérard, *Addis Ababa 1886–1941: The City and Its Architectural Heritage / La ville et son patrimoine architectural* (Addis Ababa: Shama, 2007).
- 49** Marcus, *Life and Times of Menelik II*, 223.

- 50 Robert Peet Skinner, *Abyssinia of To-day: An Account of the First Mission Sent by the American Government to the Court of the King of Kings (1903–1904)* (London: E. Arnold, 1906), 115.
- 51 Edward Gleichen, *With the Mission to Menelik, 1897* (London: E. Arnold, 1898), 175.
- 52 Gleichen, *With the Mission to Menelik*, 186.
- 53 For the most comprehensive technical overviews of *tej* production, see K. Dammers, “Ṭäḡḡ,” in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia*, vol. 4, ed. Siegbert Uhlig with Alessandro Bausi et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 817–19; and Bekele Bahiru, Tetenike Mehari, and Mogessie Ashenafi, “Chemical and Nutritional Properties of ‘Tej,’ an Indigenous Ethiopian Honey Wine: Variations within and between Production Units,” *Journal of Food Technology in Africa* 6, no. 3 (2001): 104–8. For honey wine in Africa (including Ethiopia), see Carol Seyffert-Dresden, *Biene und Honig im Volksleben der Afrikaner* (Braunschweig: Voigtlander, 1930).
- 54 Dammers, “Ṭäḡḡ,” 818.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia*, 33–36; Marcus, *Life and Times of Menelik II*, 223.
- 57 Marcus, *Life and Times of Menelik II*, 223.
- 58 Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, King of Abyssinia* (London: John Murray, 1869), 34; H. G. C. Swayne, *Seventeen Trips through Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia* (London: Rowland Ward, 1903), 277; Skinner, *Abyssinia of To-day*, 117; Henry Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia: With Some Account of the Late Emperor Theodore, His Country and People* (London: Smith, 1868), 395; Bulatovich, *Ethiopia through Russian Eyes*, 187, 202, 232; Henry M. Stanley *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (New York: Harper, 1874), 465.
- 59 See: የጠጅ ቀንጅ (*yatäḡḡ qānd*), in Kane, *Amharic-English Dictionary*, 791. One twentieth-century example of a *tej* container I saw in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum in Addis Ababa in June 2018 copied the morphology of a wine bottle in horn.
- 60 Hoffman Philip, *Abyssinian Memories*, 7, 20.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 63 Le Roux, *Ménèlik et nous*, 429.
- 64 Cotton, *A Sporting Trip through Abyssinia*, 130–31; Menelik’s court chronicle discusses the quick setting of banquet wares (including beakers) as akin to miraculous (Selassé, *Chronique du règne de Ménèlik II*, 1:226–27).
- 65 Gleichen, *With the Mission to Menelik*, 185–86.
- 66 The *Kebra Nagast* is an elaboration and continuation of the biblical story of Solomon and Sheba found in 1 Kings 10. For the original text (annotated with apparatus and German translation), see Carl Bezold, *Kebra Nagast: Die Herrlichkeit des Könige; Nach den Handschriften in Berlin, London, Oxford und Paris* (Munich: K. B. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1905). The English translation is unfortunately inaccurate, but see E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (London: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1932]). For an overview of the textual sources of the story, see David A. Hubbard, “The Literary Sources of the Kebra Nagast: Another Look” (PhD diss., St. Andrews University, 1956).
- 67 Selassé, *Chronique du règne de Ménèlik II*, 1: chaps. 1–3; Bertrand Hirsch and François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar, “Aksum après Aksum: Royauté, archéologie et herméneutique chrétienne de Ménèlik II (r. 1865–1913) à Zār’a Ya’qob (r. 1434–1468),” *Annales d’Éthiopie* 17 (2001): 64–66.
- 68 Donald Crummey, “Imperial Legitimacy and the Creation of Neo-Solomonic Ideology in 19th-Century Ethiopia,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 28, no. 109 (1988): 33–36. For introductions to the aforementioned “Era of Princes,” see Shiferaw Bekele, “Reflections on the Power Elite of the Wārā Seh Māsēnate (1786–1853),” *Annales d’Éthiopie* 15 (1990): 157–79.
- 69 ወዳዊት ጌ : ደቤ : ወፍቁርስ : ከመ : ወልጅ : ዘ፩ቀርት ፤ ወካዕበ : ደቤ : ወእምክቅርንት : ዘ፩ቀርት : ለብሐቱትየ ፤ ወሰዕበ : ደቤ : ወይትሌዕል : ቀርንየ : ከመ : ዘ፩ቀርት ። ክቅርንትሰ : ደተረጎም : መንግሥተተ : ዓለም : ወዘይትበሀልሂ : ዘ፩ቀርት : ለመንግሥቱ : ክልበ : ዘይትቃረኖ : ክሰመ : መለኪ : ነገሥት : ውክተ : ለዘ : ፈቀደ : ደስዕር : ወለዘፈቀደ : ደሠደም ። በከመ : ደቤ : ዳዊት : ወእምክቅርንት : ክቅርንት : ዘእምክቅር : ክስተፈሰሰክ ፤ ወዘንቱ : ዘተብሀለ : ክምክቅርንት : ነገሥት : ክንተ : ትከብር : ወትትፊሣሕ : ብሂል ።
- Reproduced in Bezold, *Kebra Nagast*, sec. 107, 21. The translation in the text is my own. Note that the word for “unicorn” is rendered quite literally with the number “1” (፩) before the word for horn, *Qarn*. The first line is a reference to Psalms 22:21.
- 70 This same ideology of matching royal body parts to the unity of the state is explored by the late medievalist Ernst H. Kantorowicz as the *Corpus mysticum*, with the king as the “head” of the body politic of sacred and secular feudal space. Kantorowicz’s theory of the importance of the head in medieval societies is part of a greater trend in his text to collate medieval conceptions of space through analogies of the body. See *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 206.
- 71 Bezold, *Kebra Nagast*, sec. 107, 21. Translation mine.
- 72 Izabela Orlowska, “Feasting and Political Change: Tafari’s Ascent to Power and Early 20th Century Geber,” *Annales d’Éthiopie* 28 (2013): 49. Menelik II did not revive the association with the anointing

of Solomon, since from the fifteenth century onwards, court chronicles note the invocation of the *Manbara Dawit* in the coronations of Ethiopian kings; Amsalu Tefera, *The Ethiopian Homily on the Ark of the Covenant* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 68. For a full overview, see Stuart Munro-Hay, "The 'Coronation' of the Ethiopian Emperors at Axum," in *Studia Aethiopica: In Honor of Siegbert Uhlig on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Verena Böll et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 177–203.

73 Though certain size differentials exist between the beakers I saw, these do not seem to constitute a hierarchical scale. The physical unevenness of the "green" rhinoceros horn from which they were carved would naturally preclude even scale between the resulting beakers if the carvers were frugal in their use of the material.

74 Kaori O'Connor, *The Never-Ending Feast: The Anthropology and Archaeology of Feasting* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 9. See also David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

75 Hoffman Philip, *Abyssinian Memories*, 21; Arnold Henry Savage Landor, *Across Widest Africa* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1907), 98.

76 The image of the king enthroned and holding a beaker is common iconography in the secular arts of the medieval Silk Road and Mediterranean worlds. As there is no evidence that suggests Menelik gifted these beakers in order to reference this specific royal iconography, the idea was not included in my article. There is, however, one known photograph of the emperor holding a beaker in 1900, taken by the Swiss court photographer Alfred Ilg, but this photograph appears candid, and the beaker is not of rhinoceros horn; Estelle Sohler, *Le roi des rois et la photographie: Politique de l'image et pouvoir royal en Éthiopie sous le règne de Ménélik II* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012), 46.