

The Martin Rikli Photo Albums: A Snapshot of Ethiopia Circa 1935

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I worked with the George A. Smathers Libraries Digital Library Center staff this summer to digitize and provide contextual metadata for about 900 photographic prints relating to Ethiopia (coinciding with the Second Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935-36) in the Martin Rikli Photographs collection. Our partner in the cooperative effort to acquire this unique collection has been the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art. Harn Director Dr. Rebecca Nagy originally viewed these albums in Munich in 2004, and after consulting colleagues at the Museum für Völkerkunde there, contributed Harn funds to jointly purchase them along with the Libraries' Africana Collection.

These albums may have been a gift to members of an official German delegation whose voyage it documents. Germany was one of only a few countries to assist and arm Ethiopia against the impending attack by Mussolini's forces in 1935, despite their membership in the League of Nations. The photographs depict a passenger ship voyage from Marseilles through the Suez Canal to Aden and Djibouti, followed by a railway trip to Addis Ababa. The cultural and physical settings of rural and urban areas of Ethiopia are documented, including images of Emperor Haile Selassie I, his family and court, state ceremonies, dinners at the Gibbi palace, a number of government and religious assemblies, diplomats and their families. Schools, shops, market and street activities, rural villages and landscapes (including aerial images of a variety of locales) and Ethiopians in a wide variety of situations are included.

The official opening of a military training school (the *École de Guerre Haile Selassie I* at Gannat) in April 1935 is documented, along with the general mobilization of soldiers and other preparations for war. Later prints depict the consequences of war: refugees, looters, burning buildings, corpses in the streets of Addis Ababa, a withdrawal of European expatriates to temporary camps outside of the city, followed by images of the Italian occupation including officers and troops both working and in repose after a long campaign as well as in formal parades and official ceremonies. A few posted signs, announcements, general orders and otherwise distributed official



communications from the Italian military are also reproduced.

The quality, subject matter and historical moment of the creation of these images combine to make their potential use extremely broad and their value in any number of academic projects high. Dr. Martin Rikli was among the best known instructional and documentary filmmakers in Germany during the 1920s through the 1940s. He worked for Zeiss Ikon as well as Ufa and "Gorch Fock" (Kriegsmarine) from 1934 is probably his best-known film. A detailed finding aid with additional contextual information is available online at: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/manuscript/guides/rikli.htm>

The original still photographic albums are located in the Libraries'

Manuscripts collection (Special and Area Studies Collections). Digital surrogates of the entire contents of four albums and accompanying manuscripts and ephemera are now available online to the public in UF Digital Collections (Photographs of Africa).

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