

Tradition & Change in Ethiopia: Social and Cultural Life as Reflected in Amharic Fictional Literature (1930-1974)

Reidulf Knut Molvær

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A longtime scholar of Ethiopian history and Amharic writings, Reidulf Molvær crafted a thesis with the intent of understanding that history from new and rejuvenating perspectives. The resulting work, "Tradition and Change in Ethiopia: Social and Cultural Life as Reflected in Amharic Fictional Literature," is a sweeping study of the importance of fictional writing as a barometer for the culture and lifestyle within which it is crafted. In the introduction, Molvaer writes 'authors have at all times acted as a kind of "conscience" of society, and in their writings they include their own evaluation of social institutions and customs in the country.' With this volume, the author looks at 12 influential Ethiopian writers that wrote as a reflection of their changing society, no matter their economic, social or cultural standing. The turbulence of the 20th century came at a time when literature in Amharic first began to break out, and everything from the class structure of society and the forms of private relationships to the attitudes towards change and new aspirations are described as they are found within the texts. Within the words of the authors, albeit fictional, comes an understanding of what their eyes had seen and what their ears had heard.

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