



Press Release

TSEHAI Publishers founder Elias Wondimu to receive prestigious Order of Emperor Menelik II

LOS ANGELES, February 6, 2017 –TSEHAI Publishers is pleased to announce that Editorial Director and founder Elias Wondimu will be receiving one of the Ethiopian Crown’s most distinguished awards: the Grand Officer of the Imperial Order of Emperor Menelik II.

The award was founded in 1924 during the reign of Empress Zauditu and intended for highly distinguished individuals, but after the exile of the Crown during the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, all decorations, imperial orders, and titles were mandated to be sanctioned by the Crown Council of Ethiopia in accordance with the pre-1974 Constitution.

“I am humbled for being selected for this honor and it shows the importance of the work we do,” Wondimu said. “This award is the result of our staff, supporters, and the authors who came with their stories.”

Elias Wondimu was born in Ethiopia but, against tremendous odds, has distinguished himself as one of the leading publishers in African literature and academia in the United States. Wondimu’s latest imprint, the Harriet Tubman Press, seeks to expand his literary and academic empire to give a voice to African-American authors and scholars. It is as a result of his ever-expanding quest for knowledge and never-ending quest to give a voice to the voiceless that Elias Wondimu is the perfect recipient for this high honor.

His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie describes Elias Wondimu as, “A national treasure, not only of the United States, but of his native Ethiopia.” He further goes on to say that, “By preserving history, and particularly by preserving it on such a detailed level, and yet with the full understanding of context, he preserves the national identity of Ethiopians and Africans, and contributes to a greater understanding of Ethiopia and Africa by people outside the continent.”

The president of the Crown Council of Ethiopia will be presenting the award at the Army and Navy Club at Farragut Square in Washington, DC, on February 25, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. The commencement will be during the 6th Annual Victory of Adwa Commemorative Dinner. In attendance at the dinner will be renowned guests, including His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie and HIH Princess Saba. The black-tie event will be invite only.

Media Advisory

To learn more about Tsehai publishers please visit:

<http://www.tsehaipublishers.com/>



For Immediate Release

LOS ANGELES, February 1, 2017 –TSEHAI Publishers is pleased to announce that founding publisher and editor, Elias Wondimu will be receiving one of Ethiopian Crown's most distinguished awards: The Grand Officer of the Imperial Order of Emperor Menelik II.

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WHO: Elias Wondimu, Publisher & Editorial Director
TSEHAI Publishers

WHAT: The Ethiopian Crown Council awarding the Grand Officer of the Imperial Order of Emperor Menelik II to Elias Wondimu

WHEN: Saturday, February 25, 2017. 6:30 pm

WHERE: The Army and Navy Club at Farragut Square in Washington D.C.
901 17th St NW, Washington, DC 20006

CONTACT: Collin Hinds
Director of Development
chinds@lmu.edu



Biography of Elias Wondimu

Founder of TSEHAI Publishers



Elias Wondimu was born in and spent his childhood in Addis Ababa. Elias joined the Ethiopian free press in 1992, and began writing for local weekly newspapers and as a column editor for *Moged*. In September 1994, Elias left his country to participate in the Twelfth International Ethiopian Studies conference at Michigan State University, and has remained in exile since.

In October 1994, he joined the *Ethiopian Review* magazine in Los Angeles, and served as the managing editor for the next six years. Through his position, he found a void in the American book market for African books, especially those written by Africans. Characteristically,

Elias took it upon himself to fill that void.

In 1997 Elias founded his publishing company, TSEHAI Publishers, which is named after and dedicated to his late mother who had passed away earlier in the year. Since its inception, TSEHAI “has become a vital and indispensable resource [where] Wondimu has assumed the role of cultural ambassador,” according to Anthony Miller of *LA Weekly*. Elias never saw TSEHAI as an end in itself, but rather a means to ensure that knowledge would be freely accessible to inspire new generations of readers who might otherwise be dejected by their situation, so that they may use that knowledge as a tool. From publishing its first book in 1998 TSEHAI to 2001 Elias sought to distribute books that were rare.

In 2001, Elias began running TSEHAI Publishers full time. Since then TSEHAI has published over one hundred books, started three academic journals, and founded four imprints. TSEHAI has published notable names such as Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, Paul Zeleza, and Richard Pankhurst. Additionally, TSEHAI has published Ethiopian political leaders such as former dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, former P.M. Fikre Selassie Wogderess, and the cofounder of the current ruling party, Aregawi Berhe. In 2007, TSEHAI joined Loyola Marymount University. Elias is one of only five black, and one of only two African publishers in America. Additionally, TSEHAI has become the only African-focused press based in an American, Asian, or European university.

Going forward, Elias still retains his original passion and aim to produce knowledge for the next generation, and TSEHAI continually works to reflect that desire. Perhaps the best summation of Elias and his mission is by the *Ethiopian Review*: “[Elias] is widely acknowledged as one of the most active young leaders in the African diaspora and has built a name for service to the community through brokering connections among Americans and Africans, the general public and political leaders, and academia and business.”



About TSEHAI

TSEHAI Publishers is an internationally recognized publisher of fiction and academic scholarship related to Africa, especially Ethiopia, founded by Elias Wondimu in 1997. Our work is committed to artistic diversity, social justice, internationality, and indigenous knowledge production. Moreover, TSEHAI exists to provide a platform for African and other marginalized stories around the world. We are dedicated to creating an alternative, honest, homegrown narrative divorced from the cultural bias, value judgments, historical interpretation, and misinformation pervading the Western media.

TSEHAI is also an activist press committed to telling human stories and producing excellent books. Thus, we maintain a diverse list of titles addressing the complex and misrepresented history and culture of the African continent. These works seek to embolden the misled, the misrepresented, and the marginalized. To this effect TSEHAI has four imprints: the African Academic Press, the Marymount Institute Press, Chereka Books, and Harriet Tubman Press.

- **The African Academic Press (AAP)** was created to in large part to mitigate and reverse the “brain drain” that has plagued Africa. The AAP serves to bring back the knowledge base.
- **Harriet Tubman Press (HTP)** seeks to bring voices to African-Americans in both academia and literature. The ultimate goal of Harriet Tubman is to uncover the hidden narratives of a group with a tumultuous past that now participates at every level of American society.
- **Marymount Institute Press (MIP)** is the publishing arm of Loyola Marymount University’s Marymount Institute. The university approached TSEHAI publishers in February of 2007 and the Institute was born. Marymount Institute Press embodies the mission statement of the Marymount Institute for Faith, Culture and the Arts and encourages dialogue between differing faiths and cultures.
- **Chereka Books** is dedicated to bringing joyful and child friendly books that are illustrated and targeted towards young readers. Although the stories are meant to be entertaining the imprint seeks to educate young children. The books range from newly independent readers and read together stories.

Tsehai also publishes three Ethiopian academic journals: ***International Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Ethiopian Journal of Religious Studies, and ETHIORICA: a Journal of Literature and the Arts.***

History of the Award and Recipients

The The Order of Emperor Menelik II was founded in 1924 during the reign of Empress Zauditu, by the Regent Ras Tafari Makkonen and intended for highly distinguished individuals.



The original intention of the award was to honor the late Menelik II. After the exile of the Crown during the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution all Decorations, Imperial Orders, and Titles were mandated to be sanctioned by the Crown Council of Ethiopia in accordance with the pre-1974 Constitution. While the Communist Derg abolished the monarchy and exiled or executed those associated with the crown, the Crown Council found justification to continue the tradition and many, including descendents of Haile Selassie I continued to carry out the duties of the crown in exile with the reasoning that the coup that had taken place was unconstitutional.

The chaos resulting from the war and the abolition of the monarchy by the Derg caused there to be a period in which very few formal decorations and titles were handed out. Despite the insistence of the Ethiopian government to not fully recognize the place of the monarchy in Ethiopia the Crown Council continues its robust cultural preservation and humanitarian work.

The Order has always been categorized into five grades: Knight Grand Cross, Knight Commander, Commander, Officer and Member. The award has been made by the Paris firm of Arthus-Bertrand. It is probable that the design of the Order was influenced by the Montenegrin Order of Danilo which had passed into abeyance with the fall of the kingdom and its absorption into the United Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Notable recipients of the award have traditionally been distinguished high ranking members of the military, high court officials. One notable recipient of the award was Prince Bertil of Sweden.