



The Awash River and the Aussa Sultanate

Author(s): Wilfred Thesiger

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Jan., 1935, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jan., 1935), pp. 1-19

Published by: The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1787031>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Wiley and The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Geographical Journal*

JSTOR

The
GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL

Vol LXXXV No 1



January 1935

THE AWASH RIVER AND THE AUSSA SULTANATE: *A paper read at the Evening Meeting of the Society on 12 November 1934, by*

WILFRED THESIGER

THE disappearance of the Awash River in the Aussa Sultanate of Danakil has excited considerable curiosity, and many have been the theories expounded to account for the river's failure to reach the sea. Nesbitt, in his great journey across Danakil in 1928, did not solve this problem, as he did not attempt to enter Aussa proper, though he remained for some days in Galifagi. In 1930 I spent a month big-game shooting on the Awash River on the frontier of the Danakil country, and it was then that I first resolved to trace the river to its end as soon as opportunity should offer. Last year I was enabled to do this thanks to the generosity of the Royal Geographical Society, the Percy Sladen Trust, Magdalen College, Oxford, and numerous friends. The Emperor Haile Selassie sanctioned the expedition, and I left England at the end of August 1933 accompanied by David Haig-Thomas as ornithologist. I hoped that having reached the end of the river I should be able to cross the desert eastwards to Tajura on the coast. I wished to bring back a comprehensive collection of birds, mammals, and plants, and to collect as much information as possible on the interesting people inhabiting this land.

Unfortunately Haig-Thomas fell ill towards the end of a two months' preliminary trek which we undertook in the Arussi Galla country, to try out the caravan while allowing time for the feverish conditions prevalent in the Awash valley at this season to improve. This handicapped me badly with the collecting, but I succeeded in my main objective, which was the thorough exploration of the river, and I crossed from the point where it disappears to Tajura. I also collected 880 specimens of birds comprising 193 varieties, of which four appear to be new subspecies. I am at present engaged in writing a paper for the *Ibis* describing this collection, so I shall not dwell on it here. I shall deal mainly with the country, the Dankali, and their customs. Throughout my paper I have called the natives inhabiting this country the Dankali, although they never use this word. They nearly always refer to themselves as either Asaeimara or Adaeimara, according to the section of their nation to which they belong; but when speaking of it collectively, as opposed to the Galla or Somali, they say Afar. The Abyssinians know them as Dankali or

Adal, while the Somalis call them the Udali. Both the Asaeimara and the Adaeimara are divided into about six great tribes, which again are indefinitely subdivided. Both sections are hostile to each other, but sometimes temporarily united against their hereditary foes the Itu and Kareyu Galla, the Essa Somali, and the raiding Wagerat of Tigre. The Asaeimara possess the only two fertile districts in Danakil—Badhu and Aussa; but these districts are separated from one another by the Adaeimara of Borharamela, and of Adau.

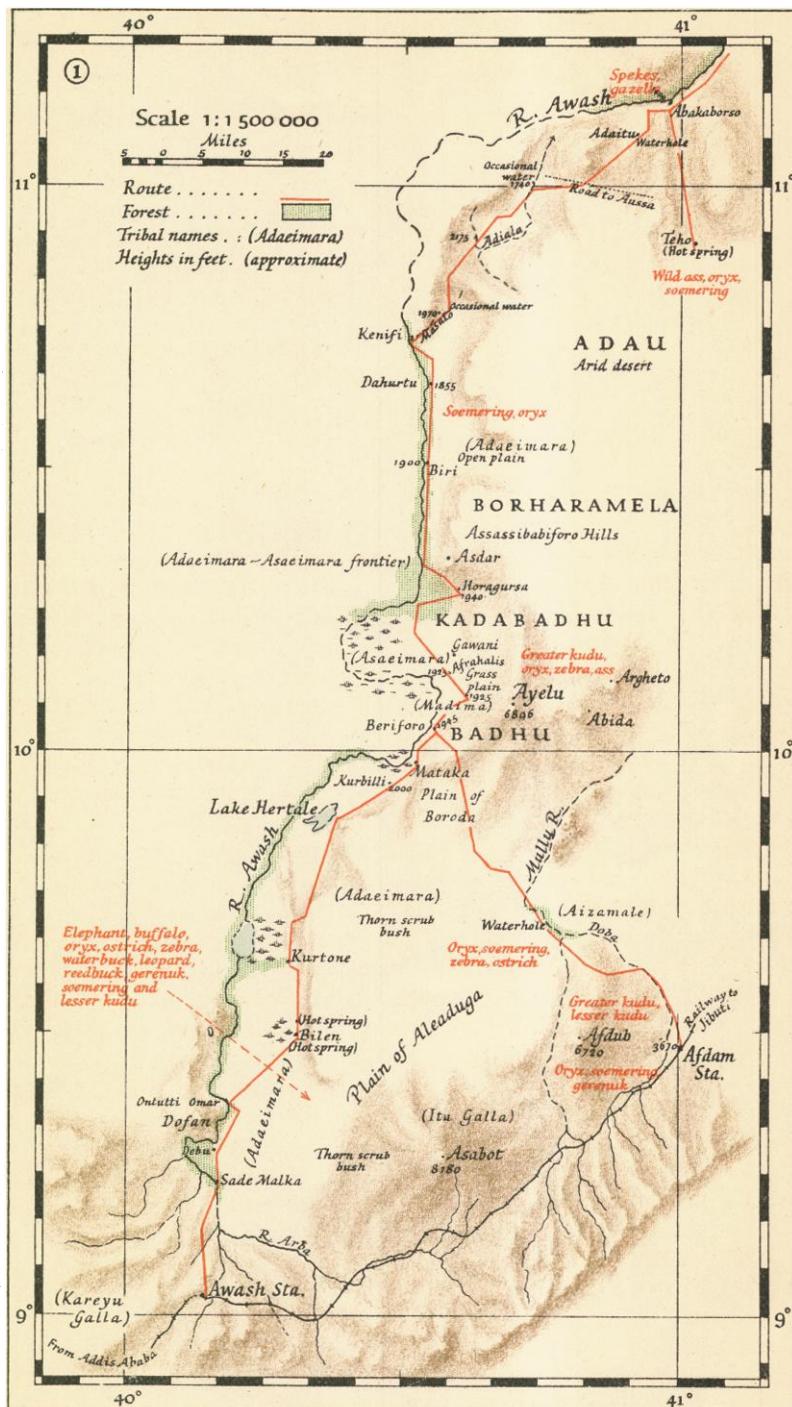
The Asaeimara appear to extend north from Aussa across the deserts towards Eritrea. East of Aussa the country belongs to the Adaeimara, who occupy the whole of northern French Somaliland centring on Tajura. Across the Gulf of Tajura is the land of the Essa. South of Badhu the Adaeimara extend as far as the railway line, beyond which live the Itu. There is also a wedge of Itu Territory based on Mount Asabot and extending north across the plain of Aleaduga nearly as far as Bilen. To the west round Metahara are the redoubtable Kareyu.

The exploration of the Danakil country has always been much handicapped by the well-merited reputation for savagery which these tribes possess. The country has never been effectively conquered by the Abyssinians, who are highlanders, unsuited by nature to operations in these hot and feverish lowlands. The Dankali possess innumerable *fusils gras*, and are skilful and courageous in desert warfare. To subdue them would indeed prove no easy task, taking into consideration the waterless nature of their country away from the river, and the unhealthy conditions prevalent along its banks.

Between the Awash station and Badhu there is a plain descending from 3500 to 2000 feet, much broken by dry watercourses and low rocky encampments. The country is generally covered with thin thorn scrub bush, though there are several level plains of powdered earth with tufts of burnt grass and low evergreen bushes. Except along the river the only water is in wells jealously guarded by the natives. The Awash River, normally slow flowing, is fordable only in certain places, and its banks are shut in by dense low-growing forests where the mosquitoes are bad. The wall of the Abyssinian tableland is clearly visible to the west.

The Dankali somewhat resemble the Somalis in appearance, but they speak a language distinct both from Somali and from Galla. Most, if not all, of them are now Moslems, although the neighbouring Itu are generally pagan. But throughout the greater part of Danakil Islam sits but lightly upon them, and they revolted any more orthodox Somalis by eating the flesh of the hippopotamus.

Like most nomadic peoples they are slightly built, though they are often very tall, and it is not uncommon to see men of 6 feet in height. They are well proportioned, and lithe and graceful in their movements. In colouring they are dark, but their features are small and regular. They have a ready smile, and though many of them file their teeth their expression is attractive. The boys have their hair shaven off or cut very short, but the men allow it to grow into a fuzzy mop. They anoint it constantly with *ghee*, and periodically wave it into close ringlets. The women, and occasionally the men, raise scar-patterns upon their bodies, and both bear the tribal mark upon their faces. The men wear short and usually extremely dirty loin cloths, and keep them-



selves carefully covered except when working in the wells. The women wear long skirts dyed brown in colour with the bark of the mimosa. Their breasts are bare, but if married they wear a piece of black cloth, known as *shash*, round their heads. They are fond of beads, but do not weave them into their hair as do the Arussi women. The men invariably wear strapped across the front of the stomach a formidable curved knife known as a *jile*, with a blade 16 inches long and sharp on both sides. In the more fertile districts almost without exception they carry rifles, and often spears, though these are of no distinctive type (two of those I saw were made from the horn of an oryx). The use of shields has recently been abandoned. The children play with toy bows and arrows.

I left the Awash station on December 1 with a caravan of eighteen camels and twenty-three men armed with thirteen rifles. The Government provided me with a further escort of fifteen armed *Zabalias*. These soldiers brought their own camels. I found that a camel could carry nine days' food for my men, but I was able to supplement their rations fairly regularly with meat. It is impossible to obtain any grain, vegetables, or even eggs from the Dankali, except at Aussa, where some *durrah* is cultivated. They live exclusively on meat and milk, and their greatest delicacy is *ghee* and *berberi* (red pepper), mixed in curdled milk.

I left the Awash station somewhat hurriedly, as I heard that the Government was preparing to forbid my departure owing to trouble with the Asaemara tribes of Badhu. These tribes had recently renounced their allegiance to the Government and refused to pay any further taxes. The situation was still unsettled, though there was a tendency on the part of the tribes to reconsider their decision. I marched down the river towards Badhu, stopping for several days at Bilen in order to try and obtain a specimen of the buffalo which inhabit the reed-bed there. This swamp is formed by the overflow from a large hot spring and is several miles in circumference. I failed to get a buffalo, though I several times got close up to them in the reed-bed. They were astonishingly wary, withdrawing into their reeds long before dawn. I have never heard of one being shot, which makes their extreme shyness difficult to explain. From the tracks which I saw I think the herd consists of only ten individuals. Big game is numerous on the plains and in the bush country south of Badhu, but to the north Spekes gazelle, wild ass, and small herds of soemering and oryx are all that are to be seen. The country south of Mount Ayelu however is one of the best game districts in Abyssinia. Oryx and soemering abound, though the herds are not usually large. Waterbuck are to be met with in fair numbers in the thick jungle along the river, where bushbuck are also found, and I was very much surprised to see a pair of reedbuck on the edge of the Bilen Swamps. There is a small but dwindling colony of Swaynes hartebeest between the Awash station and Metahara, but I met with none elsewhere. I saw no gerenuk nor zebra north of Lake Hertale, though they are fairly plentiful to the south. Greater kudu are not uncommon on Mount Ayelu, round Mount Asabot, and in the hills round Afdub mountain.¹ I saw

¹ I have tried to use throughout the local names, whether Dankali or Galla, rather than the Abyssinian: thus Ayelu mountain, not Azelu, and Afdub mountain, not Afdelem, though I have naturally retained Afdelem as the name of the Abyssinian station.

sixteen lesser kudu bucks in a two-hours' stroll round Afdem station, and they are generally distributed in suitable country. I came across no roan, though Powell Cotton shot one on the plain of Aleaduga in 1900. Leopard are common everywhere, particularly in the dense forests of Aussa, but I saw no sign of lion, although in 1930 I found their tracks at Bilen and also on the Mullu River. There are a few on the Errer, but I think they have always been rare in Danakil. There is one elephant surviving from the herd which Powell Cotton found at Bilen. Hippopotami are fairly plentiful in the deeper reaches of the river and in the lakes at Aussa. The Dankali seldom molest the game, since they value their cartridges too highly to waste them on an animal, and they use no form of trap.

At Bilen we heard much talk of the Asaeimara, and were assured that we should certainly be massacred if we attempted to enter Badhu. From now on the word Asaeimara became monotonous in its repetition, especially round the camp fire at night. Leaving Bilen we marched to Kurtone, a stagnant waste of mud and water, where myriads of mosquitoes seemed bent on making full use of their opportunities. Then, passing the lovely lake of Hertale, we arrived close to the frontier of Badhu. The night before our arrival the Asaeimara had raided the village, killing several people, and we were just in time to share in the funeral feast. Every one was expecting a further raid at any moment. I now made a practice of building a parapet round the camp. This gave the men confidence at night and was useful for keeping the Dankali out during the day. It is the custom for the traveller in these parts to take hostages from the tribe in whose territory he is encamped, only freeing the last hostage when he can induce some one to take his place. In practice of course this system is not always applicable. The chieftain, or *balabat*, who is with you stands up as darkness falls and cries out the traditional warning, which removes from the camp all responsibility should they shoot any one approaching during the hours of darkness.

The entry into Badhu is guarded by the ill-famed pass of Mataka, where the tracks skirt an impassable swamp at the foot of a rugged chain of hills. We all felt relieved when we had passed safely through into the plain beyond. This plain was dominated by the great cone of Mount Ayelu, 6896 feet high, and was shut in by an encampment running WSW. from that mountain. Along the river banks were a number of great *shola* or wild fig trees, and clumps of tamarisk. The grazing was good, and there were several small marshes round whose edges fed great herds of cattle, sheep, and goats. Along the river there was a succession of huts, circular structures built of mats thrown over a framework of sticks, and tethered close by were numerous well-cared-for ponies. These ponies are obtained from the Arussi, and are highly prized, being used solely for raiding. I was told that they were often given milk to drink.

There was a large gathering of armed warriors at Beriforo awaiting our arrival, and their reception of us was far from friendly. They were inclined to force a quarrel, declaring that my Somalis were Essa, with whom they were then, as always, at war. But references to a non-existent machine gun helped us to reach an understanding. The great ambition of every Dankali is to collect more trophies than his neighbour, and they invariably castrate the



The Mataka Pass into Badhu



Camp on the Awash river, Badhu



Madima warriors of the Asaeimara in Badhu



A Badhu "jenili"



Madima warriors (Ahamdo Uga on left) wearing killing decorations

dead and dying and most usually their prisoners. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance attached by them to this custom, and many raids are undertaken solely with the object of collecting trophies. For a man's standing in the tribe depends on the number of his trophies, and ten will give him the right to wear a coveted iron bracelet. An elaborate system of decorations displays his prowess to his contemporaries, and a line of stones upright before his memorial hands down his fame to posterity. The most general method of denoting kills is to attach a brass-bound leather thong to knife or rifle, one for each trophy taken. But no man may wear a coloured loin cloth, a comb or feather in his hair, nor decorate his knife with brass or silver until he has killed at least once, and two kills will entitle him to split his ears. I never saw them wearing the testicles of their victims round their necks, as Nesbitt states is their custom; they actually deny this, and I find it difficult to believe that their denial is based on feelings of delicacy, when they are ready to admit that they will rip open a pregnant woman to mutilate the child inside her. I have however seen them wearing around their wrists those of animals which they have killed, and they will mark themselves on the forehead with the blood of an animal, and probably do the same with human blood. On returning from a raid those warriors who have not yet killed must provide the animals for the feasting, and they are ragged unmercifully by their more successful companions, their clothes being soiled and cow dung rubbed in their hair.

Most youths and small children wear a piece of skin round their necks, wrists, or ankles. This they are given by the witch doctor of the tribe to bring them luck in killing. Before going on a raid they will often make a bracelet from a certain creeper to use as a charm. To change a run of bad luck they will go secretly to the river, unobserved by any one, or the charm loses its efficiency, and dive to the bottom holding a stone to sink themselves. They bring up a lump of clay with which they mark themselves on the forehead. The children often mark themselves thus in play.

There is a widespread but incorrect belief that a Dankali may not marry until he has killed, but no woman other than his wife would submit to his embraces. "You are a woman and I am a woman, so why do you come to me?" she is reputed to exclaim. A man must marry his father's sister's daughter, or his father's brother's daughter if his father had no sister. Among the Asaeimara, but not among the coastal Adaeimara, the cousin of a boy who is too young to marry is given away temporarily to some one else by the elders of the tribe. When the boy is of a marriageable age the girl is taken back and married to him, the temporary husband paying so many cows for each child he has had in the meanwhile. They occasionally marry women from another tribe who have been captured in a raid, but the practice is not approved of.

The Adaeimara of French Somaliland have an interesting marriage ceremony. The suitor pays three dollars to the girl's father, who informs him of the place where the girl is herding the sheep. He goes there, but she has meanwhile collected her friends and taken up her position on a hilltop. She then defends herself with sticks and stones, ably assisted by her friends, and the man sometimes gets seriously hurt. Having captured her he carries her off to his hut for seven days, after which she returns to her father's house. He is then told to bring a camel, and the saying goes round that so-and-so's daughter

has received a camel. This camel must be "bubbling" or the children of the marriage will be weak and useless. Many people now assemble, and the girl, dressed in her finest clothes, is tied on to the back of the camel. The ropes round the camel's legs are then loosed, and the camel is led three times round the house of the girl's father. The camel jumps about considerably and the girl is much shaken. She is then taken down, laid on an embroidered mat and swung to and fro by four women, who sing as they swing her. Next she is covered to the eyes, so that no man may see her face, and assisted by two women is led to a hut situated at some distance from the village in the direction of the rising sun. She must remain inside this hut with her husband for seven days, while the young men play and every one feasts outside. She then returns to her father's village, where the husband comes and fetches her some days later.

Sometimes one passes a large heap of stones by the roadside, and the Dankali with you will cast a stone, crying out, "*Hess! Hess!*" which means "preserve us from this." This is where an unmarried girl has had a child, or in one famous case where a brother and sister having committed incest, the child was born. The child is buried alive and the man becomes an outcast, and should the girl die in childbirth, he is killed. Among the Adaeimara the man may pay a fine called *albe* when the girl is found to be pregnant, and this protects him should the girl die. He must also pay a further fine called *logi* to the headman of her tribe before the child is born. If the accused man denies being the father they will not listen to his denial, believing the girl. To commit adultery is not a serious crime among the Dankali. The husband will lead the offender, bound round the neck with the woman's *shash*, before the headman, and they will sentence him to a fine or for a repeated offence to a ducking in the river. This is a favourite punishment in Badhu. The man is tied in a ball and cast into the river, being pulled out just before he is drowned.

Among the Asaeimara boys are initiated into the tribe when fifteen years old, and are not permitted to wear a knife before they have been circumcised. There is no regular date for the ceremony, which generally occurs shortly before the rains, and all youths of a suitable age undergo the operation on the same day. They are allowed no food on that morning. All the ponies are saddled and the old men and warriors collect at a fixed spot on one of the main paths. The operator is any famous warrior, and he circumcises the boys at some little distance from the crowd. After the operation each boy endeavours to call out the names of as many cows or camels as possible, and he is given the number of animals which he succeeds in naming. Some call out as many as thirty names, while others, overcome by the pain, fail to name any. The boys are then given a certain root to eat, which, it is claimed, gives to them clearness of brain. The newly initiated warriors then mount their ponies and go hunting, and *must* now kill something, if it is only a young bird or a rat. They eat no food till the evening, when there is a great feast and the *jenili* dance. The girls sing the praises of the young men, reciting what they have killed during the day. The boys wear a bead necklace until the wound has healed, but no attempt is made to doctor it. Among the Adaeimara circumcision generally takes place at nine years old, but those Adaeimara who will not marry an Essa woman circumcise shortly after birth. Clyterodotomy is per-

formed on the girls at the age of puberty, and they then remain for a month or more with their knees bound together.

Leaving Beriforo we marched down to the village of an autocratic and aged savage named Afleodham, a man of great influence in these parts, who compelled us to camp among his hovels in the centre of a most malarious bog. He was rather deaf, and the greater part of the day was spent in endless and exhausting discussions. Finally he agreed to provide me with guides and take us down to Aussa, and the situation seemed to have improved. But just before sunset a letter arrived from the Government handed on from headman to headman. The arrival of this letter roused much excitement among the Dankali, who gathered in great numbers round their old chief. It was addressed to the headman of the *Zabanias*, and it ordered me to turn back at once, since the country was too dangerous. Should I refuse to obey this order the *Zabanias* were to return without me, and were to announce to the Dankali that the Government took no further responsibility for my safety. I very reluctantly decided that to continue after losing half my rifles, and when the Dankali knew that the Government had refused to be responsible for our lives, was to invite certain massacre for myself and for my men.

To save time I marched back across the desert to Afdem station, where I arrived on December 19. On the Mullu River we passed the ruins of an Adaeimara village of the Aizamale tribe. The Madima of Badhu had wiped it out a month or two before, killing sixty-one people. The Asaeimara had sent a deputation of seven old men to this tribe to try and reach a settlement over a long-standing pasturage dispute. The Adaeimara had feasted the deputation, and then treacherously set upon them while they slept, killing all but one, who escaped grievously wounded with a shattered arm and numerous knife wounds. I doctored this man's wounds when I returned to Badhu.

I went up to Addis Ababa, but six weeks were wasted before a settlement could be reached with the Abyssinian Government, by which in return for an escort of fifteen rifles I gave them a letter absolving them from all responsibility for my safety. I was opposed to any considerable increase in the number of my escort, believing that this would only make the Dankali apprehensive of my intentions and consequently dangerous.

I found on returning to Afdem that my men had suffered very badly from fever in my absence, and that not unnaturally there was a certain amount of demoralization, but ten days' reorganization effected great changes. The day before we started a rumour came in that the Asaeimara were again out raiding. On the Mullu River we met a party of Adaeimara, who told us that they were moving away from the trouble, but on arriving at Badhu we found everything quiet. I was accompanied this time by Maram Muhammad, Sheikh of Badhu, who had been held by the Abyssinians as a hostage for the good behaviour of his tribe. I now learnt that his refusal to guarantee my safety in Badhu had led to my recall. The Sheikh of Badhu is always the eldest male of the two ruling families of the Asboura and Badogalet, sub-tribes of the Madima. On being invested with his office he changes his name, and is believed to receive the power of controlling the rain. The Dankali are fully convinced that it always rains on this day, even from a clear sky.

The Sheikh is clad in a red and a white cloth. He is smeared with *ghee* and

may not now put his feet upon the ground. He is carried in a special chair some 200 yards towards the rising sun and back. The right of carrying the chair, as of clothing him, is hereditary. On his return the chair is placed upon a bed outside his hut. Then earth from the summit of Mount Ayelu, the sacred mountain, is rubbed upon his hands, earth from beneath a large *shola* tree upon his feet, and clay from the bottom of the Awash River on his forehead. (The Dankali connect the *shola* tree with their ancestors, but were very obscure upon this point.) The Sheikh is next saturated with *ghee*, and the crowd fight to touch him. For a week he will not drink water nor take a bath. They bring a red and a white goat and two bulls, one red and the other white. The Mesara then lift up the red bull, and holding it over the Sheikh they cut its throat so that the blood flows down upon him. The Asoda then kill the red goat in like fashion. The Sheikh's son or nearest male relative kills the white bull and the white goat and his tribe smear themselves with the blood. More *ghee* is poured over the Sheikh, first by the men, next by the women, and finally by the children. When the ceremony is over every one indulges in an orgy of feasting. In time of war the Madima elect a war chief whose position is dependent upon his keeping the confidence of the tribe, but in general a chieftainship descends from father to son.

While at Badhu I climbed Mount Ayelu. On its summit I found a rectangular enclosure 20 yards long by 10 yards across, whose roughly constructed wall was 2 feet high, but much fallen down. Each year when the rains are over the Dankali, some of whom come from as far as Aussa, make a pilgrimage to the summit of this mountain and sacrifice sheep within the enclosure, praying for good health, prosperity among the herds, and success in war. A rough track over crumbling lava lead up the mountain, and there was very little vegetation except for a few mimosa trees, mostly on the summit. I saw three greater kudu cows, and small parties of oryx, some of them very near the mountain top. There is another sacred mountain called Guraali, to the north-west of Aussa, to which the Dankali also make pilgrimage.

To celebrate the return of their Sheikh the Asaeimara held an oracle dance, or the dance of the *jenili*. I saw this dance on three occasions, once by the light of the moon when the *jenili* was a woman and the scene was most impressive. Unlike the Somalis the Dankali have but few dances, and these are generally a monotonous droning and hand-clapping with very little movement. In the dance of the *jenili* the men form a close circle shoulder to shoulder. They chant and clap their hands, summoning the *jenili*, who is seated close by. At last the *jenili* joins them, entering the circle, where he stands on a sheepskin or pile of grass covered to the eyes with a *shamma*. The dancers bend more and more forward, but they never move their feet, while the clapping and chanting grows faster and faster. Suddenly the *jenili* prophesies and the dancers straighten up and listen, chanting back each time the words he has just spoken to the refrain "Asaeimara." Sometimes one of them will ask a question, and the reply is eagerly awaited, for they have implicit faith in the *jenili*. Curiously enough the *jenili* have not utilized their powers to assume any special position in the tribe. They remain ordinary men and women possessed of the alleged gift of foreseeing the future.

Leaving Badhu I marched through Kadabadhu, where the country changes

from the grass plains beneath Ayelu to extensive swamp and open forest submerged during a great part of the year. Here lives Ahamdo, chief of the Badogale, and the son of the last Sheikh of Badhu. He is related by marriage to the Sultan of Aussa and has much power in the land. I learned that Ahamdo Uga, a young chief of Madima, and a most attractive boy, had been killed the night before in an Adaeimara raid. He had but recently returned from the Essa frontier with three trophies to his credit.

Crossing the fantastically coloured sandstone hills of Assassibabiforo we entered Borharamela. It was here that Nesbitt's syce Bayonna was murdered and that Nesbitt was forced to turn westwards to the Abyssinian tableland, only descending to the Awash River again at Tandaho. The country between here and Tandaho had consequently never been explored. The Adaeimara were already suffering severely from the drought and were wild and shy. It was not always easy to procure guides.

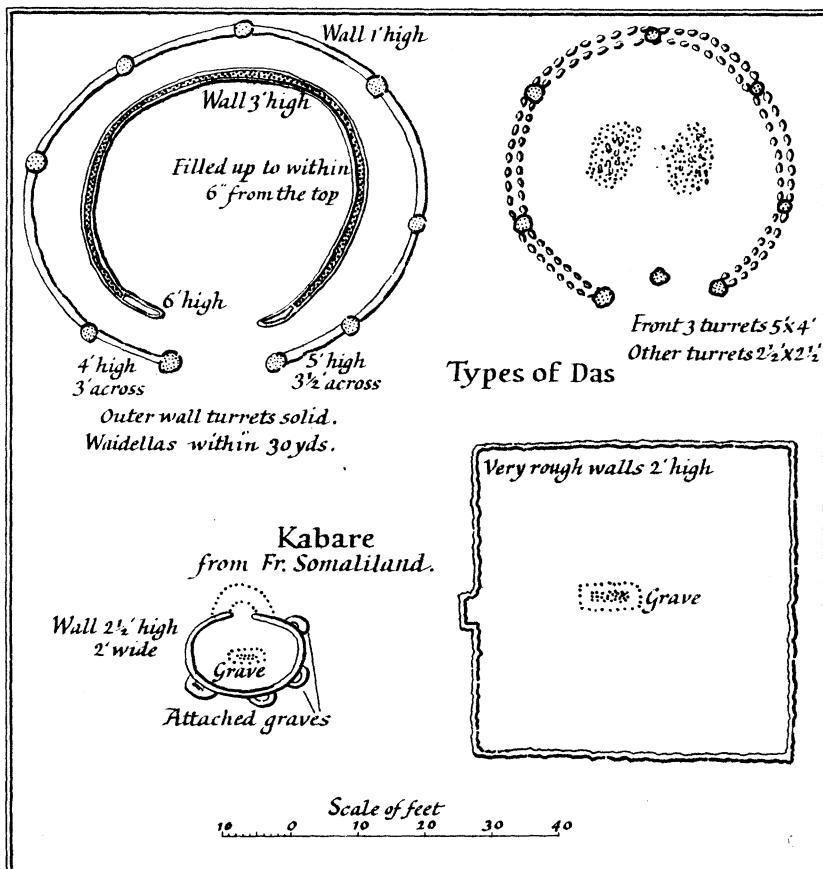
After marching along the river for five days, a series of ravines obliged me to enter the desert to the east called Adau, or place of thirst. Here the country was featureless and on all sides were endless low hills, whose composition varied from coarsest gravel to fine sand. What little vegetation there was consisted of the ubiquitous "wait a bit" thorn. We struck the river again after five days at Abakaborso on the edge of the Kareyu plain, having marched mostly by night and only spent one day without water. This plain is shut in by great mountain ranges, and to the east we could now see the Majenta massif which encloses Aussa to the west. I remained encamped at Abakaborso while I sent a Dankali down to Aussa to warn the Sultan of my approach. It was in the hills here that I first came across Spekes gazelle, which I later found to be generally distributed along the remainder of the route. I also saw wild ass in the surrounding hills, and numerous ostriches on the plain, and the Dankali constantly brought their eggs and young birds into camp.

The hills round Abakaborso were covered with *waidellas*, rough stone cairns in which the Dankali entomb their dead. They lay the corpse upon a platform of stones and then wall it up inside a great hollow mound, the same *waidella* often serving for a whole family. A large upright stone or a pile of small stones is frequently placed on the top of the mound to scare away hyenas should they attempt to dig out the corpse. In Aussa this scarecrow has lost its original purpose and has been incorporated into the *waidella* itself, radically changing its construction. The *waidellas* in Aussa varied enormously in shape, but usually they consisted of a circular platform some $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high on which is erected a tapering cone, or a turret 3 feet or more in height. These *waidellas*, unlike the primitive mound type, are carefully constructed. In one place I passed a small cemetery of *dicos*, and noticed that two cones $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high had been erected within a few feet of the graves. Here the cone had been used separately from the *waidella* purely for its decorative effect. If a Dankali is killed by a man from another tribe his brother will often undertake to avenge him. After having killed a man from the tribe of his brother's slayer, he will go to his brother's *waidella* and set up two upright stones on top of it to show that he is avenged.

The Madima of Badhu have a special burying ground not far from their chief village of Gawani, but no women or children are buried in there, and it

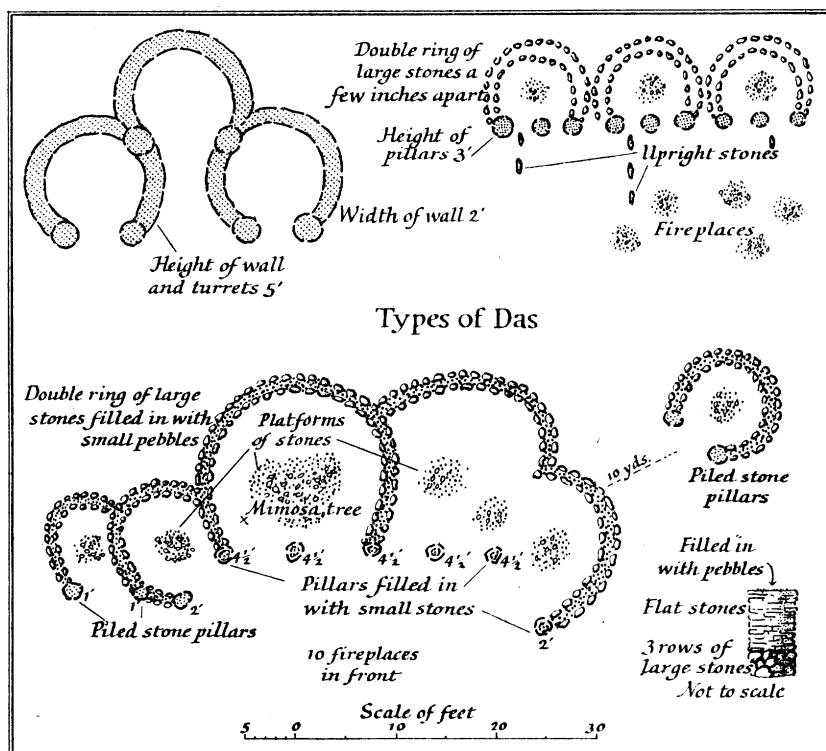
is interesting to find that they will not bury a man here who has been killed in battle, even should his body be brought back. *Waidellas* are in general placed upon a skyline where they can be seen from afar. Sometimes however the dead are buried according to the Moslem law in a grave known as a *dico*, but this custom is not common in the interior of Danakil, not even at Aussa, where Islam has considerable influence. The *dico* often, but by no means always, has an upright stone at both ends of the grave.

Among the coastal Adaeimara only men killed in battle, those dying in a



thinly inhabited district where there are but few people to dig a grave, and women dead in childbirth are buried in *waidellas*. Otherwise the dead are buried in Moslem fashion in graves known as *kabare*, which fulfil the functions of both the *dico* and the *das*. The *kabare*, like the *das*, is generally situated close to a main track. The grave is enclosed by a low circular wall, with a doorway generally flanked by two pillars. It is quite common to find two or even more graves inside one enclosure. The family of a dead man dig a circular hole close to the *kabare* round which they gather to pray, afterwards decorating the grave with branches or palm fronds.

The Dankali very frequently commemorate the dead with a memorial or *das* situated in a conspicuous place by the road-side. This is distinct from a *kabare* in that it does not contain the grave. These *das* are almost invariably circular, indeed, I never saw one which was rectangular, though I saw one *kabare* of that shape, the single grave being inside a low enclosure 45 feet square. There are innumerable different forms and combinations of *das*, and they vary from a single ring of stones to an elaborate and carefully constructed double circle 5 feet high and 50 feet across, decorated with numerous turrets. The simplest form is a ring of large stones with two rough piles to mark the entrance. Generally the *das* is 10 to 15 feet across with an entrance between



two turrets 3 feet high, the circle being formed of a double ring of stones filled in with small pebbles and sometimes built up to form a low wall. Very commonly two or more people are commemorated by one *das*. In this case each entrance commemorates a man, but even more frequently several are joined one to the other. There is then generally a large centre one with other small ones attached to its outer wall. Sometimes two, three, or even more of similar shape are joined on side to side. Before their entrance is a line of upright stones commemorating the victims of the dead man, though the first stone always represents the man himself. A lion or elephant is represented by a flat instead of an upright stone.

There are large areas of clay plain in the southern section of Danakil, round

Ayelu in particular, where very few large stones are to be found. Here, in consequence, the Dankali use another form of *das*. The dead are commemorated by large hollow cones formed of stacked tree trunks. I saw numerous huts on the Kareyu plain made in exactly the same fashion. On this plain the *das* consist of a circular wall of logs, many of them of considerable size. These have a narrow entrance and are usually about 36 feet across. In one case four mimosa saplings had been planted in a rough square inside and joined up by thin poles placed horizontally, these poles and the trees being decorated with pieces of cloth and a sheepskin. The *das* is often built round a thorn bush or has a dead bush dragged in front of the entrance. The Dankali denied that the trophies taken from their victims were exposed on these trees, and I never saw an example of this. It seems likely however that they do do this.

In front of the *das* there are always two or three fire-blackened heaps of small stones, where the animals killed when it was built were cooked, and there is usually another platform of small stones inside on which the meat is placed. To cook it small stones are piled on top of heaps of wood, stacked outside, and the wood being burnt away the meat is roasted on the red-hot stones. When they built the *das* to the last Sheikh of Badhu, they claim to have killed 220 cows. The *das* is never erected until at least a month, and generally a year, has elapsed since the man's death. The most striking thing about them is the enormous trouble which the Dankali, usually so lazy, will take in building them. They live in the crudest shelters, but will carry tree trunks and large stones over very considerable distances for these monuments to the dead. Many are built with surprising skill, and in Adau I passed three *das* joined together, whose walls were 4 feet high and 3 feet wide, built of carefully fitted blocks of stone to present as smooth a surface as is possible without the use of mortar. Nesbitt states that the Dankali erect three different forms according to whether the dead man is a chief, a famous warrior, or an ordinary man. I do not agree with this statement, and consider that several of his theories on this subject are incorrect, as in some cases he appears to have mistaken hut circles for monuments. Where a man draws his last breath the Dankali erect a pile of stones called an *aki*, which is generally a very rough heap of stones with an upright stone in the centre. On the Kareyu plain I saw one remarkably carefully constructed *aki*.

While at Ahakahouso I heard that a party of Wagerat were raiding the Adaeimara on the western bank of the river, but they had withdrawn with their spoil when we moved down there. On the hill opposite our camp were some fortifications erected by a famous Wagerat brigand, Fitana Maram, who had established himself there a few years before, and harassed the surrounding country unmercifully. Yet these Wagerat, who are half Christian and half Moslem, live far away on the plateau of eastern Tigre and speak Amharic. They are intrepid raiders and have penetrated as far as the railway line on the French Somali frontier. Of them alone the Dankali stand in awe.

Ali Wali, whom I had sent to the Sultan, returned from Aussa after eight days, and brought the welcome news that I might cross the Sultan's frontier and approach Aussa. Muhammad Yayu, the Sultan, or *Amoita*, of Aussa, like his father before him, hates and mistrusts all Europeans, and I found that this feeling was prevalent throughout Aussa. These Dankali have seen the



Primitive nomad type of "waidella"



Waidellas in Aussa



"Das" with upright stones indicating number of victims



Wooden das on the Kareyu plain



The entrance into Aussa: Kulsikuma foothills and dense forest



The soldiers of the Sultan of Aussa arriving in camp



Dankali women

coast-line seized by France and Italy, and are naturally apprehensive lest the European Powers should desire to extend their dominions over the fabulous plains of Aussa. No European, previously to Nesbitt, had been given the Sultan's "silver baton," and all had been massacred in consequence. I was shown a'place on the shores of Lake Adobada where the Dankali said that they had annihilated a Turkish force, and I consider that it is probable that it was here that Munzinger's expedition was wiped out in 1875, not on the shores of Lake Assal, as was previously supposed. Nesbitt had received the silver baton in 1928, but his object was to cross the inhospitable deserts to the north, not to enter the inner fastness of Aussa. I was greatly relieved by Ali Wali's news, for I had half expected a refusal, and though permission to approach was not permission to enter Aussa, it at least held out some promise of success. I was also interested to hear from Ali Wali, who had been mistaken on his return journey for an inhabitant of Aussa, that my camp was under constant supervision by quite a large force of Adaeimara. I was quite unaware of this, having seen practically no Dankali in the neighbourhood.

At our next camp I was met by two of the *Amota*'s askaris bearing the silver baton, a stout bamboo bound round with engraved silver bands which gives to the bearer the authority of the Sultan. The quickest and easiest way to Aussa from here is by way of the Galatu pass through the Majenta mountains, which enclose Aussa on the west. But I was anxious to follow the river, and marched north to Tandaho, through a country volcanic and desolate in the extreme. There the Awash flows through a narrow gorge and the hilltops on either side are strongly fortified. These fortifications were built by Ras Imur of Wollo in the days of the Abyssinian conquest. From here the river bends eastward towards Mount Kulsikuma, skirting the edge of the great sandy desert of Kurub, which extends out of sight to the north. Having crossed this desert we reached the forest bordering the river at Galifagi.

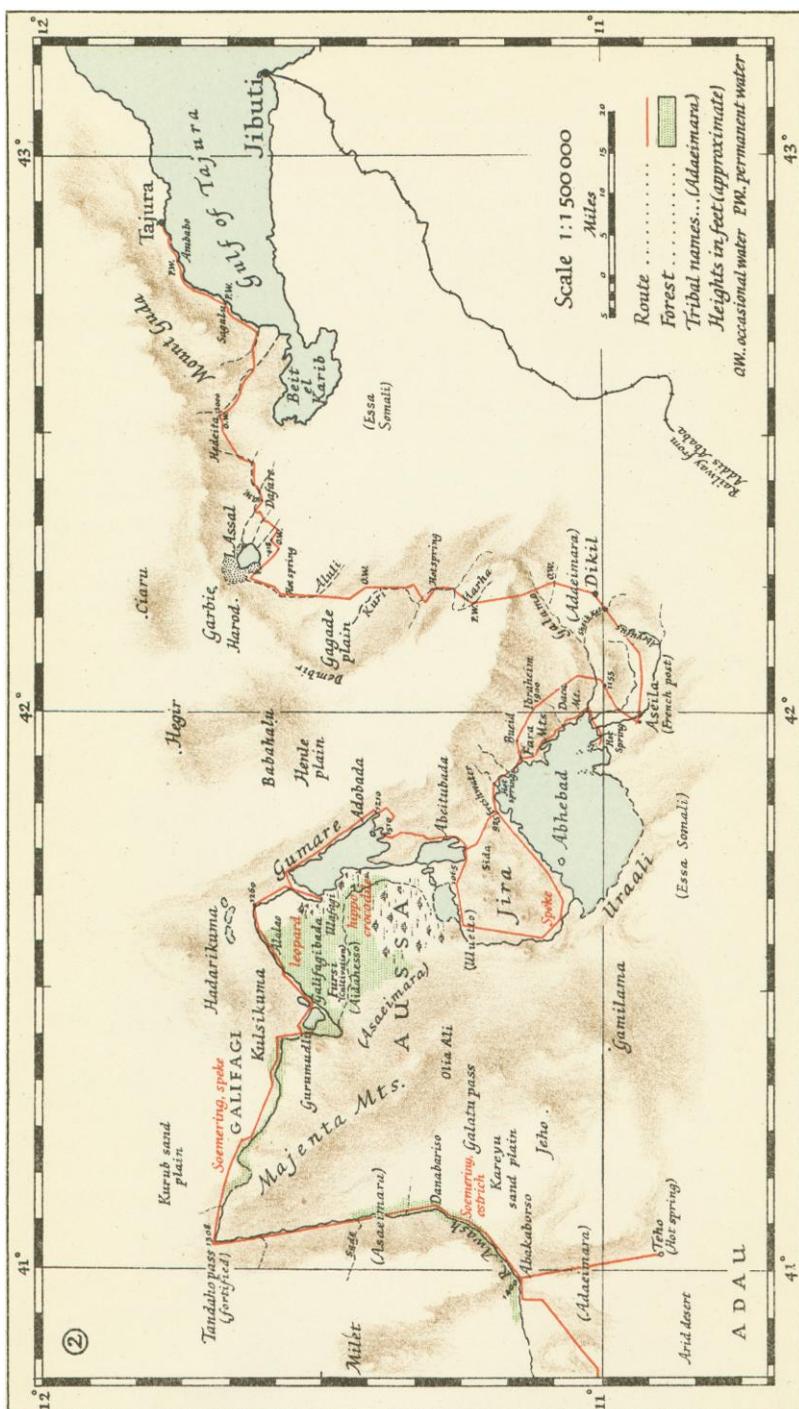
After a few days' delay I was met by the Vizier Kenyasmach Yayu with a present from the Sultan of five oxen and numerous sheep. Then by slow stages we moved down to Gurumudli, where the river is shut in by a narrow belt of dense forest. The trees were mostly large acacias smothered under a matted carpet of creepers, and the clearings were rich with luxuriant grass and a tangle of bean-like clover. On March 29 I heard that the Sultan was on his way to visit me, but just as the sun was setting I received a message asking me to meet him close by, since he had too many men with him to enter my camp. I left accompanied by most of my men, dressed in their best clothes and carrying every rifle. The jungle on either side of the path was alive with men, and a constant stream of runners came and went. We arrived at a large clearing where four hundred picked Dankali were formed up round the Sultan. They were dressed in clean white loin cloths and *shammas*. They carried rifles with full belts of cartridges and all wore the curved Dankali knife. Behind the Sultan were his chosen guard, their rifles in red silk covers. The Sultan was dressed in white and wore a very old silver-mounted knife, probably his father's. He is small in stature, his bearded face oval and rather dark, and his expression sensitive and proud. Having greeted me he dismissed his men to some little distance, keeping only the Vizier and his trusted adviser Telahun beside him. The full moon lit up the long ranks of squatting Dankali and the

solitary little group formed by my men, enclosed on all sides by the thick silent jungle. We talked for an hour or more, and I gave the Sultan an account of my journey and asked his permission to follow the Awash River through Aussa to its end. Next morning we met again. News had recently arrived that the Essa had murdered Beitz, the German who had been working with the Abyssinian boundary commission, and I soon realized that I was suspected of being connected with this work. It was necessary to proceed with care, and we remained in discussion during the greater part of the morning. Before I left the Sultan had granted me leave to follow the Awash through Aussa, permission which had hitherto been refused to all Europeans. The Sultan told me that he had met Nesbitt in this very place, and he was extremely interested to hear of his successful journey through the waterless deserts to the north.

He now gave me four bulls as a present, indeed, throughout my stay in Aussa, as in Badhu, I received a most lavish hospitality: daily oxen, sheep, milk, and durrah bread were brought into my camp as presents from the Sultan. What to give as presents in return it is not easy to know, for in Danakil the dollar is all but valueless, and I was interested to find that the Sultan is far from anxious that its use should become more widespread, believing that this would weaken his hold over his tribesmen. I found that *abergardeed*, or calico, was always acceptable to them, and to a lesser degree small blue, red, or white beads, berberri, and round trade balls of tobacco. Both sexes and even the small children chew tobacco, but I never saw them smoke. *Kat* is eaten on the coast but is not found inland.

Leaving Gurumudli we marched along the lava-covered side of Kulsikuma and entered Aussa proper. The plain of Aussa is approximately square in shape and 30 miles across, and it is to this plain that the word "Aussa" is confined, although the Sultan's dominions extend over a considerable area of desert to the north and west. Aussa is enclosed on every side by great mountain ranges, and the greater part of its inhabitants are of the Eidaheso tribe. On the west it is shut in by the Majenta massif, on the north by Kulsikuma and the smaller cones of Hadarikuma. On the east the long precipice of Gumare, a sheer wall of rock, extends from Hadarikuma to the craters of Jira, which confine Aussa on the south.

The northern half of Aussa is covered in the main with dense forest, so thick as to be impenetrable except along the paths. Leopard and hyena abound in these forests, and lay a heavy toll on the herds belonging to the tribesmen. I saw no buck in Aussa though the constant supervision to which I was subjected made shooting difficult. Wart-hog however are extraordinarily plentiful. There are extensive clearings, where great herds of cattle, sheep, and goats are pastured, and durrah is cultivated around the Sultan's abode of Fursi. The southern section of this plain consists of a great swamp enclosing numerous lakes. This swamp is formed by a small branch of the Awash, which leaves the main stream shortly after its entry into Aussa, and flowing to the south-east, is finally absorbed. Fursi is situated in the angle of these two branches. The Dankali were resolved that I should not go there, and to prevent it the Sultan left Aussa and came to Galifagi to receive me, spending a night in the jungle rather than let me approach his residence. I was able



however to locate it by climbing one of the shoulders of Kulsikuma. Looking out over Aussa from this mountain the sudden transformation in the nature of the country is most remarkable, and the forests and pastures of Gurumudli are seen to be but a narrow ribbon extending up the river into the wastes all round. The Awash River enters Aussa through the gap between the Majenta and Kulsikuma mountains, skirting the lake of Galifagibada, which guards the approach into Aussa from this side. It then bends eastward, passing close to another small lake situated at the foot of Kulsikuma, and continues in this direction until forced south again by the precipices of Gumare. Here the country becomes more open, and is in consequence thickly populated. The Dankali told me that during the rainy season upon the plateau where the river rises, the Awash floods almost the entire plain of Aussa, and that they then move with their herds into the surrounding mountains. A great part of them indeed live throughout the year on the mountain slopes in crude rock-built shelters undistressed by the blazing heat of their basalt surroundings. We passed one solidly constructed house situated on a hilltop to the east of Kulsikuma, which the Dankali assured me was a deserted mosque, but which was quite evidently one of the Sultan's numerous abodes. It was intensely difficult to obtain any information from them, and even those who had accompanied me from the start were now nervous of being seen talking to me. The local Dankali said that if they were to tell me even the name of a mountain they would be severely punished by the Sultan, whose favourite punishment for such offences appears to be to shave their heads with a blunt knife and no water.

The Sultan rules Aussa with an iron hand, and here, in consequence, alone in Danakil, are peace and security to be found. I was astonished by the orderly conditions which prevail throughout the greater part of his land. Only along the Uluetto tribe living in the southern half of the swamp round Mount Jira is man-hunting practised as a normal occupation. Shortly before my arrival in Aussa three Dankali had come from Badhu claiming to be traders, and had induced an old man to give them shelter, saying that they too were Asaeimara. Some nights later they had murdered and mutilated him, the man who lived with him, and his daughter, and then sought refuge in the desert of Adau. Here they had been tracked down, captured, and brought back to face the Sultan's justice.

When overlooking Aussa I had observed three small lakes among the lava hills in its north-west corner, but I was unable to visit them. I had also noticed that the Awash River enters a large lake shortly after turning south under the Gumare cliffs. This is Adobada, or the "White lake," whose waters wash the very foot of the Gumare precipice. The river's inlet is hidden among dense reed-beds enclosing the lake on the north and west. The swamps consist of bulrushes and feathery tufted bamboo, but nowhere in Aussa did I see any papyrus. Small pythons, of which the largest we killed was $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, were plentiful in the rushes along the expanse of mud at the lake's edge. We also found the skeletons of numerous hippo. These could be heard grunting out of sight in the centre of the lake, but we seldom saw them. Crocodiles, on the other hand, were all too much in evidence. They exist in incredible numbers both in the Awash at Badhu and in the river and lakes at Aussa,

though uncommon in the river between these two places. I shot a great number of them, but never obtained a specimen over 10 feet in length. I think they must require but little food, since otherwise they would soon exhaust the supply of catfish in the river. Certainly most of those I cut open were empty, a few only containing fishbones and small stones. I noticed that they land to feed, and that they will eat baby crocodiles if these are left in the water after being shot. These camps were made extremely unpleasant by the large numbers of tarantula spiders which invaded the circle of light after dark, and it was not uncommon to kill a dozen in one night. Strangely enough, I only saw one scorpion in Danakil, which I put on inside my shorts after a bathe, and got severely stung.

The Dankali assured me that I had now reached the very end of the Awash River, maintaining that the lake had no exit. I insisted on exploring its shores, and taking sufficient food for four days I set out with three of my men, the Vizier, and his retainers. I found, as I had expected, an outlet in the southern corner of the lake, and from a neighbouring summit I saw that the Awash disappeared to the west after passing through two smaller lakes, enclosed in the great swamp which covers southern Aussa. Having returned I made preparations to move my camp down to these lakes. This roused great opposition from the Dankali, who had been hoping that I would now leave Aussa. Further envoys arrived from the Sultan to persuade me to depart, and the Vizier said that the surrounding tribes were becoming restive, declaring that their country was being sold to the *ferengi*. I certainly noticed that during these days he never left my side, always carrying with him the silver baton. I said that I was prepared to go to any lengths rather than depart without seeing the end of the river which I had come so far to seek. Finally they agreed to allow me to proceed, provided I took my camels round the almost pathless eastern shore of Lake Adobada. The main road runs along its western side, and I later heard that on this road were bridges constructed in ancient times by the Arabs, which I should much like to have inspected. But my main object had been obtained, although at one time the chance of success had appeared hopeless.

It took us five days to reach the first of the smaller lakes, the loveliest of all the lakes in Aussa, and we remained encamped here for several days resting the camels and ourselves. I now heard of the great sodium lake of Abhebad, situated on the farther side of Mount Jira, which the Awash River enters at its north-east corner after circling round that mountain. Every evening great numbers of whistling duck, Cape wigeon, and Egyptian geese flew across the shoulder of Jira to the brackish waters of this lake.

I sent my caravan across to a spring of fresh water on the shores of Abhebad and set out with three men and a party of Dankali to follow the remainder of the river's course. We marched across cracked and riven lava, which, having poured forth from the numerous craters on Jira, now covers the mountain's face. This lava field ends abruptly in a low cliff which confines the swamp on this side. It proved impossible to approach the next lake owing to the swamps which entirely surround it, but we descended to the river near its exit. There is a narrow belt of pasturage between the lava cliff and the river uninhabited by the Uluetto tribe; but it is under water during a great part of the year. I

noticed in this district that nearly every grown man was decorated for kills. The river here is very broad and deep and shut in behind dense reed-beds. The Dankali, who are in general good swimmers, using an overarm stroke, cross it on a raft of rushes resembling a giant dabchick's nest. This is possibly the origin of the *Balsa*. The mosquitoes were very bad during the night, though we tried to escape them by moving back on to the lava plateau.

Next day we continued down the river, which, after leaving the swamp, turns southward round the base of Jira. The country was an arid waste of blackened rock, and the heat was intense, thrown up off these rocks as from a furnace door. That night we camped in sight of Abhebad, and next morning reached its shores. Notwithstanding the severe drought, for the rains were now two months delayed, a considerable volume of water was flowing into the lake. I later satisfied myself that this lake has no exit, and it was evident from the water stains upon the surrounding rocks that the lake was at least 60 feet below its highest level. The older Dankali can remember it appreciably higher than it is to-day. I was interested to see that the low level of the water has exposed a grove of trees, whose skeleton trunks and branches are thickly encrusted with calcium. Preserved in this fashion they must be the relics of wood which grew here before the lake existed.

There was a small village among a clump of *dum* palms near the river's end, but during the 17 miles to camp I saw no other vegetation, save for tussocks of spiking grass which even a hungry camel scorns. Camp was not unpleasantly situated at the north-east corner of the lake, where there were three fair-sized springs of fresh water, and small reed-beds. Some days later I moved camp along the eastern shore of the lake. Shade there was none, our drinking water was hot and brackish, and regularly at sunset a sandstorm swept down upon us from the Essa mountains across the lake. I remained here for seven days collecting waders. There were large flocks of curlew sandpiper, wood and marsh sandpiper, avocet, stilt, ringed plover, and stint. I had seen occasional flamingoes on the other lakes, but here there were several fair-sized flocks. There were a few crocodiles, all small and very wary. The lake, which is very soapy to the touch, is surrounded by treacherous black mud, and much algae floats like red scum upon its surface. Hot water seeps into the lake along practically the entire eastern shore, and there are numerous boiling springs and one small geyser. Many Dankali visit this lake, for its waters are reported to possess valuable medical properties.

Before leaving the lake I explored its coast-line as far as the Uraali mountains, a stronghold of the Essa. I walked round three sides of the lake, and there remained but the unbroken barrier of the Essa ranges to explore. This I did not attempt since it would have been too dangerous to have gone into Essa territory from the Danakil country with a small party, and it would have been impracticable to have gone there with a large one. I inspected the mountains from many angles and was convinced that there was no possible outlet from the lake.

In the south-east corner of the lake there were a great number of fantastically shaped sinter formations. The highest of the pinnacles fully exposed by the receding water was perhaps 30 feet in height, but many of those partly submerged must be very considerably higher than this. A chain of them

extends far out into the lake, those most remote from the shore being the largest. They are composed of a fairly soft material of a dirty grey colouring. Some of them appear to be covered with the finest tracery and are strangely beautiful. They extended for between 2 and 3 miles along the edge of the lake, and were practically confined to this one place, although there were a few small ones round a hot spring halfway to camp. It appeared that they were formed by the hot water acting on the sodium of the lake, but if this is so it is strange that practically none exist along the eastern shore of the lake, where hot springs are abundant. These pinnacles were 13 miles from camp, but I managed to get there and back on the same day. We passed through a country which was as dead as lunar landscape; the heat was tremendous, making us sick and giddy. Throughout the hottest hours we crouched among the rocks our heads swathed in cloths, wondering if we should have the strength left to return.

Now that I had explored as much as possible of the lake I set out to cross the Fara mountain, which rises up from the eastern shore of the lake. The going was very bad, a steady climb over round slipping stones, and I lost two camels from exhaustion. It took us four days to reach Aseila, where the French have recently established a military post. Behind this post and linked up by road with the railway is the impregnable fort of Dikil. I arrived here on May 6 and obtained permission to cross the desert north-east to Tajura, permission which had previously been refused. I sent the *Zabanias* back to Abyssinia by the railway, but the Governor insisted on replacing them by fifteen men with a machine gun under Adjutant Dongradi. The long-expected rains had now broken, and the watercourses were filled with their short-lived torrents. This rain was very welcome since it replenished the waterholes ahead. But for it we should not have reached Tajura, since the waterholes round Lake Assal had been dried up. These waterholes are most usually crevices in the basalt known only to the local Dankali and invisible from the distance of a few yards. The French have made no attempt to explore the interior of their colony, and there was practically no information available concerning our route.

We left Dikil on May 9, marching only for a few hours in the afternoon. The second day we camped in the boulder-strewn valley of the Marha, by a pool of rain-water 25 feet across and 7 feet deep, stored in a natural basin in the rock. It was green and slimy but unexpectedly cold. Then we camped farther down this river-bed among a grove of *dum* palms. We passed several such groves, and in one place a family of Dankali were tapping the trunks to collect the sap into small fibre cones. From this sap they make a form of wine. The country between Dikil and Tajura is broken by range upon range of mountains, which rise gaunt and quivering in the heat from the seas of lava which surround them. Throughout this waste of blackened rock there was scarcely a stunted thorn bush on which to feed the exhausted camels. They were already weak when we left Dikil. Now, on arriving in camp they lay where they had been unloaded, too tired to search among the rocks for food. The Dankali guides assured me that we should find good grazing on the plain of Gagade, where we could rest and feed the camels. We reached this plain by following the course of the Kuri. The plain in the distance was submerged



Swamps of southern Aussa



Gumare precipices and Lake Adobada



The Awash in northern Aussa



Sinter formations in the south-east corner of Lake Abhebad



Lake Assal and salt plains



The two acacias in otherwise barren country around Lake Assal which saved some of the camels

by a recent storm, and this gave the illusion of a great lake. We camped among some leafless thorn bushes. The Adaeimara who inhabit this plain had exhausted the feeding, and then moved away to the plain of Henle, close to the Aussa frontier. The guides said that we should find no vegetation for the next four days, not even wood for fires. We entered the awe-inspiring valley of the Aluli, a narrow gash in the Dataali mountains, where the towering precipices are scarcely 12 yards apart. Orange, rose red, purple, amber, and olive green were the varying shades of the sandstone rock, but the prevailing tone was red. Throughout the valley's course there was a succession of hot springs, but the water, though crystal clear, was flat and brackish. We had the great good fortune to find two acacia bushes in full leaf, and this scanty feed saved sufficient of my camels to enable us to reach Tajura, but fourteen died of starvation before we reached the sea. It was heart-breaking, for I knew them all so well: little Farur, Elmi, Hawiya, and the great-hearted Negadras. During the hottest hours of the day we found some shade under the over-hanging rocks, but nothing could shelter us from the scorching wind which drove before it a stinging cloud of sand.

The Aluli valley opens out into the Assal basin. The blue-black waters of the lake are surrounded by a great plain of salt, white and level as an icefield, from which the mountains rise up in crowded tiers, the lava on their slopes black and rusty red. The Dankali trade the salt from this plain, and from others farther to the north, with the Abyssinians on the plateau, where in the form of bars it passes as currency. We met several salt caravans round Abakabuso. They carry the salt in cylinders of matting 2 feet long and 3 inches across. Only along the south-eastern shore is there no salt, for there hot salt-water pours forth from tunnels under the sandstone cliff. This lake is 500 feet below sea-level. It took us three days to pass round it, owing to a series of heart-breaking escarpments, and we dragged the dying camels by main force from one sharp-edged block of lava to the next. On the third day we encountered a small encampment of the Aizamale tribe, and induced them to hire us camels. They were camped at Dafare on the only waterhole that we encountered on the shores of Lake Assal which could possibly last from one rains to the next. The day before we had passed a recently erected *waidella*, covering the remains of a Dankali who died of thirst before the rains broke.

I marched round the south-western side of Mount Guda, and arrived on the shore of the Beit el Karib in two days. We reached Tajura on May 20, twelve days after leaving Dikil, and nearly six months after first entering the Danakil country. A few days later I sailed in an Arab *dhow* for Jibuti. I had successfully accomplished what I had undertaken, and it was the unfailing loyalty and courage of my men, led by Omar Ibrahim, which had made this possible.

DISCUSSION

Before the paper the PRESIDENT (Major-General Sir PERCY COX) said: The lecture, as you have seen, is on the Awash River and the Aussa Sultanate, Abyssinia. It is a very interesting and little-known piece of country. What Mr. Thesiger has done is to carry out a thoroughly good piece of work in really dangerous country. Mr. Thesiger's father was for eight or ten years in our Legation in Abyssinia, so that our lecturer started with a hereditary interest in