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**Hawassa University**

**INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

**Faculty of Informatics**

**Department of Information Systems**

**Course:History of Ethiopia nd the horn**

**Group assignment**

Group members ID

1. **Biniyam Tilahun ................................................ NaScR/0594/13**
2. **Yeabsira melaku**
3. **Metshafe eyasu**
4. **Mohamed endris**
5. **Destaw aschalew**
6. **List at least four major religions of Ethiopia (1%). Explain how each religion was introduced, expanded and contributed to specific and in shaping the history of the region at large (4%).**

* **Christianity (Orthodox Christianity)**:

Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia in the 4th century AD through the efforts of Frumentius of Tyre and his brother Aedesius,They converted King Ezana, who then made Christianity the state religion.Christianity spread throughout the region, helped by the conversion of kings and rulers and the establishment of monasteries and churches. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church became a major institution, preserving Ethiopian culture, language, and religious practices.Christianity played a significant role in shaping Ethiopian culture, politics, and identity.it contributed to arts architecture and music,the Church also served as a source of resistance during times of foreign invasion.

* **Islam:**

Islam was introduced to Ethiopia in the 7th century AD through early Muslim migrants and traders, as well as through the migration of Muslims fleeing persecution in Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad had instructed his followers to seek refuge in Ethiopia (Abyssinia) under the rule of King Negus (Ashama ibn Abjar).Islam spread gradually through trade and intermarriage with local populations. It gained significant influence in regions such as Harar and the eastern lowlands. Islam gradually spread across Ethiopia, particularly in regions like Harar and the eastern lowlands. The adoption of Islam contributed to the diversification of Ethiopia's religious landscape and influenced various aspects of its society. Politically, Islam played a significant role in shaping regional dynamics and power structures, leading to the emergence of Islamic states and sultanates in different parts of Ethiopia. Culturally, Islam enriched Ethiopia's heritage through the introduction of new architectural styles, such as the distinctive Harari architecture, and influenced language, cuisine, and social customs.

* **Judaism:**

Judaism has ancient roots in Ethiopia, dating back to biblical times. According to tradition, Ethiopian Jews, known as Beta Israel or Falasha, are descendants of the tribe of Dan or the Queen of Sheba's union with King Solomon. The Beta Israel community maintained its distinct religious and cultural practices for centuries, largely isolated from the rest of the Jewish world. However, there were periods of contact and exchange with Jewish communities in the Middle East. Ethiopian Jews have contributed to the religious and cultural diversity of Ethiopia. Their traditions, such as the observance of the Sabbath and unique religious practices, have helped the tapestry of Ethiopian society.

* **Indigenous Religions:**

Ethiopia has a rich tradition of indigenous religions log before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. These religions are often animistic and polytheistic, with beliefs centered on nature spirits and ancestor worship.These religions are native to the region and followed by the native people of the region,some examples are the waqqeffena of the oromo people,aricho megano of the kambata people and iqa of the borro shinasha people among many others. Indigenous religions have been practiced by various ethnic groups across Ethiopia for millennia. Despite the spread of Christianity and Islam, elements of indigenous beliefs and practices have still stayed to this day, especially in rural areas. Traditional indigenous religions have shaped Ethiopian culture, worldview, and social structures. They have influenced rituals, ceremonies, and festivals, contributing to the cultural heritage of the country

1. **The Oromo population movement of the 16th century cannot be better understood without considering the *Gadaa* system. Refer sources and write a brief explanation about the values of the *Gadaa* system (3%) and how it contributed to the social integration in the Horn (2%).**

The Gadaa system is a unique socio-political institution practiced by the Oromo people of Ethiopia, Kenya, and parts of Somalia. It is a complex system of governance, social organization, and cultural norms that has played a central role in Oromo society for centuries.

The Gadaa system is based on a cyclical eight-year period, during which power and leadership roles rotate among a series of age sets or classes within Oromo society. Each age set progresses through a series of stages – such as "Gadaa," "Borana," and "Hirma" with specific rights, responsibilities, and duties assigned to each stage. Leadership positions, including that of the Abbaa Gadaa (leader), are determined through a democratic process based on leadership qualities, and consensus.

One of the central values of the Gadaa system is egalitarianism. It emphasizes the principles of equality, fairness, and inclusivity, ensuring that power is distributed equitably among different segments of Oromo society. Leadership positions are not hereditary but are earned through demonstrated competence and adherence to societal norms. This rotation of leadership fosters social cohesion, prevents the concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals or families, and promotes a sense of collective ownership and accountability.

The Gadaa system promotes social justice, conflict resolution, and the preservation of cultural heritage. It provides mechanisms for resolving disputes, promoting reconciliation, and upholding traditional customs and values. Additionally, the Gadaa system serves as a vehicle for the transmission of oral history, cultural practices, and ethical principles from one generation to the next, reinforcing a sense of identity and continuity among the Oromo people.

In the 16th century, the Oromo people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia,underwent a significant population movement known as the "Great Oromo Migration" or "Oromo Expansion." This movement, which lasted for several centuries, was driven by a combination of factors, including population pressure, competition for resources, and the search for new grazing lands for their cattle.

As the Oromo migrated from their ancestral homelands in the southern regions of Ethiopia,

they expanded into territories inhabited by various ethnic groups, including the Sidama, Somali, and Amhara peoples.The Oromo migration had profound implications for the socio-political landscape of the Horn of Africa, leading to cultural exchange, conflict,

and the formation of new alliances and power structures. This movement also contributed to the spread of Oromo language, culture, and traditions across vast territories, shaping the ethnic composition and historical development of the region.

1. **Discuss major characteristics of both Gondar period and “era of warlords” or *Zemene Mesafint* (3%) and analyze how such conditions did affect the societies (2%).**

* **Gondar period**

The Gondarine period was a period of Ethiopian history between the ascension of Emperor Fasilides in 1632 and a period of decentralization in 1769, known as the Zemene Mesafint. Gondar was founded by Emperor Fasilides in 1636 as a permanent capital, and became a highly stable, prosperous commercial center. This period saw profound achievements in Ethiopian art, architecture, and innovations such as the construction of the royal complex Fasil Ghebbi, and 44 churches that were established around Lake Tana. In the arts, the Gondarine period saw the creation of diptychs and triptychs, murals and illuminated manuscripts, mostly with religious motifs.

The death of Iyasu I in 1706 began the slow decline in Gondar’s supremacy. Emperor Iyasu I's regent, Empress Mentewab, brought her brother Ras Wolde Leul to Gondar and made him Ras Bitwaded. After this and Iyasu II’s death in 1755, brief dynastic conflicts occurred between Mentewab's Quaregnoch and the Yejju groups led by Wubit.

The Gondarine period ended when Tigray governor Ras Mikael Sehul assassinated Iyoas I in 1769 which marked the beginning of the country's decentralized Zemene Mesafint ("Era of Princes") which lasted until Emperor Tewodros II reunified the empire in 1855 in its modern form. The era was mainly characterized by

* Centralized Monarchy: The Gondarine rulers centralized power in the hands of the monarchy, establishing a strong centralized government with the emperor at its helm. Gondar served as the capital and a center of political, cultural, and religious activity.
* Cultural Renaissance: The Gondar period witnessed a cultural renaissance, with significant developments in art, literature, and architecture. The construction of magnificent castles, churches, and monasteries, adorned with intricate frescoes and carvings, reflected the flourishing of Ethiopian arts and culture.
* Expansion and Conflict: The Gondarine rulers expanded Ethiopia's territory through conquests and military campaigns, extending the empire's influence into neighboring regions. However, this expansion also led to conflicts with rival powers, including the Ottoman Empire and regional Muslim states.
* **Zemene mesafint**

The Zemene Mesafint ("Era of Judges", "Era of the Princes," "Age of Princes,") was a period in Ethiopian history between the mid-18th and mid-19th(1769-1855) centuries when the country was ruled by a class of Oromo elite noblemen who replaced Habesha nobility in their courts, making the emperor merely a figurehead.For the most part, the regional lords were tightly related by marriage and constituted a stable ruling elite that prevailed until the mid-20th century. In short, during the Zemene Mesafint, the Emperors from the Solomonic dynasty were reduced to little more than figureheads confined to the capital city of Gondar.

The most powerful lords during the Zemene Mesafint were from the House of Yejju, a dynasty that included Ali I of Yejju, Aligaz, Gugsa and Ali II based in Yejju, a region in Wollo. Other regional lords included Kenfu Hailu of Gondar, Ras Dullu Menz, Ras Hailu Yosedeq of Gojjam, Sabagadis Woldu of Tigre, Ras Wolde Selassie of Tigre, Wube Haile Mariam of Simien, and provincial king Sahle Selassie of Shewa.

The lords fought against each other for the expansion of their territory and to become the guardians of the kings of kings in Gondar, the capital of the empire at the time. The monarchy continued only in name because of its sacred character. This nominal but divinely ordained monarchy preserved the dynasty from actual extinction. The Zemene Mesafint represented a period of profound social, political, and economic upheaval in Ethiopian history, characterized by :-

* Decentralization of Power: Following the decline of central authority, power became decentralized, leading to the emergence of regional warlords and local rulers known as "rasses." These warlords competed for dominance, leading to a protracted period of civil war and instability.
* Economic Decline: The era of warlords witnessed economic decline and social upheaval, as prolonged conflicts disrupted trade routes, agricultural production, and economic activities. The breakdown of law and order further exacerbated economic hardships, leading to widespread poverty and famine.
* Social Dislocation: The era of warlords resulted in social dislocation, displacement, and upheaval for ordinary Ethiopians. Communities were often caught in the crossfire of warring factions, facing violence, pillaging, and forced conscription. Social cohesion and traditional institutions were undermined, leading to widespread suffering and instability.

1. **Analyze the socio-economic developments of Ethiopia between 1800 and 1941 in fields of agriculture, land holding system, commercial activities, industrial, and urban growth (5%).**

Between 1800 and 1941, Ethiopia experienced significant socio-economic developments across various fields, with notable challenges and transformations. In agriculture, traditional farming practices predominated, with subsistence agriculture being the primary means of livelihood for the majority of Ethiopians. The landholding system during this period was characterized by feudalism, with large estates owned by aristocrats, religious institutions, and the monarchy. Peasants worked the land under various forms of tenure, often facing heavy taxation and labor obligations to landowners. However, there were also efforts to reform land tenure systems, such as Emperor Menelik II's land redistribution policies in the late 19th century.

Commercial activities in Ethiopia during this time were largely centered around trade routes and market towns, with trade in goods such as coffee, ivory, hides, and gold playing a significant role in the economy. Ethiopia's position as a landlocked country limited its access to international markets, but it remained an important hub for regional trade networks, particularly with neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Industrial development in Ethiopia was limited during this period, with few notable industrial ventures. The country lacked significant infrastructure and technological advancements, which hindered the growth of industries beyond artisanal crafts and small-scale manufacturing. However, there were some initiatives to promote industrialization, such as the establishment of modern factories and workshops by Emperor Menelik II, particularly in areas like textiles and weaponry.

Urban growth in Ethiopia was also modest during this period, with most of the population residing in rural areas engaged in agricultural activities. However, there were notable urban centers such as Addis Ababa, the capital established by Emperor Menelik II in 1886. Addis Ababa served as a political, economic, and cultural center, attracting people from different regions of Ethiopia and beyond. The city experienced some degree of modernization and infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, schools, and government buildings.

the socio-economic developments of Ethiopia between 1800 and 1941 were characterized by a mix of continuity and change. While traditional agricultural practices and feudal landholding systems persisted, there were also efforts to reform and modernize aspects of the economy, particularly under the reign of Emperor Menelik II. However, Ethiopia faced numerous challenges during this period, including external pressures from colonial powers, internal conflicts, and socio-economic inequalities, which shaped the trajectory of its development leading up to the mid-20th century.

**5.Identify reforms of the *Derg* regime and discuss how these reforms shaped the political and socio-economic conditions of Ethiopia (5%).**

Sources:

Asmarom Legesse, "Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System", The Red Sea Press, 2006.

Gufu Oba, "Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous Political System", The Journal of Oromo Studies, Volume 7, Number 1&2, 2000.