

Unit 7



STATES, PRINCIPALITIES, POPULATION MOVEMENTS AND INTERACTIONS IN ETHIOPIA, 13th - MID-16th C.

Unit Introduction

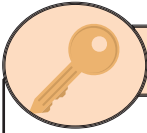
This unit deals with states, principalities, population movements and interactions in Ethiopia during the 13th to mid-16th centuries. The first section deals with the “Solomonic” Dynasty’s “restoration”. In the second section, you will learn about Muslim sultanates such as Ifat, Fatigat, Dawaro, Dara, Bali, Hadya, Arbabini, Sharka, and Adal. In the third section, you will learn about conflicts between the Christian kingdoms and the Sultanate of Adal. In the fourth

section, you will learn about the societies and states in the central and southern parts of the country in the period. In the fifth section, you will learn about the population movements of Afar, Somali, Argobba and the Oromo. In the sixth section, you will learn about the Oromo Gadaa system. In the seventh section, you will learn about the Oromo adoption system. Finally, in the eighth section, you will learn about the egalitarian system of governance.

Unit learning outcomes

At the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- examine the major characteristics of Peoples, States and Principalities in Ethiopia from 13th to 16th centuries.
- explain the major population movement, expansion, and integration in Ethiopia.
- identify the features of the relationship between the Christina kingdom and the Muslim Sultanates.
- discuss the Oromo *Gadaa* system.



Key Terms

- Restoration
- Dynasty
- Abba Gadaa
- Adoption
- Integration
- Egalitarian

7.1 The “Solomonic” Dynasty & the Christian Kingdom, 13th -16th Centuries

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- outline factors that led to the restoration of “Solomonic” Dynasty.
- analyse social, economic, and political features of the Christian kingdom.
- sketch the major political, economic, social, and cultural features of the Christian kingdom.

Brainstorming

- What comes to your mind when you read or hear about “Solomonic” Dynasty?

The founder of this dynasty was a local ruler in Amhara called Yekuno-Amlak. Yekuno Amlak claimed to be the descendant of the Aksumite kings. Accordingly, he founded the so-called “Solomonic” dynasty, using the legend of Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. This dynasty, which came to power in 1270, called itself “Solomonic”. Yekuno Amlak and his followers took this dynastic name to justify their legitimacy by claiming that the Zagwe rulers were illegitimate.

Similarly, the name “Solomonic” is placed in quotation marks because the claim of descent from King Solomon of Israel is legendary and cannot be historically proven. However, the claim was elaborated in the Kibre Negest (“Glory of Kings”) in the 14th century. The Kibre Negest claims that the Ethiopian ruling class descended from the line of Menilek I, son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Israel. As a result, Ethiopian monarchs from Yekuno Amlak to Emperor Haile Silassie I claimed descent from Menilek I.

In 1270, when it came to power, the Christian Kingdom was confined to the territory of Southern Eritrea, Tigray, Lasta and the northern part of Shewa. From this area, Yekuno

Amlak and his successors, such as Amde-Tsion (r.1314-44), began to expand the dynasty's territory. Its territorial limits covered the ancient highland provinces of Aksum and Zagwe in the north. It also covered the regions of Gondar and eastern Gojjam in the northwest, Bizamo and Damot in the southwest, the Gurage lands and the Omotic populations of Wolaita and Gamo in the south and Ifat, Fatagar, Dawaro, Hadiya and Bali in the east and southeast. Amde-Tsion was the first "*Solomonic*" King, who embarked on a wider and rapid territorial expansion policy.

Their main motives of expansion were economic and political, i.e., to control the trade routes and territorial seizures. The control over the Zeila trade route helped Yekuno Amlak strengthen his economic power. In turn, the economic strength helped him to organize and sustain a strong army. As a result, the Christian Kingdom controlled extensive territories during the reign of Emperor Amde-Tsion. The period also witnessed the expansion of trade, leading to the flow of commodities to the coast. This economic and military strength contributed much to his success in defeating his opponents and expanding his kingdom.

Following the end of the reign of Yikuno-Amlak in 1285, political instability caused constant power struggles among his sons and grandsons for succession.

The succession problem seems to have been partly resolved in 1300 during the reign of Widim-Ra'ad (r. 1299-1314) following the establishment of a 'royal prison' at Amba-Gishen located in present-day southern Wollo. According to the rule, all-male members of the royal family were confined at the Amba Gishen. Loyal soldiers to the reigning monarch guarded the royal prison. When the monarch died, court dignitaries would send an army to the royal prison to escort the designated successor and put him on the throne. This practice continued until Amba-Gishen was destroyed by Imam Ahmad Ibrahim Al-Ghazi's force in 1540.

From 1270 until the establishment of Gondar in 1636, the medieval monarchs had no permanent capital like Aksum or Lalibela. Instead, they ruled over the vast territory through mobile courts for two centuries. Initially, the centre of the "restored" dynasty was in today's South Wollo around Lake Haiq.

Then, however, it gradually shifted southward to the districts of Menz, Tegulet, Bulga in northern Shawa, and finally, to the regions dominated by the great height of the Yerer and Zequalla in eastern Shawa. The need to get daily food supplies and firewood for such a great number of court officials, soldiers and servants necessitated the use of mobile camps. Initially, military motives prompted the Ethiopian ruling elite to change their capitals

from fixed to mobile settlements. These mobile capitals were adapted in several ways:

- They moved to food supply areas rather than supplies being moved to the capital.
- They impoverished their current hinterlands.
- The political integration of Ethiopia came eventually to depend on a mobile center of the polity.

These three factors not only represented adaptations to nomadic capitals but, in turn, made stabilisation of capitals difficult. In other words, the very adaptations to the wandering capitals themselves had a feedback effect on the pattern of movement. They, therefore, contributed to a continuation of capital movement.

The physical environment of medieval cities was not pleasant. The cities were often dirty and smelled of animal and human waste. Air pollution was also a fact of life. Even worse, pollution came from the burning of firewood. Cities were also unable to stop water pollution, especially from animal slaughtering. Such tradition of the medieval period brought about deforestation because trees were cut down for daily requirements of the camp dwellers. As a result, the camp sites and surroundings were abandoned.

Activity 7.1



1. Explain why the Christian Kingdom used mobile capitals from 13th to 16th centuries. Browse the internet or refer to other sources.
2. Describe where the capital cities tend to be located during the medieval period and discuss why they appeared there.

To effectively administer over this vast territory, the Christian Kingdom consolidated a feudal system of administration known as the gult system. Under this system, state officials were guaranteed the right to collect tribute from the local peasantry (called the gult right). Gult right was a right given to an official to share the produce of the peasantry. An official given this right by the state was known as bale-gult or gult owner.

Peasants were given to him based on his rank in the state hierarchy. The bale-gult enjoyed several political and economic privileges over the peasants under him. He had the right to collect tributes in kind and use them to maintain himself and his family. He could also use the labour of peasants under him for different purposes. Moreover, he could recruit a local army and command them in wars during the period of local or national crises.

In return for all these privileges, the *bale-gult* was responsible for maintaining law and order in his area. So, this system immensely helped simplify administering the vast Christian empire by dividing it into smaller units. It also enabled the Christian kingdom to maintain a large territorial army, which the kingdom used to bring Muslims and other states under its control.

A *rist* right is a claim to the hereditary ownership of land. *Rist* right was a communal birthright to land. The state provided them with security, whereas the peasants were obliged to pay tribute or *gibber* to the state. *Gult* right was given to a state official in return for his service to the state. So, it was a medieval substitute for salary. It lasted as long as the official remained loyal to the state. It was not hereditary. For an extended period, the *gult* system remained a predominant feature of Ethiopian feudalism.

Like the Zagwe rulers, the kings of the new “*Solomonic*” dynasty maintained the political and cultural traditions of Aksum. They continued to expand Christianity in different directions. The rulers exercised both political and religious powers at the same time. The Church-state relationship became very strong and almost reached its peak during this period. The Christian highland rulers also continued Zagwe’s tradition of foreign relations with Egypt and the Middle East. They also extended these relations to Europe, but closer ties were established with Portugal and Spain from European countries.

Activity 7.2



1. Describe the major features of the Christian kingdom of 13th to 16th centuries.
2. Debate whether the “*Solomonic*” Dynasty was a legend or a historically proven fact.

7.2 The Muslim Principalities

Lesson learning outcomes

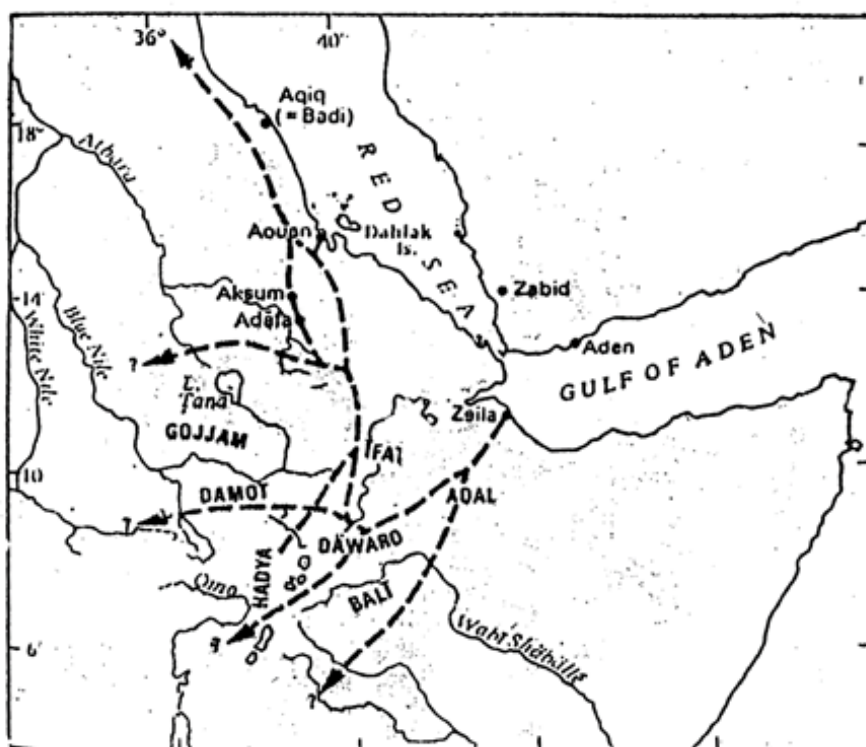
At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- explain the historical relationship between the Muslim states and the Christian kingdom.
- identify the contributions of trade routes in linking the states and peoples in Ethiopia and the Horn.

Brainstorming

- What are the reasons for the rise of the Muslim Sultanate in Ethiopia?

The establishment of several Muslim sultanates along the long-distance trade routes followed the introduction of Islam to Ethiopia and the Horn. Along the Zeila trade route, which served as the most important gateway of Islam to the interior of Ethiopia, a series of Muslim states were formed. Some of these Muslim sultanates of the region were Ifat, Fatagar, Dawaro, Dara, Bali, Hadya, Arbabini, Sharka, and Adal.



Map 7.1 Muslim states and trade routes in the Ethiopian, 14th and 15th centuries
(Source: Church and State)

Towards the mid- 13th century, a Muslim Sultanate of Ifat emerged to the south of Shewa. Its founder was Umar Walasma and hence the Walasma Dynasty. In 1285AD, it destroyed the older Makhzumite dynasty and became the strongest Muslim Sultanate in the region. Moreover, Ifat controlled a vast territory through which the long-distance trade routes of Zeila. Therefore, most of the profitable Zeila trade came under the control of Ifat. Eventually, Ifat became the strongest rival of the Christian highland state.

Since 1270, the Christian highland state also developed a great interest in the Zeila trade and trade routes. Therefore, they need to control the Zeila trade to become the primary source of conflict between the two states. Frequent skirmishes between the two finally resulted in the defeat of Ifat by the Christian forces of Amde Seyon in 1332AD.

There were several other small Muslim Sultanates to the south, east and north of the Ifat. The Sultanates of Fatagar emerged around the middle of the 13th century. The Sultanate was situated south of the present-day Bulga around Shenkora.

Dawaro was located between the middle Awash River and upper Wabe-Shebele. Further, Bali's location was in the rich area south of the Wabe-Shebele. We do not know when Bali emerged as a state. Dara probably existed between Dawaro and Bali states. Whereas, Arbabini was located between Dawaro and Hadiya, about which we know very little. Hadiya was located to the west of the Dawaro and Bali. We do not know when the Sultanate comes to power. However, the Sultanate was mentioned for the first time during the reign of Amde Seyon. Sharaka was located in the present territory of Arsi.

Similarly, there is no tangible evidence of when the Sultanate emerged as a state. However, from the 14th century onwards, it existed as a tributary to the Christian kingdom until the first quarter of the 16th century. Trade was one of the significant factors that resulted in the rise and development of those states. Trade served as a significant source of livelihood. It acted as a major agent that resulted in the formation of Muslim sultanates. However, it remained a major source of conflict between the Christian Kingdoms and Muslim sultanates. After its establishment, Ifat conducted a series of campaigns against its neighbouring sultanates, extending its hegemony over these areas. It also resisted the expansion of the Christian Kingdom.

One branch of the Walasma family realized that Ifat was becoming an easy target to the Christian Kingdom due to its location. So, it moved further to the south-eastern lowlands and established a new and vigorous Muslim Sultanate of Adal in the highland districts around Harar in 1367. One of the strong Muslim sultanates that emerged along trade routes and became a centre of resistance against the Christian Kingdom until the second half of the sixteenth century was the Sultanate of Adal. The first centre of this extended Walasma Dynasty was at a place called Dakar, located in the southeast of Harar. The Walasma family consolidated its power in the new centre and began another phase of military campaigns against the frontiers of the Christian Kingdom. As a result, in 1520, the centre of Adal was changed to the city of Harar. The defeat of Imam Ahmed in 1543 and the Oromo population movement and expansion forced the Sultanate to change its capital to Awsa in 1576/7, which is in the present Afar region.

Activity 7.3



1. Mention the trade routes that linked different states and peoples in Ethiopia and the Horn.

7.3 Relationship Between the Christian Kingdom and the Sultanate of Adal, 1520s-1559

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- criticise how conflicts between the Christian kingdom and Muslim sultanates are presented as if they were religious ones.
- analyse the relationship between the Christian kingdom and the Muslim Sultanates as well as the other States.
- acknowledge the contributions of trade routes in linking the states and peoples in Ethiopia and the Horn.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about the relationship between the Christian kingdom and Muslim sultanates?

The primary source of conflict among peoples and states in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa was the desire to monopolize long-distance trade. Long-distance trade was a source of great wealth. It also served as a link among the peoples of Ethiopia. The desire for territorial expansion was also another source of rivalry among the peoples and states of the Ethiopian region. Therefore, the desire for the monopoly of long-distance trade and territorial expansion proved to be sources for inter-state conflicts.

The revival of long-distance trade caused competition and struggle for control over the trade routes between the Christian kingdoms and the Muslim principalities. This was followed by a series of wars, depicted as wars for religious supremacy in historical accounts of Christian and Muslim clerics. While maladministration and exploitation of the periphery made military mobilization possible, religion provided ideological justification for the wars. However, the interest in controlling trade routes lay at the heart of the conflict that continued for two centuries. The war culminated in the years from 1529

to 1543.

In the beginning, the Zeila trade route was under the control of the Muslim states, mainly Ifat. However, in 1332 Ifat was defeated by the Christian kingdom and lost its independence. Thus monopoly over the route went to Amde Seyon. To regain their independence and control over the Zeila trade route Haqadin II and Sa'adadin retreated to the Harar plateau and set up a new Muslim resistance base in the late fourteenth century.

As a prelude to this conflict among the Muslim Sultanates, internal strife, corruption and anarchy were intensified, and new leadership was urgently called for. Such leadership came from Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi. The origin of Imam Ahmed, also named as “the left-handed” is obscure. He was born at Hubet in between Dire Dawa and Jigjiga and raised by his devout Muslim kin in one of the oases on the route to Zeila.

After Imam Ahmad came to power, the battles were not just fought to control the long-distance trade route going through Zeila but mainly because there was a demographic pressure among the Afar and Somali pastoralists pushing to approach Harar and the Christian Kingdom. It was one of the Imam's remarkable achievements in leadership that he mobilized the pastoral communities of the Afar, the Argoba, the Somali, the Harla, Harari and others to a common cause. He convinced them not to fight amongst them but to unite and expand to the Christian Kingdom. It was to resolve their pressing material needs while at the same time keeping Islamic beliefs and practices from the infiltration of any alien religious doctrine. As a result, he was able to gain an audience as Imam. He consolidated his army to fight the Christian Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Lebne-Dengel was enthroned when he was only eleven. Nevertheless, assisted by the elderly Elleni and due to internal conflicts in Adal, the Christian state initially retained its interest and even advanced into Muslim territory scoring significant victories in the early sixteenth century. As a result, most Muslim Sultanates, including Adal, were tributaries to the Christian Kingdom.

However, shortly, Adal fell to Imam Ahmed's army. By the time Imam Ahmed was strong enough for military confrontation in 1520. He refused to pay tribute, which was followed by a campaign against the Christian Kingdom in 1527. The Imam's army fought fiercely and controlled the territories including Bali, Dawaro, Fatagar, Sidama, Hadiya and Kambata, and the Christian Kingdom was at risk. In 1528, realizing the upcoming threat, Lebne-Dengel mobilized a vast force. However, there was a logistics problem, and the leadership of the army of the Christian Kingdom failed to adopt a common strategy to defeat Adal's force. On the other hand, enthusiastic Imam Ahmed's army managed

logistics problems with its small-sized army. The Imam's army also had an excellent leadership characterized by better mobility and flexible tactics with a unified command.

As a result, the larger and well-equipped Christian army was defeated in one of the most decisive engagements at the battle of Shimbra Kure in 1529, near present-day Mojo. After the victory, the Imam's army made a large-scale control of the territories of the Christian Kingdom, including Shewa, Amhara, Lasta, and moved as far north as Mereb Melash. By 1535, Imam Ahmed's empire stretched from Zeila to Massawa on the coast, including the Ethiopian interior. As he penetrated deep into the Christian Kingdom, Imam Ahmed established a civil, administrative bureaucracy constituted by his men and newly recruited personnel from the Christian territories.

One of the most helpful figures during the war was the wife of the Imam, Bati Del Wanbara. She was the daughter of a Muslim military commander of Adal known as Mahfuz. She accompanied her husband throughout his expeditions. She is said to have marched even in a state of pregnancy during which she was unable to use mules. Indeed, she delivered her two sons during the campaigns of 1531 and 1533 in Ifat and present-day Tigray, respectively. On the part of the Christian Kingdom, the military setback forced the reigning king, Lebne Dengel, to retreat, who finally died in 1540 being fugitive. His son Gelawdewos (r. 1540-1559) ascended to the throne and continued to face the wars with more intensity.

Conflict in the Ethiopian region began to take an international dimension when two foreign powers intervened for their advantage. These powers were Portugal and Ottoman Turkey. Since the twelfth century, Europeans had found the long-distance trade route from Europe to the Far East blocked by the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turkish Empire was already in control of Arabia and Egypt. It also occupied areas in parts of the Red Sea coast and along the eastern coast of the Indian Ocean. Ottoman Turkey was an established power in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean regions. After Vasco da Gama discovered a direct sea route to India for Europe in 1498, the Portuguese began to establish trading stations along the eastern coasts of Africa. They were also interested in getting new ones on the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea coasts.

Having noticed the movement of diplomatic missions between the Christian Kingdoms and Portugal, the Turks gave moral and military support to Imam Ahmed. Imam Ahmed had received Turkish two hundred Muslim musketeers and ten cannons in 1540. In the meantime, based on the earlier request made by Lebne-Dengel in 1535, about four hundred Portuguese soldiers armed with matchlocks arrived in the Christian court in 1541.

The army was led by Christopher da Gama, the youngest son of Vasco da Gama. However, in August 1542, the Christian army was defeated in Ofra, in today's southern Tigray.

In the battle, about two hundred Portuguese and their leader Christopher da Gama were killed, and the leader was beheaded. An important anecdote that should be mentioned here is the role of Lebne-Dengel's wife, Seblewongel. She is said to have participated in the war against Imam Ahmed in 1542. After the success, Imam Ahmed was confident about his army's ability to repulse any future attack by the force of the Christian Kingdom that he sent his allies back home and let his army camp.

On the part of the Christians, preparations were made for the final confrontation under the leadership of Emperor Gelawdewos. The Queen's mother, Seble-Wongel, advised the reigning emperor how to prepare and march for the battle of Woyna-Dega. Due to limited resources, the monarch employed hit and run strategy, which severely affected Imam's army. Imam Ahmed's army could not use its previous quality of easy mobility because they did not know where the attacks came from. On February 25, 1543, while Imam Ahmed was encamped near Lake Tana, he was attacked and killed after fierce fighting at the battle of Woyna-Dega.

Soon after the battle, Gelawdewos was confident that the nobility and his army were loyal to him. As a result, the king restored possession of almost all the northern and central plateau. Muslim communities in the highlands submitted to Gelawdewos. He was tolerant toward them to promote national conciliation and develop a revival of smooth relations with the Muslim world. Besides, Gelawdewos restored many of the pre-1520s territories and tributary regions. The king attempted to reconsolidate the state through campaigns to different areas and camping Chewa (regiment) in border areas. By the early 1550s, Gelawdewos had established a strong Christian Kingdom. However, controlling the Muslim-dominated areas was not an easy task. The growing challenge to the Christian state came from the retreating soldiers of the Sultanate of Adal, the Ottoman Turks, Jesuit interlude, and Oromo that advanced into the centre. Under the leadership of Nur Ibn al-Waazir Mujahid, Adal was ready to wage war against the Christian state for revenge. In 1559, the forces of Emir Nur confronted Gelawdewos and killed the king himself.

Emperor Minas (r.1559-1563), who succeeded Gelawdewos defeated the Turks' force and reclaimed territories on the coast, including Dabarwa. However, in the early 1560s, Yishaq revolted and allied with the Turks against him. Similarly, Sartsa-Dengle (r.1563-1598) had to defend the Turks while fighting with the Agaw, Gumuz, Bete-Israel, Sidama, Ennarya and the Oromo. The emperor then marched to the north, defeated Turkish

forces, and restored the territories. The Muslim-Christian conflict had resulted in several consequences. One of the most obvious was the huge human and material cost.

It is also evident that both the Muslim Sultanate and the Christian Kingdom were weakened, thereby paving the way for easy penetration and success of the Oromo population movement. On the positive side, it should be restated that the war had arguably resulted in cultural interaction among the peoples of Ethiopia. Linguistic and religious interactions accompanied by intermarriages among peoples of the various cultural groups were one of these manifestations in the long history of Ethiopia and the Horn.

Competition for supremacy over the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean between Portugal and the Ottoman Turks gave the prolonged conflict between the Christian Kingdom and the Muslim principalities a global dimension.

Apart from the hostile relations, wider socio-economic and cultural interactions were between the Christian Kingdoms and Muslim principalities. As in earlier periods, trade continued to be the major channel of social integration. Also, it had long been the source of friendship, interaction, interdependence and conflict among the region's states. The long-distance trade and local markets served as core areas of social ties. The difference in ecology between the Muslim sultanates and the Christian Kingdom created economic interdependence, which strengthened socio-economic bondage. Merchants of the two regions often moved from the highlands to the coast and vice versa. The social links were strengthened through such caravan merchants, and religions spread. These interactions and interdependence in economic, social, cultural and political spheres lay the foundation for modern Ethiopia.

Activity 7.4



1. List the positive impacts created as a result of the Christian kingdom and Muslim sultanates interaction. Browse the internet or refer to other sources.
2. Write a paragraph on the title "women and their political participation" in Ethiopia. Ask elders or use the internet to get the necessary information.

7.4 Political and Socio-Economic Conditions of Southern and Central States in Ethiopia

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- explain major characteristics of central and southern states and peoples in the Ethiopian region.
- sketch map of Ethiopia and the Horn to locate the territorial extent of various states of Ethiopia.
- acknowledge the contributions of trade routes in linking the states and peoples in Ethiopia and the Horn.

Brainstorming

- Who were the peoples in the central and southern states of Ethiopia?

This lesson provides an exhaustive detail of societies and states in central and southern parts of the country in the period. Thus, this section explores the history of some of the states (as illustrations) in the period under consideration. Although no one criterion was used to select the states, due regard has been given to balancing the number of states selected from each region mentioned above. The selection of states for discussion also considered the availability of sources and treatment in earlier sections.

In central and southern parts of the region, there were states and peoples with traditional religions. Those were Damot, Kafa, Ennarya, Bizamo, Walaita, Yem, Kambata, the Gurage chiefdoms, and the Agaw kingdom of Gojjam. Damot was probably the earliest of these states. It seems to have existed as early as the Aksumite period over an extensive territory. This territory includes the areas south of the Blue Nile River. Damot might have possibly extended to include the areas of Enareya, Bizamo and Walaita. Among the rulers of this state, the well-known was called Motalami. Motalami was converted to Christianity by Abune Tekle Haymanot in the late thirteenth century AD.

The rulers of the Solomonic dynasty began attempts to bring this state under their control in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Finally, King Amde Seyon annexed it into the Christian state in 1316. Information on the history of Bizamo is scanty. Nevertheless, there are pieces of evidence that it had early connections with Damot. The kingdoms of Enareya, Kafa, and Wolaita also had similar connections with Damot.

The Kingdom of Enareya probably existed in the area north of the Gojeb River. The influence of the highland Christian state into the area seems to have extended through Damot. Enareya became part of the Christian highland Kingdom. Its rulers built several Churches. South of Enareya was the Kingdom of Kafa. Kafa was known at least since the end of the fourteenth century. However, it was not mentioned in any of the Christian documents. It was an independent kingdom from the Christian High land state.

The state of Wolaita might have also been part of the Kingdom of Damot since its connection with Damot was strong. The ruling dynasty of Wolaita was known as Wolaita-Malla. This dynasty had a strong tradition that recognized Motalami as its first king. Wolaita was mentioned as one of the areas paying tribute to the Christian king Yeshaq (r. 1413 - 1430). It might have also continued as part of the Christian empire up to the wars of Ahmad Ibrahim.

Several states existed in central Ethiopian highlands. Among them: Kambata, the Gurage chiefdoms and the Agaw kingdom of Gojjam. These states seem to have existed for an extended period. Nevertheless, they became more important in this period. The Gurage chiefdoms, on the other hand, were concentrated in the area west of Lake Zeway and the highlands of Dawaro. Its local chiefs used the titles of Azmach, Abegaz and Nigus.

The Agaw kingdom of Gojjam was mentioned in the Christian historical documents. The Agaw are ancient people who settled in the northern and central Ethiopian Plateau and are associated with agriculture and animal husbandry development. One of the Agaw inhabiting central Ethiopian highlands is the Gojjam Agaw. They established the Agwa kingdom of Gojjam, located to the south of Lake Tana. They were predominantly Agaw speaking. They exercised strong control over the Lake and its islands. Many Christian kings made successive attempts to bring it under their control. They advanced to the hinterlands using the Lake Tana region as a steppingstone. Finally, Amde Tseyon (r. 1314-1344) incorporated Gojjam into the Christian state in the early fourteenth century.

In the reign of Amde Tsiyon, a Christian preacher at one of the island monasteries at Lake Tana named Abba Za Yohannes marched southwards to the Agaw inhabited villages and attempted to evangelize the people. However, the Agaw community of the island and the surrounding was already converted to Christianity during the Zagwe periods.

However, the same people south of the Lake were predominantly followers of the indigenous religion. Therefore, Abba ZeYohannes's attempt to preach the gospel over Tana areas immediately led to open conflict between Zhan Chuhay and the Christian Kingdom. Zhan Chuhay was then ruler of the Agaw Kingdom that extended as far southeast as

Amadamit Mountain in what is today Quarit. He ordered his army to arrest Abba ZeYohannes, and the monk was detained at Amadamit Mountain. Amde Tsiyon, in his turn, dispatched his forces to the Agaw kingdom. Zhan Chuhay was killed in the campaign, and Abba ZeYohannes was freed. This marked the incorporation of the Gojjam Agaw kingdom into the Christian highland Kingdom.

However, the title of “King of Gojjam” was maintained by local rulers under the Christian state. Since its conquest, Christianity was introduced to Gojjam. Its people were Christianized, and Churches and monasteries were built in the Kingdom.

The economy of peoples and states of southern and central Ethiopia was based on profits from trade and agriculture. The main trade items from these areas were enslaved people, civets, ivory, and other natural products. Enslaved people formed the most important trade item in this period. There was high demand for enslaved people from this region in Arabia, Persia, and India.

Slaves as captives of war were obtained from the south and central regions and the highland Christian territories.

So far, we have seen the existence of several peoples with a state tradition in the Ethiopian region and the Horn. However, other societies were in the same area without highly organised states. Most of them had inhabited the frontier areas of present-day Ethiopia and its neighbours. Moreover, less organised communities inhabited the narrow lowland strip in the west, along the Ethio- Sudanese border. These peoples are mainly speakers of the Nilo- Saharan language family.

The less organised societies mentioned possessing their local administrative system. They were led by their chiefs and local elderly councils based on their villages and clan territories. They were the primary agents of frontier trade and cultural relations between the Ethiopian interior and its neighbours.

Activity 7.5



1. List some of the peoples and states in southern and central Ethiopian region during the period.
2. By sketching a map of Ethiopia and the Horn, locate the territorial extent of southern and central states of Ethiopia.

7.5 Population Movements, Expansion, and Integration in Ethiopia

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- explain the causes and consequences of population movement in Ethiopia and the Horn.
- draw a sketch map of Ethiopia to indicate the main directions of Oromo population's movement.

Brainstorming

- What is population movement?

The lowland in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa is inhabited by Afar, Oromo, Somali, Saho, and other Cushitic language family speakers. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the military conflict between the Christian kingdoms and the Sultanate of Adal was partly responsible for the Argoba, Afar and Somali population movement. In addition, the demographic pressure on the environment gave the background for the population movement. Their territories lay in the region where trade routes passed and were affected by the consequences of the military conflict. Therefore, these people moved back and forth in response to the ongoing military conflict.

Argoba: The Argoba were major agents of Islamic expansion, trade and Muslim state formation in the Horn. For instance, the sultanate of Shewa and Ifat was established by the Makhzumite and Walasma Dynasties, respectively. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the sultanate of Shewa moved further to the east due to the pressure from the

Christian Kingdom. The sultanate of Ifat, where the Argoba were dominant, became the center of Muslim resistance. On the eve of the wars of Imam Ahmed al-Ghazi, the Argoba joined the Afar and the Somali against the Christian Kingdom. The area inhabited by the Argoba was also a target of the expanding Christian Kingdom. It was the major center of the conflict. This was because the major caravan trade routes passed through Argoba territory. As a result, the Christian-Muslim rivalry and the conflicts thereof led to the destruction of sultanates and dispersion of the people. The enduring effect of the conflict can be observed from the fragmented settlement patterns of the people.

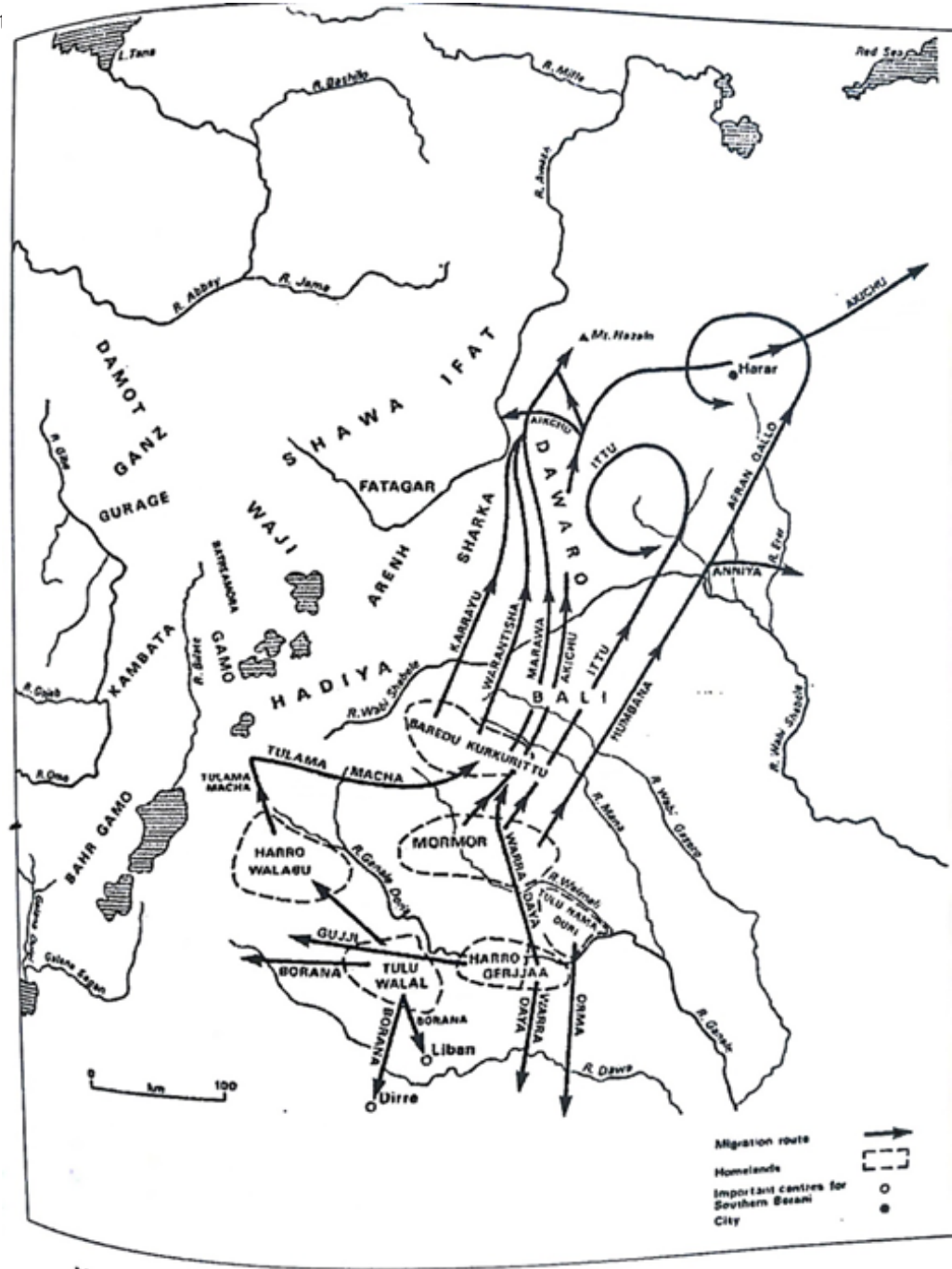
Afar: Due to drought, the Afar moved towards the east until they reached the middle Awash. Trade routes linking the ports in the Horn passed through the Afar's territory. As a result, the region was the centre of competition between the Christian kingdoms and the Muslim sultanates to control the trade routes. Besides being actors in the conflict, the conflict inevitably pressurised the Afar to move in different directions to avoid the risk of disputes. In the sixteenth century, their pastoral economy helped them survive the destructive effects of the wars.

Somali: Their territory lay in the medieval competition to control trade routes. Likewise, before the wars of Imam Ahmed al-Ghazi, there was strong demographic pressure from the Somali. The population movement of the Somali was a strong force behind the military strength of the Imam. However, the population movement of the Somali did not last for long as they returned to their home base following the defeat of Imam Ahmed in 1543.

Oromo: The Oromos are an indigenous Cushitic people of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. When Aksum came into history, it was quite clear that the Oromo also occupied a considerable part of the land in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. According to Oromo oral traditions, the original homeland of the Oromo before the sixteenth century was the south-central part of Ethiopia's highlands. The political and religious centre of the Oromo settlement area was Madda Walabu, located on the Bale- Sidama borderlands.

A combination of natural and manmade factors caused the movement of Oromo population in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These are:

- demographic pressure and the subsequent need for land to accommodate the growing human and livestock population.
- the conflict between the Christian Kingdoms and Muslim Sultanates was the other factor that forced the Oromo to leave the lands they inhabited and move to other areas.

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Map 7.2 The beginning of the 16th century Oromo Population Movement, Mohammed Hassen, 1994

Long before their expansion, the Oromo people were divided into two major confederacies: the Barentu and the Borana confederacies. Each confederacy comprised smaller divisions and clans. The Borana confederacy consisted of Mecha, Tulama, southern Borana and Guji clans. The Barentu was composed of the Karayu, Marawa, Ittu, Humbana, Akachu, Wollo and Arsi clans. The movement and expansion took place from around 1522 to 1618. The movement was set in two major directions in the Ethiopian region. The Barentu moved out in a northeast direction. The Borana followed a north-westerly direction. They also moved out in the directions of Kenya and Somalia outside the Ethiopian region. The movement took place in two stages. The first stage was the period of a small and slow movement in the first half of the sixteenth century. The second stage started around the mid-sixteenth century and lasted up to 1618. This was a large-scale movement carried out using force.

In 1522, when the population movement began, the Oromo were already organised under Borana and Barentu confederacies. The Oromo forces took northern direction and passed through a corridor between Mount Walabu and Lake Abaya. When they reached halfway between Lakes Abaya and Hawassa, they took westward. First, they penetrated across the Bilatte River to the southwest. Then they headed northwards to the lake's region of the Rift Valley.

From 1522 to 1618, the Oromo fought twelve Butta wars. Accordingly,

- the first *Gadaa*, i.e. Melba (1522-1530), fought and defeated the Christian regiment Batra Amora led by Fasil and occupied Bali.
- Gadaa Mudena (1530-8) reached the edge of Awash River.
- The Kilole *Gadaa* (1538-46) controlled Dawaro after defeating Christian regiment Adal Mabraaq
- Bifole (1546-54) advanced to Waj and Erer.
- The Michille (1554-62) scored a victory over Hamalmal's force at Dago, Jan Amora forces, and Adal led by Emir Nur Mujahiddin at Mount Hazalo.
- The Harmufa (1562-70) fought Minas (r.1559-63) at Qacina and Wayyata; occupied Angot, Ganzyi, Sayint etc.
- In 1574, Sartsa Dingil's (r.1563-97) cavalry led by Azzaj Halibo defeated Robale Gadaa (1570-78) at Woyna Daga. However, Robale recovered by defeating Zara'a Yohannis' force.
- The Birmaji (1578-86) controlled Ar'ine in Waj, crossed Jama to Wolaqa and overwhelmed the Daragoti regiment.
- The Mul'ata (1586-94) seized Damot, Bizamo, Gafat, Dambiya and Tigray. In the

early seventeenth century,

- the Dulo (1594-1602),
- Melba (1603-10), and
- Mudena (1610-18) expanded to the West and Northern parts of the Horn of Africa while others like the Warday moved to Kenya and Bur Haqaba and Majertin in Somalia. In addition to the wars between the Christian Kingdoms and Muslim Sultanates, the organisation of the Oromo under the *Gadaa* system played a crucial role in the success of the Oromo population movement.

In their movement into various regions, different Oromo branches established *Gadaa* centres. These centers were:

- Oda Nabee of Tulama (East Shewa),
- Oda Roba of Sikko-Mando (Arsi),
- Oda Bultum of Itu-Humbenna (Hararge),
- Oda Bisil of Mecha (West Shewa) and
- Oda Bulluq of Jawwi Mecha (Horro-Guduru).

Other places, which became *Gadaa* centres, were Gayo of Sabbo-Gona, Me'e Bokko of Guji, Oda Dogi of Ilu, Oda Hulle of Jimma, Oda Garad of Wallo, etc.

Gadaa leaders such as Dawe Gobbo of Borana, Anna Sorra of Guji, Makko-Bili of Mecha, Babbo Koyye of Jimma and others established *Gadaa* centres. They laid down cardinal laws in their respective areas.

However, various Oromo groups kept their relations through the office of *Abba Muda* (the father of anointment) seated at Madda Walabu and formed alliances during times of difficulty. Besides, they obeyed similar culture and law (Seera) by sending their delegates to Madda-Walabu, the central chaffe, until the pan-Oromo assembly was forbidden in 1900 due to the political influence Ethiopian state.

The Oromo population movement and expansion was successful for several reasons:-

- In the first place, the *Gadaa* system provided training and military organisation, which contributed much to the movement's success.
- Besides, almost all members of society participated in wars.

So, it was a large-scale expansion so difficult to stop. The Oromo made wide and good use of the horse at the time of the expansion. One important Oromo institution which seems to have facilitated the expansion was adaptation. Moreover, the movement took place when the Sultanate of Adal- was exhausted and weakened due to the wars of the first half of the sixteenth century.

The Oromo population movement and expansion brought about fundamental changes in the Ethiopian region. Ethnic and cultural intermixing took place between the Oromo and other peoples of the region. The expanding Oromo destroyed the old states of the kingdoms of Damot, Bizamo and Ennarya. The peoples of Damot and Gafat were either assimilated with the Oromo or forced to move out from the south to the north and intermingle with the Christian community of the area. The Christian kingdom was greatly disturbed by the Oromo population movement. The territorial and financial strengths of the kingdom were highly weakened. It was forced to shift its political centre from Shewa in the south to the Lake Tana area north and Gondar.

The Sultanate of Adal was reduced to the walled town of Harar as the result of the Oromo expansion. This was mainly because after the death of Iman Ahmed, the Muslims of Adal was reorganised under Emir Nur Mujahid. The Emir launched an offensive war against the Christian kingdom. In 1559 Nur Mujahid defeated and killed Gelawdewos in the Awash valley. Nevertheless, he could not pursue his victory over the Christian forces because the Oromo forces had already reached the Harar area at the time.

So, he returned to Adal to defend it from falling to the Oromo. However, since most of Harar was occupied by the Oromo, he just built a wall around the town of Harar, which is known as the Jegol Gimb. This led to the end of an age-old conflict between Adal and the Christian kingdom. Following their movement and expansion, the Oromo became largely sedentary agriculturists. In time, the great majority of them also adopted Christianity and Islam. Still, later on, they were able to form kingdoms of their own in the Ethiopian region.

Activity 7.6



1. Discuss briefly the consequences of the Oromo population movement.

7.6 Gadaa System of the Oromo

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- describe the Oromo *Gadaa* system.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about the *Gadaa* System?

The *Gadaa* system was based on age- grades. It was an egalitarian system in which an assembly or a chaffe of the ruling *Gadaa* class provided leadership for the Oromo nation. It was developed from knowledge gained by community experience over generations. The system regulates the community's political, economic, social, and religious activities dealing with conflict resolution (arara), reparation (Guma), and protecting women's rights. It serves as a mechanism for enforcing moral conduct, building social cohesion, and expressing forms of community culture. Moreover, the *Gadaa* system was an institution through which the Oromo socially organised themselves, administered their affairs, defended their territories, maintained law order, and managed their economies. The Oromo had practiced the *Gadaa* system long before the sixteenth-century movement of the Oromo.

The *Gadaa* system constituted elements of democracy such as periodic succession and power-sharing to prevent a one-man rule. Other principles of the system included representation of all lineages, clans and confederacies.

The *Gadaa* system organised the Oromo society into age grades and generation sets delineating members' social, political, and economic responsibilities. In the system, ten age grades and five classes operated in parallel. The system provided a socio-political framework that institutionalised relationships between seniors and juniors and egalitarian relations among grade members. The system helped the members of age-sets to develop a consistent and stable sense of self and others. Sons joined the first grade as members of *Gadaa* class (generation class or set) forty years after their fathers and were initiated into the next higher grade every eight years. In the system, eight years represented one *Gadaa* period, five *Gadaa* periods or 40 years represented one generation, and nine generations represented an era. The political philosophy of *Gadaa* is based on three main values: terms of eight years, balanced opposition between parties, and power-sharing between higher and lower levels. In the *Gadaa* system, generation, age, sex, and class were the guiding criteria in labour division and the sharing of responsibilities.

Gadaa system was interrupted and revitalised during various eras because of various internal and external factors. For instance, the Borana-Barentu *Gadaa* was instituted after an interruption for nearly two generations. It was revived in 1450 at Madda Walabu,

which became the central Chaffe (assembly) and seat of the senior Qallu until 1900.

Gumi-Gayo (Assembly of the representatives): this is the assembly of the representatives of the entire society that mainly serve as the law-making body. In theory, any individual had a right to attend and participate in the deliberation and would bring any matter to the attention of the gumi-gayo. Each class send a delegation of five people to sit at the legislative body called the Caffee. The new law to be issued and the law to be repealed or amended were introduced to the Caffee by elders for discussion.

The Oromo common version of age grades and their roles associated with them is discussed as follows: Dabale (birth-8 years) and Game (9-16 years) are the grades of socialization; Folle (17-24 years) military training, agriculture etc.; Qondala (25-32 years) military service; Raba-Dori (33-40 years) candidates for political power; *Gadaa* (41-48 years) leaders of *Gadaa* government; Yuba (49 to 80 years) senior advisors, educators and ritual leaders.

The *Gadaa* assumed power for eight years. In the *Gadaa* system, there was peaceful transfer of political power from one *Gadaa* class to the other every eight years. The head of the government was known as *Abba-Gadaa*, literally “father of the period”, who was assisted by several elected representatives from among the generation set. These included *Abba Bokku* (father of scepter), *Abba Chaffe* (head of the assembly), *Abba-Dula* (war leader), *Abba Sera* (father of law), *Abba Alanga* (judge), *Abba Sa'a* (father of treasury) and other councillors.

The *Abba Gadaa* or *Abba Boku* served as the spokesman of the reigning set. However, he did not have absolute power. The supreme authority rested on the assembly (chaffe), which consisted of all members of the ruling *Gadaa* class or those in the sixth *Gadaa* grade (41 – 48 years).

Acitivitiy 7.7



1. Ask elders or browse the internet and write a paragraph describing the major features and values of the Oromo *Gadaa* system.

The *Gadaa* assembly takes place under a sycamore tree (Odaa), symbolically representing its emphasis on dialogue and consensus.



Figure 7.1 *Abba Gadaa* of Oromo Sitting under Odaa (Left) and the Chaffe (Right)

In the *Gadaa* system, the senior Qallu (*Abba Muda*) played indispensable roles in power transfer and legitimizing the ruling *Gadaa* class. Women maintained their rights by the *Singe* institution, which helped them to form sisterhood and solidarity. Women from childhood to old age, i.e., *guduru* (pre-pubescent), *qarre* (adolescent, ready for marriage), *kalale* (wives of *Luba* and *Yuba*) and *cifire* (wives of *Gadaamojji*/above 80 years), were believed to have sacred power. They are involved in power transfer, conflict resolution, thanksgiving, and others. The *kalale* were also privileged to support and advise the ruling class.

The *Gadaa* system functioned by the cyclical power transfer from one *Gadaa* class to the next every eight years. With some minor differences in nomenclature in different parts of Oromo territories, the five *Gadaa* classes (generation sets) are listed below:

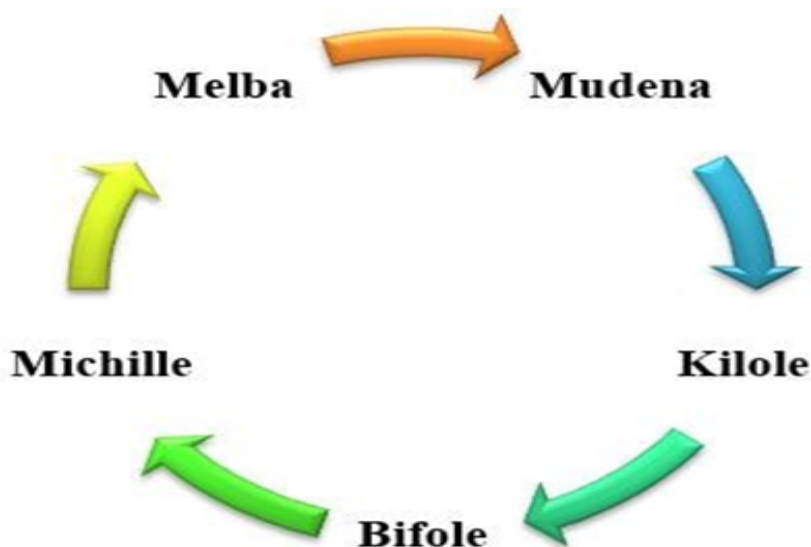


Chart 7.1 The Five *Gadaa* Classes

The *Gadaa* system has the principles of check and balance (through a regular succession of every eight years), division of power (among executive, legislative, and judicial branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power-sharing among administrative organs. In addition, it embodies the following principles:

- the rule of laws that stand above all, the principle of accountability,
- the role of confession and impeachment (*buqqisu*),
- the subordination of warriors to deliberative assemblies,
- a period of testing: time gap between elections and investiture,
- the principle of check and balanced.

Activity 7.8



1. List the roles of *Abba Gadaa*.

7.7 *Moggasa* and *Guddifacha*

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- point out the main features and practice of the *Moggasa* and *Guddifacha* System of the Oromo.
- explain the consequences of the *Moggasa* and *Guddifacha* System of the Oromo.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about *Moggasa* and *Guddifacha*?

The Oromo integrated non-Oromo people through two adoption mechanisms. One form of adoption was *Guddifacha*, a form of parent adopting a child. In this system, the child enjoyed equal rights and privileges with a biological child. The second form of adoption is known as *Moggasa*. *Moggasa* was a system of adopting non-Oromos commonly known as Oromsu.

Moreover, *Moggasa* was the practice of incorporating individuals or groups into a clan through an oath of allegiance. The incorporated person enjoys all the rights and obligations that such membership entailed. The *Abba Gadaa* undertook *Moggasa* on

behalf of the clan. The adopted community or individual shares everything equally with the Oromos and gains protection and material benefits.

The *Moggasa* and *Guddifacha* culture allowed other peoples to mix with the Oromos and live together in peace. So, in their expansion, the Oromo adopted much of the population they came across and used them in their wars with the next group. The process significantly contributed to the social cohesions, national integration, and the revival of long-distance trade. The interactions also resulted in an exchange of socio-cultural values and institutions.

Several people in the neighbourhood of the Oromo adopted the *Gadaa* system and the Oromo language. Likewise, the Oromo adopted the cultures and traditions of the people with whom they came into contact. A case in point is the adoption of monarchical systems and the integration of the Oromo to the Christian and Muslim states. On a larger scale, the Oromo contact with diverse peoples in the sixteenth century brought far-reaching integrations among peoples across ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Activity 7.9



1. Identify the characteristic features of *Moggasa* and *Guddifacha*.

7.8 Egalitarian System of Governance

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- explain an egalitarian democracy in Ethiopia among Sidama, Gedeo, Konso and Burji.
- draw a sketch map of Ethiopia and show the site of egalitarian democracies in Ethiopia.

Brainstorming

- What is an egalitarian democracy?

Sidama

The Sidama had an indigenous system of governance led by the *Mote* (king). The *Mote* exercised political and administrative authority in consultation with the council of elders called *Songo*. *Songo* members would raise any agenda for discussion within the council and submit their decisions to the *Mote* for approval. Although there was no written constitution, the rules were known by the heart through generations and practiced accordingly.



Figure 7.2 The Sidama Luwa system and their assembly,
(source: static.dw.com)

The *Woma* was the cultural and ritual leader in Sidama society. The criteria for his election were his ability as a peacemaker, bodily perfection, expressive ability, wisdom, and caution. The *Woma* could not participate in war or cattle raiding as he was considered a man of peace. In addition, the *Woma* handled cultural matters such as offering sacrifices to the spirits. He also performed other rituals such as circumcision and marriage. The Sidama were grouped into two major clans called Bushe and Maldea. These are, in turn, subdivided into different sub-clans.

Seniority was closely related to the age cycles of *luwa*. The *luwa* structure had many commonalities with the Oromo Gadaa system and played a fundamental role in initiation rites and maintaining authority roles. There are two terms used to refer to the elderly, *gercho* and *cimessiccho*. The first term refers to a person's age- a person with grey hair. The other term refers to an elder who has undergone the rite of passage, the initiation into the status of elderhood. The timing of this rite is a function of the *luwa* age-grade system. The *luwa* identity had repeatedly been expressed as a basic traditional Sidama value.

The age-grade had an 8-year cycle, and each of the five luwa generations had its name: Fulasa, Wawasa, Darara, Hirbora and Mogisa.

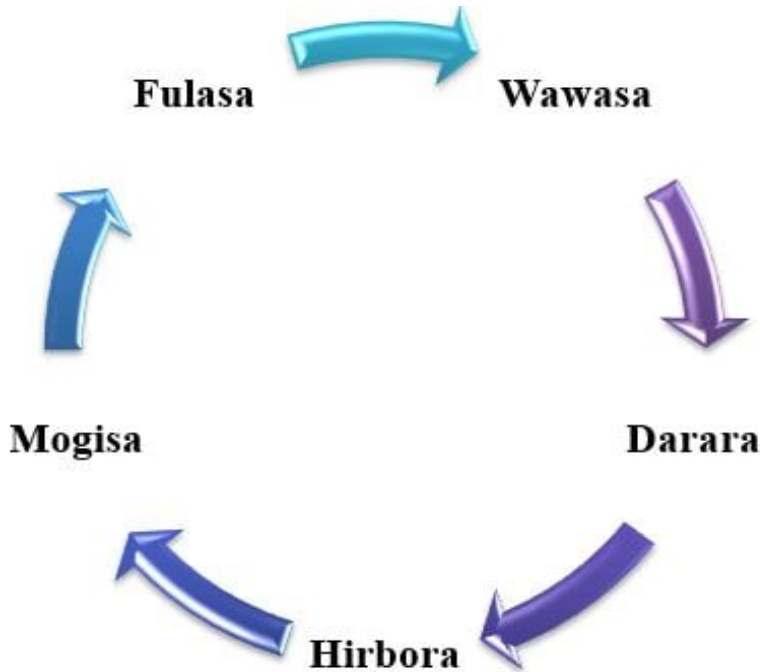


Chart 7.2 The Five Luwa Classes of the Sidama

Boys are assigned to one of these age groups, primarily by the age cycle each was born. Men of the same luwa, age-cycle group, have powerful bonding. Each age group selects their Gadaanna, leader, who will represent their generation throughout eight years. The passage into elderhood, which gives a man the status of cimessima, takes place during the rites of his generation, the luwa to which he belongs. A son cannot undergo the initiation ritual to enter the cimessima, which includes circumcision berchima, before his father. He has to wait for the successive luwa to be initiated. According to the halal, an elder is expected to live according to the halale, the actual concept. Traditionally, this is a moral standard reflecting the truth by avoiding any form of crime, such as stealing, perjury, corruption, injustice, and strict adherence to the highest standards of probity, integrity, honesty, and truthfulness. In this respect, they are the repository of the tribal heritage, passed on from generation to generation.

The daily lives have traditionally been organised around a social network within the olla, village or mine manni, the family unit. The murricha (elder) has a leadership role at the village level. In general, the gerontocracy has traditionally dominated the communal network on all levels.

The Sidama people comprise some subtribes, gosa, which are ruled independently by their king, actually a supreme judge, and the woma. The woma of the different subtribes within the Sidama make up the woma-songo, the assembly of subtribal kings or judges. It is the highest traditional authority. In addition, there are differentiated lower songo assemblies, which have different areas of authority and responsibility. However, gender and age are limitations to participation. Only the elders and only the men have a say in these assemblies. The sera are defined as the ruling truth, referred to as halale. Halale proclaimed by the elders is hard to challenge and is often a base for “forced” consensus. As opposed to individualism, decision making in the assemblies is always with one voice, and the consensus is valued over the open confrontation of opposing ideas.

The gare-songo is the next level. This is the council of the mote, who are the kings of the gare, the maximal lineage segment (a sub-division of the subtribe). The mote is partly an inherited position, but there may be a choice between the sons of the former mote. The gare-songo deals with matters closer to daily life than the woma-songo. It may, for example, be involved in making a disobedient son obedient to his father. It also deals with matters of loans and serves as a local court, and can impose penalties. People who do not pay their penalties in cash, in-kind, or community service obligations may be excommunicated from the community.

Within the smaller agnatic units such as at the haracha level, there are also songo (assemblies), headed by the *muriccha*. The haracha comprises a cluster of agnatic units, olla, villages, sharing sera. There is a songo at the olla level, and the head of that assembly is also called a *muriccha*. At both levels, the haracha and the olla, the *murriccha* are primarily in charge of administering the services related to deaths and funerals. However, because of the high authority associated with these indispensable ceremonies in the community, the *murriccha* may also be called upon to become involved in other significant community activities. The principle of seniority and communal relationship is still strong at the neighbourhood and household level. Observations confirm that the elders still have a powerful influence on the daily life of ordinary people. In particular, the *murriccha* was referred to as an authority. Gender roles are traditionally defined.

The *sera* in the Sidama community have traditionally ruled a web of relations and interrelations. *Sera* is a set of local cultural norms or codes regulating the communal social structure and interaction. Traditionally, *sera* are almost an ethical and moral codex. It may be seen as unwritten law, but it constitutes at the same time the morality and the conscience of the individual and the community. *Sera* also provides social security to the members. It provides the community with a procedure of decision making through

consensus.

It obliges the individual to conform to the majority, to seek harmony and consensus rather than an individual opinion and personalised justice. The *sera* mainly relate to domestic, communal life. It traditionally works at the basis of commonality and consent rather than individualism. The *sera* law or rule is advanced regarding the social communal life, particularly on the domestic level.

Activity 7.10



Case Study

The Sidama tradition refers to a legendary Queen (Motite – in Sidama language) called Fura. During the reign of Fura, the status of males was degraded below the status of the female. Fura was said to have cruel, mistrusted men and asked them to carry out various orders that were difficult or degrading to execute. For example, she asked them to bring an animal that had not been mounted by anyone previously. She also ordered men to build a house on air between the earth and the sky. Furthermore, Queen Fura ordered the killing of all elderly males because

1. What can you learn from this story about women and politics? Are there similar traditions in your locality? Asking local elders, write a paragraph about women and politics.

Gedeo

Gedeos live in the highlands found to the east of Lake Abaya. They are bordered north by the Sidama and the Guji on the remaining sides. Tradition indicates that they are descendants of Derasso. The tradition also suggests that there was a close relationship between Derasso and the ancestors of neighbouring Oromo groups like the Guji and Borana. The traditions account for the similarities in the social organisation of these groups.

The area around Haro Walabu, a lake found near Dilla town, is believed to be the homeland of the Gedeo. Other traditions indicate that before moving to Haro Walabu, the ancestors of the Gedeo lived at a place called Harsu and its surroundings. The movement to Haro Walabu is believed to have taken place before the 16th century.

The Gedeo comprised seven clans. The Gedeo traditional governance system is known as *ballee*. It is based on an age system and has similarities with the *Gadaa* system of the neighbouring Gujji Oromo. The leaders of the *ballee* were elected by the general council called *Yaa* from the ruling age group. The *yaa* council was the supreme authority among the Gedeo. All *ballee* officials were elected by the *yaa*. The most important of these officials was the *Abba Gadaa*, who would give political, social and ritual leadership to the whole Gedeo. Each of the three Gedeo territorial units was administered by a *roga*. These were responsible for the *Abba Gadaa*.

Konso

Konsos live in a largely mountainous region found to the east of the Rift valley in southwestern Ethiopia. They are bordered in the south by the Sagan River, north by the Gumayde plains, east by the Amaro Mountains, and east by the Woito River. They speak an East Highland Cushitic language spoken by their neighbours, the Burji, Dirashe and Gawada. Konso traditions have close cultural relations with some of these neighbours. For example, they used to live in a region called Liban together with the Borana Oromo, Burji and Dirashe before they departed and settled in their present locations.

Konso economy is dependent on mixed agriculture. They produce grains, the most important of which is sorghum and millet. The region receives low and erratic rainfall, which is ideal for the crops. They also cultivate a tree crop locally called *shelgeda*. It is like moringa whose leaves are consumed as cabbage.

Konsos have also developed an intensive agriculture system through time. They have terraced their hillsides with stones. This practice has made Konso agriculture sustainable. Political organisation among the Konso was non-centralised. Thus, power was shared among different individuals and groups. One of these individuals was the *poqalla* who was a priest. He was responsible for the clan's well-being and mediated in conflicts. Other groups involved in the administration were the members of the generation set called *tella* and the council of elders.

Until the late nineteenth century, the Konso people lived in walled villages (*paletas*). There was no central authority who acted as a sovereign power over the three regions. Instead, each village was ruled by a council of elders called *hayyota*, who were selected through the direct participation of male members of the village. Membership to the council was not hereditary but rotated every eighteen years. At the core of the socio-political organisation of the Konso appear to be the clan or lineage group and generation set, *Tselta*. The Konso were divided into nine exogamous clans:

Toqmaleta, Elayta, Saudata, Pasanta, Kertita, Ishalayta, Mahaleta, Tikisayta and Argamyta. The Tseltahada fixed cycle of years starting from birth. However, they varied across villages-eighteen in Karat, nine in Takati and five in Turo. The primary function of the generation set was informing the responsibilities expected of each age group.

Burji

The Burji clans belong to one of two moieties named Dashcha and Jiremalecha. Dashcha includes Goda, Banbal, Dedebara, Yab, Qedado, Umma, Hirola, etc. At the same time, Jire Malecha comprises Gammaye, Tamay, Wotesh, Mangodo, Anabura, Karamana and others.

Traditional Burji administration had an elective system known as basha (shumet). Under the basha system, appointments took place in different ceremonies in which official titles were conferred. They included officials titled woma in the womis ceremony, kings in royal coronations, dayna officials in daynoma ceremonies and masha in other appointment ceremonies. The Burji possessed two types of woma, each with appropriate womiso or royal coronation ceremonies. One was a hereditary spiritual woma, while the other was a popular elective political elite or woma. The latter came to power through a plebiscite based on personal ability and integrity. The hereditary spiritual woma was known as gan. There were two types: saganaka gan and banbalinka gan. The former served as a rainmaker while the latter was believed to possess powers to control and prevent wars, crop pests and disease.

The eldest son succeeded his deceased woma's father. The body of the deceased woma was taken out of his home via a hole pierced through the walls on the rear side of the house. The deceased's wrist bracelet was removed and transferred to the successor. The latter started his reign by performing all appropriate public duties. The woma was appointed as a king based upon the number of his supporters, degree of wealth oratory and fulfilment of social criteria contained in the traditional system of appointments of the basha principle.

Activity 7.11



1. Mention at least one ethnic group that practices an egalitarian democracy.

Unit Summary

The Zagwe kingdom maintained the basic features of the Aksumite kingdom. At this period, the history of peoples and states in the various parts of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa shows many interactions with one another. Moreover, the Zagwe rule was best known for its rock-hewn Churches that became numbered among the famous world heritages. The so-called 'Solomonic dynasty' replaced the Zagwe rule in 1270. This dynasty used the legend of Queen Sheba's union with King Solomon of Israel. The result of their union was Menelik I, whom they consider as the 'first Solomonic King'.

However, this legend has only helped to legitimize state power for successive generations until 1974. The result was the Christian highland state's dominance over the peoples and other states of the Ethiopian region and the Horn of Africa between 1270 and 1529.

There were a series of conflicts between the Christian, Muslim and other states. The result shows how the various peoples and states of the whole region of Ethiopia and the Horn were highly interrelated with each other in many ways. The movements of people from one place to another have played essential roles in shaping the history of Ethiopia and the Horn. As far back sources tell, population movements occurred in the Horn for various reasons, in varied scales and followed different directions. People move from place to place due to pull and push factors, summarised as natural and social.

Specifically, people move out from their habitats in search of resources and a better living environment. In Ethiopia and the Horn, the causes of the movements could be attributed to the region's long socio-political conditions involving military conflicts, drought and demographic factors.

Population movements of the medieval period had extensive effects, including integrating peoples across ethnic and religious lines. Major outcomes of population movements during the period under consideration include religious, ethnic and linguistic interactions and intermingling of peoples. Specifically, this has resulted in the intermarriage of peoples, change of abode, original culture and evolution of new identities.

Unit Review Questionns



Part I: Write true if the statement is correct and write false if the statement is in correct.

1. The name “*Solomonic*” is placed in quotation marks because the claim of descent was from King Solomon of Israel is legendary.
2. The Zagwe rule was best known for its Steles.
3. The Zagwe kingdom maintained the basic features of the Aksumite kingdom.
4. Traditional Burji administration had an elective system known as *Luwa*.
5. The Sidama had an indigenous system of governance led by the *Mote* (king).
6. Political organisation among the Konso society was highly centralized.
7. The Gedeo traditional governance system is known as *ballee*.

Part II: Match major achievements of world civilisation under column "A" with peoples or areas under column "B"

A

1. Abba-Dula
2. Abba Bokku
3. Abba Sa'a
4. Abba Sera
5. Abba Alanga
6. Abba Chaffe

B

- A. head of the assembly
- B. Father of law
- C. War leader
- D. Father of treasury
- E. Father of scepter
- F. Judge
- G. Qallu
- H. Chaffe

Part II: Choose the correct answer from the given alternatives.

1. The Muslim state which reorganised the Muslim resistance against the Christian kingdom was:
 - A. Ifat
 - B. Shewa
 - C. Adal
 - D. Bali
2. At which battle did Imam Ahmed score a decisive victory over the Christian forces?
 - A. Lake Tana
 - B. Woina Dega
 - C. Wofla
 - D. Shimbira Kure

3. The Oromo social, political and military organisation is:
 - A. Qallu institution
 - B. Gadaa system
 - C. Monarchy
 - D. Gumi Gayo
4. Which of the following is true under the Gadaa system?
 - A. Qallu institution
 - B. Gadaa system
 - C. Monarchy
 - D. Gumi Gayo
5. Which of the following is true under the Gadaa system?
 - A. The transfer of political power was hereditary.
 - B. The Abba Dulas ruled over their people.
 - C. The Abba Bokus exercised absolute power.
 - D. The council of elders led the Oromo nation.
6. The Qallus:
 - A. provided political leadership.
 - B. were intermediaries between the Oromo people and Waqa.
 - C. were advisors of the abba Gadaa.
 - D. were leaders of the fighting age-group.
7. Which of the following is not the result of Oromo population movement and expansion?
 - A. It weakened the christian state.
 - B. It led to the interaction of different people with the oromos.
 - C. It reduced the power of muslim states.
 - D. None of the above