

JOURNAL  
OF  
AFROASIATIC  
LANGUAGES,  
HISTORY AND  
CULTURE  
(JAAL)



VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2

2021

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Journal of Afroasiatic Languages, History, and Culture (JAAL). Volume 10, Number 2, 2021

ISSN 0894-9824

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Until volume VII, the *Journal of Afroasiatic Languages, History and Culture* was known as the *Journal of Afroasiatic Languages*, JAAL. It was established in 1988 by well-known Afroasiatic scholars with Prof. Robert Hetzron being its editor-in-chief.

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**We dedicate this volume of JAAL  
with gratitude to Mr. Sotirius  
Stathopoulos , a good friend and  
supporter of the work of the  
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## **POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SPECTACLE OF DESSIE, 1917–1991**

Assefa Balcha

### **ABSTRACT**

*Based on available written and local oral sources, this article revisits the political and socio-economic scene of the city of Dessie, South Wollo, Ethiopia, after the Battle of Segelle. The main objective of this historical study is thus to re-examine and explain how the unlimited intervention of the central government in the immediate after years and in the ensuing decades following the defeat in 1917 of Negus Mikael at Segelle deprived Dessie of what it should have managed to obtain and to develop itself as one of the potentially thriving urban centers in Ethiopia. The ill-fated Segelle debacle, which was a turning point in the history of Wollo's short-lived political ascendancy, had had far-reaching economic and political consequences throughout the Imperial period. The study focuses particularly on how the political leadership at the national and provincial levels thwarted, if not totally blocked, the development of the town. With the exception of the Italian interlude and the unrelenting effort of the business community, the development of Dessie with its geo-political and economic advantages was not meaningfully enhanced even after the replacement in 1974 of the Imperial regime by the military junta or the Derg that ruled the country up to the start of the last decade of the twentieth century.*

**Keywords:** Asfa Wossen, Derg, Dessie, Haile Selassie, Imru, Italians, Iyassu, Ras Mikael, Segelle, Shewa, Wollo

"You take delight not in a city's seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of yours." — Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

## INTRODUCTION

The Dessie area, previously known as 'Lakomelza', is one of the earliest inhabited regions in Ethiopia. In the medieval period and long before the name 'Wollo' emerged, the region was part of a vast geographic area called 'Bête Amhara'. Though difficult to ascertain, an older settlement at a locality called 'Wasal', first mentioned in an early sixteenth-century Italian itinerary and now probably "lost in the debris of time," may also have been the precursor of Dessie.

Emperor Tewodros II (1855–1868) repeatedly marched to Wollo to bring the region under his full control. During one of his expeditions, Tewodros chose the Jemie Hill, later renamed 'Ayteyefe', as his temporary camp. After the death of Emperor Tewodros in 1868, King Menelik of Shewa, seeking to incorporate Wollo into his realm, campaigned against the two local power contenders: Amede Liben (Abba Watew) and Mohammed Ali (the later Ras Mikael, son of Imam Ali Abba Bula and Woyzero Getie of Wore Himano). During his military expedition, Menelik also sojourned to the Jemie Hill; the same strategic spot where Tewodros had camped earlier. After securing the submission of the two prominent Wollo lords, Menelik reaffirmed the governorship of Mohammed Ali over the territories stretching from the Wayat to Bashilo rivers, constituting roughly the present Wadla Delanta, Wore Himano, Borena and Wore Ilu, while Amedie Liben was allowed to retain and govern Tehuledere, a generic name that constituted Dessie and its surroundings. Abba Watew, until his death in 1882, had his administrative headquarters at Azwa Hill (Azwa Gedel), the other highest point that shielded Dessie on the eastern side.

Emperor Yohannes IV (r. 1872–1889) saw the growing power of King Menelik in Wollo as a direct threat to his authority. Seeking to bring the two major regional rulers on his side and to resolve the doctrinal disputes among church leaders, Yohannes came to Wollo in 1878 and camped at Boru Meda, about six miles from the center

of Dessie. Yohannes also baptized Amede Liben and Mohammed Ali at the same place where the religious council took place. After their conversion to Christianity, the two local lords became Dajjazmach Haile Mariam Liben and Ras Mikael Ali respectively. For Yohannes, the conversion of these two powerful lords was a crucial pacifying measure. Since Wollo was religiously volatile and strategically important, Ethiopian rulers traversing from north to south or vice versa often came to Wollo and used Dessie as a temporary resting place.

Soon after he had mounted the throne following the death of Yohannes IV in Matemma in 1889, Emperor Menelik led his army north to deal with those who had not yet acknowledged his hegemony. While Emperor Menelik proceeded to Tigray, Empress Taytu, accompanying her spouse to Dessie, stayed at the top of Jemmie Hill (Ayteyefe). After returning from Tigray, Menelik joined Taytu and spent some time in Dessie. In the meantime, Negus Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam came to Dessie to pay homage to the Emperor and stayed there for days (Oral informants).

### NAMING OF DESSIE AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS

In 1882, Ras Mikael (c. 1850–1918)<sup>1</sup> annexing the territories of his contender Abba Watew, who died around the same time, emerged as the sole governor of Wollo. On the advice of Menelik, as some sources indicate, Ras Mikael left Tenta (Wore Himano), his long-time power base, in favor of Kuru Amba (at Hara Wobelo) around the Gerado area. After some time, Ras Mikael came to Dessie and constructed his permanent residence at the northern tip of Jemmie Hill, a spot where his royal enclosure or Gebbi eventually emerged. Ras Mikael's settlement at Jemmie, which amounted to the actual foundation of Dessie, in 1886, was a fateful decision. In the early 1900s, Ras Mikael had his palace buildings built, as well as a large banqueting hall that was passed down in history as 'Ayteyefe

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1 Based on an engraved slot pinned on the wall of Dessie Medhane Alem Church, Mikael was born on Tir 27, the same day his son Iyassu was later born.

Addarash' (lit. trans. "A Hall of No Segregation"). Even after the death of Negus Mikael (aged 68 years) in September 1918 at Holeta (being a prisoner for about three years at Dandi in Zeway Island and in Holeta),<sup>2</sup> the hall and the hill continued to bear the same name. In spite of the unfortunate ending of Mikael's reign, the name 'Ayteyefe', epitomizing the generosity and reputation of its founder, has been retained to this day (Balcha 1984). When we see the aesthetic superiority of the banqueting hall and all the other contemporary buildings at Ayteyefe, we may safely argue that Negus Mikael was the one who pioneered the introduction of modern-type buildings in Dessie; and he had done this in a period where the predominant construction technology was a thatched-roofed wooden structure and long before the widespread use of the Italian-style architectures during the five-year Fascist occupation of Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup>

Ras Mikael's selection of Ayteyefe as a seat of his regional government in Dessie was due largely to its strategic location. His settlement at Ayteyefe enabled Ras Mikael to defend himself and to control the movement of his adversaries from a distance. More importantly, the Tossa mountain range to the west and the massifs of Azwa Gedel and Doro Mezleya to the east made Dessie a naturally defended town. In addition, the five main gateways: Titaber and Qurqurber to Tigray; Kutaber to Begemider; Girarambaber to the southeast; and Bilen-Geradober to Shewa and Gojjam provided the town with an enormous strategic advantage. Dessie's fortified location had greatly reduced Mikael's security anxiety. The well-thought-out calculated move from Tenta, his previous administrative center, to Dessie had also greatly assisted

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2 The mortal remains of Negus Mikael were later exhumed from Wajit Medhane Alem Church in Holeta, transported to Wore Himano (his birthplace and initial power base) and reburied in the precinct of Tanta Mikael, a church of his own making, in February 1929.

3 Oral informants.

Ras Mikael in extending his rule to Awssa, the eastern lowlands of Afar (Oral informants).<sup>4</sup>

Besides the availability in abundance of firewood and food crops within a radius of few miles, as well as adequate water sources (constituting numerous springs and a perennial river, Borkena, which flows from its source near Boru to the East traversing the northern part of Dessie), there was an economic reason that persuaded Ras Mikael to choose Dessie as his regional administrative capital. Even if Dessie by then was not a modern urban center, the two vital trade routes passed through it. The route stretching from Addis Ababa to Massawa, one of the major trade routes that crisscrossed the country, passed through Wore Ilu, Borumeda, Samale, Magala, Adwa, Asmara and, finally, reached Massawa. The other major trade route destined to reach Tajura also passed through Dessie. In effect, Dessie seemed to have fulfilled what Ras Mikael was looking for. The need to control the trade routes and trade centers enabled him to collect considerable revenue from the “toll gates” that he erected at various points. If seen from the late nineteenth-century economic and political landscape, Mikael’s resolve to come to Dessie demonstrated his personal wisdom and farsightedness (Dessie Municipality 10; Oral informants).<sup>5</sup>

Local oral tradition has it that the origin of the name ‘Dessie’ goes back to the early days of Emperor Tewodros II, who launched several military campaigns to subdue Wollo during his reign (1855–1868). During one of these campaigns, he is said to have camped by pitching his tent at Qetema, a small locality between Boru and Dessie. From Qetema the Emperor moved to the Dessie area and chose Ayteyefe as his camping site. In another account, the name ‘Dessie’ is related to Emperor Yohannes. During his reign, Emperor

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4 Oral informants.

5 Dessie served as a major supply center when the Ethiopian army marched to Adwa. It also entertained the victorious army of Menelik while returning from Adwa. See Dessie Municipality, “Establishment of Dessie Town,” Mimeograph, N.D. P. 10. Oral informants.

Yohannes IV (1872–1889) came to Dessie repeatedly. On one of his visits of 1883, he spent some time on the high grounds of Dessie. Being delighted by what he saw, Yohannes was said to have named the area ‘My joy’, an approximate meaning for ‘Dessie’ (Oral informants).<sup>6</sup>

Further to how the name ‘Dessie’ originated, oral accounts have reiterated its association with Tewodros II. The first version is that Emperor Tewodros, observing the satisfaction of his men with the selection of the site and its naturally beautiful scenery, named the whole area ‘Delightful’. The second version is associated with the name of the Emperor’s tent, ‘Desta’ (lit. “Happiness”). Hence ‘Dessie’, a corrupted derivation of ‘Desta’. The third version is linked to a woman who vended *tella*, a local beverage. Emperor Tewodros asked her name, which happened to be Woyzero Dessie, he then named the whole area ‘Dessie’ after her. Be that as it may, as Emperor Tewodros conducted several military campaigns in the region, this period is the most likely time for the origin of the name ‘Dessie’ (Oral informants).<sup>7</sup>

The naming of *sefers* (neighborhoods) in Dessie were mostly associated with the weekly markets, water points, geographic markers, parish churches and the initial settlement of notable personalities such as Ras Yimer, Ras Yazew, Ras Ali Gebreyes, Ras Gebre Hiywot, Liqa Mekwas Abegaz, Tsehafe Tezaz Fantaye, and with the retinues of Mikael or groups of individuals working in Ras Mikael’s court, as well as craftsmen, and army contingents or business owners of various kinds. In this regard, the following are illustrative examples: The area between Ayteyefe and Silk Amba was named ‘Addis Ketema’. A locality stretching from Meriho Ghibi to the bus terminal was called ‘Arab Genda’. Arabs nationals, most of whom were Yemeni who came to Dessie in search of employment, resided there. It is said that Ras Mikael being impressed by their craftsmanship and architectural wisdom granted them land to build their houses; hence the neighborhood Arab Genda (Arab Quarter)

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6 Oral informants.

7 Oral informants.

emerged. Atari Genda was a neighborhood between Segno Gebeya and Salayish. Atari Genda literally means “Retailers’ Quarter”, indicating the initial settlement in the area of small merchants. Berbere Genda (Pepper Quarter) was found between Salayish and Piazza. The name indicated the presence of Mesheta Betoch (Local Taverns) and Setegna Adariwoch (Sex Workers), who either owned the local taverns, or those who were attached to or worked in them, and the recurrent disturbances and noises that characterized the area day after day. Owing to this constant insecurity, the place bore the name ‘Berbere Genda’. The neighborhood Dawdo was connected to a certain Sheikh Dawd. A corrupted derivation of this prominent Sheikh provided the name of this locality (Oral informants).<sup>8</sup>

Following the consecration of the Medhane Alem church on 8 May 1913 (Miazia 30, 1905 E.C.), the priestly class and officials of the church settled around it, and a neighborhood known as ‘Medhane Alem Atbia’ or ‘Medhane Alem Sefer’ emerged there. Ras Mikael built the church on the hilly spot facing Ayteyefe. A neighborhood between Medhane Alem and Silk Amba that was originally allotted to the guards (Zebengna) of Ras Mikael’s court was known as ‘Zebengna Sefer’. Likewise, living quarters between Medhane Alem Atbia and Wolayta Sefer was called ‘Gimira Sefer’. This neighborhood was named after the war captives that Lij Iyassu brought from his Gimira campaign, some of whom he gave to his father as a gift. By joining Menelik II in the campaign against Wolayta in 1894, Ras Mikael brought many war captives to Dessie. These captives, who became Mikael’s domestic slaves, were given land to settle to the northeast of the Ghibi. This special quarter, known formerly as ‘Chercharit’, took the name ‘Wolayta Sefer’ and it later became ‘Menbere Tsehay’ after the 1974 revolution. A neighborhood of army settlers who came from Cheliya and Harar and were stationed in Dessie after their victory at Segelle was to

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8 Oral informants.

become Cheliya and Hararge Sefer.<sup>9</sup> They were later subsumed under a bigger neighborhood called 'Metero'.

In contrast, a large meadow where annual celebrations such as epiphany and Genna playing as well as military processions had taken place since Ras Mikael's time was named 'Hotie'. Oral tradition has it that Hotie is a corrupted form of the Amharic word 'Watte,' which literally means "A place that takes in so many people." The name Watte thus signifies the vastness of the field and its capacity to accommodate a huge number of people at any given moment. A locality around the weekly Monday market was to become 'Segno Gebeya'. Ras Mikael was the one who founded this market. A neighborhood to the south of Ras Mikael's Ghibi where the first telephone station was erected was called 'Selk Amba' (Telephone Quarter). An open field where a bonfire was lit to celebrate the finding of the True Cross (or Meskel) was to become 'Mugad' (lit. "A place of fire"). During the Italian rule, the modern shopping center for Italian nationals, Merkato Nazionale, (also called 'Gumruk' (meaning "Custom" in Arabic; part of Arada in the Mugad neighborhood) was located in this area. It is to be remembered that additional neighborhoods also emerged in Dessie in the subsequent decades (Oral informants).<sup>10</sup>

### DESSIE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Ras Mikael transferred his seat from Tenta to Dessie. Dessie owes much to him and his choosing of Ayteyefe as his residential and administrative site. Attendants and servants of Mikael were given plots of land to build their own houses around Ayteyefe. As noted above, the building of residential houses of the nobility facilitated the cropping up of new neighborhoods in Dessie. With the initiation of the Segno Gebeya weekly market, itinerant merchants from Tigray, Shewa, Gojjam, Gondar, and Yejju flocked to Dessie. Many of them built their own houses. Their settlement around Segno Gebeya and the emergence of neighborhoods such as Atari Genda

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9 Oral informants.

10 Oral informants.



(Retailers' Quarter) in Dessie stimulated the mushrooming of retail shops, taverns for selling local alcoholic drinks and other service-rendering sites in different parts of the town (Socioeconomic Study Team Development Partners, 14–15).<sup>11</sup> Since the early twentieth century, Dessie, being the seat of Mikael and a strategically located and commercially important center, as well as its contiguity with Boru Meda (a prominent “toll gate” and a thriving market), has repeatedly been mentioned by foreign travelers. In essence, not only the number of traders and inhabitants increased, but also the socio-economic and physical landscape of Dessie had begun to change substantially.

The hard-won peace and tranquility of the post-Adwa period stimulated the growth of commercial activity in the country. A year after the signing of a treaty of commerce and friendship between Menelik II and Ferdinando Martini on 21 July 1906, the Italians opened a commercial agency, R. Agenza Commercial, in Dessie, and it became the Italian Consulate in 1932. The commercial agency was run for many years by Colonel F. Marazzani Visconti, who was later replaced with Alberto Pollera. The Bank of Abyssinia and Bank of Ethiopia also had their branch offices there. The American-based Singer Company, which started its business in Addis Ababa in 1909, had begun supplying sewing machines to the lucrative Dessie market since 1910. Other than Mohammed Bazarah (an Arab) and Ato Yirghou, many Greek and Armenian nationals, such as Pagonis Freres, Harant Pagtikian, Nicolas Zambos, Dimitri Paskos, Athanase Papadjiman, Astig Karabian, Takakland Kolidas, G. Capellani, Christo Cardaloupa and M Paskos, ran several businesses such as a movie theater, bakery, cafeteria and retail shops (Socioeconomic Study Team Development Partners, 14–15).<sup>12</sup>

At about 1907, the construction of Ras Mikael's palace was completed. Thereafter, many churches and residential houses were built in Dessie. It was Ras Mikael who built churches in Dessie, namely St. George (Giyorgis) in 1910, Medhane Alem (Savior of the

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11 Oral informants.

12 Oral Informants.

world) in 1912 and St. Mary (Mariam) in 1914 respectively. In 1914, St. Tekle Haymanot Church was also constructed in the foothills of Doro Mezleya to the east of Ayteyefe. In 1914/15 Negus Mikael built a banqueting hall called 'Ayteyefe Addarash', which literally means "A Hall of No Segregation". In the early twentieth century, Dessie had few European-type buildings owned mostly by Greek and Armenian nationals, some of whom produced or sold alcoholic drinks, medicine and other trading items. Dessie had also served as a prison and as a place of exile for rivals of the regional lords and the king of kings. Negus Tona of Wolayta and Ras Abate were some of the royal prisoners in Dessie (Teshome and Getachew 222ff).<sup>13</sup> During those early days, Dessie was visited by foreigners and local dignitaries. In 1906, Ferdinand Martini, Governor of Eritrea, paid an official stately visit to Dessie and met Ras Mikael, not to mention Lij Iyassu who frequently traveled to Dessie to meet his father. Between 1902 and 1904, Dessie, by virtue of its location, was to become one of the few towns to gain access to a telephone service from the line that was being installed between Addis Ababa and Asmara. A telephone operating station was set up at a new neighborhood called 'Selk Amba' south of Ras Mikael's Gebbi. In 1906, a telegraph station was also erected in Dessie.

### SEGELLE AND THE END OF MIKAEL'S HALCYON DAYS

Following the death of Emperor Menelik II in 1913, his grandson Iyassu, the son of Ras Mikael and the daughter of Menelik II, Shewaragad Sahle Mariam, became Emperor-designate of Ethiopia. On 31 May 1914, Lij Iyassu dubbed his father 'King of Wollo and Tigray'. Abuna Petros VII (Atnaf Seged Yilma 163),<sup>14</sup> Emperor

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13 Ras Abate was imprisoned for six years, see Wondwosen Teshome and Buayalew Getachew, *Ras Abate Buayalew Negussu* (Amharic). Addis Ababa: Mankusa Printing Press, 2012 E.C., .222ff.

14 Abuna Petros VII (the Bishop of the north and a namesake of the Abuna Fascist Italy executed), carrying the Ark of St. Mary, accompanied Negus Mikael to Segelle and prompted the Wallo people to prove their allegiance to, and fight on, the side of Negus Mikael and Lij Iyassu. At

Yohannes's own bishop, crowned Ras Mikael Negus in front of a huge gathering of about 50,000 people and a highly orchestrated spectacle at a nearby field called 'Mugad'. Though the uncrowned Emperor Iyassu did not attend this extraordinary event, he sent his senior officials (foremost among them Ligaba Wolde Gabriel and Bejirond Yiggazu) to Dessie. "The ceremony at Dessie appeared to have culminated to accentuate [Mikael's] historic transformation in stature," and the sudden glare of fame of Wollo (Zewde 125).<sup>15</sup>

The well-coordinated conspiracy that dethroned Lij Iyassu resulted in the ascension to the Imperial throne of Empress Zewditu, daughter of Menelik II, with Teferi as her heir. Upon his removal from power, Lij Iyassu retreated from Harar to the Afar lowlands. This illegal seizure of power, which was extremely upsetting to Negus Mikael and the Wollo hierarchy, soon created an unbridgeable rift between the central government and Wollo, which ultimately led to open armed conflict between the forces of Ras Teferi and Mikael on the plains of Segelle on 22 October 1916. Despite his initial victory, Negus Mikael suffered defeat at Segelle, attributed partly to his meekness (Tafete 99), which was a reversal of the astounding victory that he had scored at Tora Mesk a few days earlier. Had Negus Mikael waited for some time to allow the contingents of Lij Iyassu and Ras Gebre Hiywot, his eldest son, to join his march against the Shewan army, he could have raised a formidable force that would have reversed the outcome of the Segelle battle and the trajectory of the country's history.

Unfortunately, Mikael, the daring combatant of Matemma and Adwa marching to Segelle without waiting for his sons, paid a grievous price. Surviving the Segelle ordeal, Ras Yimer and Fitawrari Sirah Bizu were able to meet Lij Iyassu who by then had managed to reach Dessie, albeit that his attempt to fight on the side of his father at Segelle proved futile. He then moved to Maqdala

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the end of the battle, the Abuna himself became a prisoner and was taken to Addis.

15 According to Gobeze Tafete, the coronation ceremony was held at Hotie.

together with Ras Yimer and Fitawrari Sirah Bizu to resist the triumphant Shewan army that was marching to subdue Mikael's Wollo (Oral informants).<sup>16</sup> For some time, supporters of Lij Iyassu continued to offer armed resistance against the central government.

The coming to Dessie of Lij Iyassu and his subsequent entrenchment at Maqdala (Wudneh E.C. 526)<sup>17</sup> enabled him to enter into the great last combat in "a Theodorean fashion," by slipping "back and forth through the siege lines . . . won a few victories, and stirred up trouble" (Marcus 28). Following his escape from Maqdala, Iyassu, serving as a focal point of resistance and enjoying the loyalty of the Wollo peasantry (29), put up additional resistance to the ferocious, marauding Shewan forces in Ambassel, Delanta, and Dessie Zuria. Most importantly, the unsuccessful siege of Dessie, headquarters of the War Minister Habte Giorgyis, on 5 August 1917, by the Wollo forces, compelled the Shewan army to retreat. However, after a brief respite, Habte Giorgyis launched a coordinated counterattack and scored a decisive victory over his adversaries.

The capture of Ras Yimer Gebre Selassie<sup>18</sup> and the death of "many high-ranking officials" (30), especially Fitawrari Serah Bizu Gebre, the military commander of Negus Mikael, sealed Iyassu's dream of reinstatement. The military victory of Habte Giorgyis also gave the Shewan army a good excuse to create mayhem and commit unprecedented atrocities on the pretext of punishing Lij Iyassu's supporters, including the execution of captives.<sup>19</sup> With the stationing

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16 Oral informants.

17 Mamo Wudneh likened this Shewan siege and bombardment of Maqdala to the attack of the British expeditionary force launched against Emperor Tewodros II in 1868. Mamo Wudneh, *My Achievements: Me and My Reminiscences* (Amharic), Addis Ababa: Neged Printing Press, 2000 E.C., 526.

18 Ras Yimer also died while he was in custody.

19 On the alleged misinformation of Habte Giyorgis's army and the unprecedented atrocities it unleashed upon the residents of Dessie, see

of Habte Giorgyis's army contingents from Cheliya and Harar, two neighborhoods called 'Yecheliya Sefer' and 'Hararge Sefer' respectively evolved in Dessie (Oral informants).<sup>20</sup>

After obtaining information on the capture of Lij Iyassu in Tigray, on 21 May 1921, Ras Teferi came to Dessie. The troops of the central government as well as Ras Gugsa of Begemider and Ras Hailu of Gojjam gathered in Dessie. They stayed for about a month while negotiation with Ras Seyum about Iyassu's submission took place. The confrontation ended without bloodshed when Ras Seyum, the main proponent and father-in-law of Lij Iyassu, surrendered on 17 June. Ras Gugsa Araya brought Iyassu, the most wanted royal fugitive, to Dessie and handed him over to Ras Teferi. After getting hold of Lij Iyassu, Ras Teferi immediately returned to Addis Ababa. While this event confirmed Iyassu's removal from the early twentieth-century power politics of Ethiopia, it had greatly assisted the realization of Teferi's long-time aspiration of becoming an undisputed ruler of the country. In contrast, Iyassu's incarceration at Koremash (Bulga), Fiche (Shewa) and Grawa (Gara Muleta, Hararge) for about a decade and half and his mysterious death in November 1935 (aged c. 37 years), at the start of the Italian invasion, exacerbated the bitterness and resentment of the Wollo public towards Haile Selassie (Oral informants).<sup>21</sup>

### DESSIE IN THE POST-SEGELLE YEARS

After the infamous Segelle battle, new governors were appointed to administer Wollo. Ras Kassa Hailu governed the province for some eight months. In the footsteps of Ras Kassa, Ras Abate, Lij Iyassu's prisoner at Maqdala and released on the promise of siding with Lij Iyassu, was made Governor of Wollo in October 1917 but he died a few days later (Teshome and Getachew 249). Ras Teferi entrusted Ras Wolde Giyorgis to fully pacify and govern Wollo until Ras

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Bahru Zewde, *Habte the Strategist: from War Prisoner to Political Leader* (Amharic), Addis Ababa: Eclipse Printing Press, 2008 E.C., 93–97.

20 Oral informants.

21 Oral informants.

Kebede Mengesha Atikem replaced him in 1918. Ras Kebede governed the province for the next seven years until Fitawrari Aregay Becherie took his place in 1925. During Ras Kebede Mengesha's time the entire Wollo nobility were sacked from their governorship position. Moreover, their landholdings, together with the tenants working on them, were transferred to "retainers and soldiers from Shawa, Harar, and southern and south-western provinces of the country" (Gasha Muhammed 9). Despite the imposition of a variety of new taxes on the Wollo peasantry, the administration of Ras Kebede was characterized by extreme repression and rapacious exploitation, an eccentric system of governance that infringed what Mahteme Selassie has dubbed "intrinsic Ethiopian virtues" such as fear of God, courtesy, generosity, hospitality, honesty, and faithfulness (Wolde Meskel 9–12). The abuse of power and the flagrant violation of people's rights, as well as the unbearable injustice and administrative problems that plagued the region, demonstrated the dearth on the victors' side of moral decency and generosity of spirit. The perturbed situation obviously caused tremendous suffering on the entire population; and owing to this problem, many peasants were even forced to migrate to neighboring provinces. The following verse clearly demonstrates Ras Kebede's notoriously repressive administration of Wollo:

ቀን ሲተኛ ውሎ ሲጮህ ያድራል ውሻ

ወሎን አስለቀሰው ከበደ መንገሻ (Oral informants)<sup>22</sup>

(A dog that slumbers during the day barks all through the night,  
Kebede Mengesha makes the whole of Wollo squeal!)

This abnormally troublesome period leaves a lot to be desired. One may speculate that the deprivation of entitlement to farmlands seems to have inadvertently compelled many individuals and families to enter into the business sector, and this resulted in Wollo playing a leading mercantile role in the country. Perhaps, writing the history of Wollo under the Shewan administration (1916–1930)

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22 Oral informants.

along the lines of contemporaneous administrations in the south and south-western parts of the country may well be a distinctively useful area of comparative research. In Dessie, the only accomplishments during the period of Shewan dominance did not go beyond the construction of the Selassie or Trinity (1920) and St. Mikael (1919) churches.<sup>23</sup>

After Mikael's removal from Wollo, Teferi (later Haile Selassie) introduced a stringent policy of designating non-Wolloyes to the post of Enderassie (lit: "On my behalf"), a discomfiting policy he steadfastly upheld and cherished for nearly half-a-century of his rule; and "departures from this policy were rare" (Markakis 293). The appointment over Wollo of members of his own family and the Shewan aristocracy confirmed that Haile Selassie was determined not to reinstate natives of Wollo as governors in the birthplace of his wife, Empress Menen. Until her death on 15 February 1962, she had very little practical influence on her husband Emperor Haile Selassie I, and she was even powerless to help her son, the Crown Prince, exercise full authority over Wollo. That aside, the early destruction of the autonomous status of Wollo and its absorption by the central government inaugurated the coming onto the scene of a highly centralized administration of Emperor Haile Selassie, to which other regional entities also fell victim one after the other.

For Wollo, Ras Imru's appointment was said to be an auspicious period. It was in 1930 that Dajjazzmach (later Ras) Imru Haile Selassie (cousin of Teferi) was appointed Enderassie of Wollo. Ras Imru introduced major infrastructural and administrative changes. During his time vital reforms, such as land tax, restructuring of the provincial administration, appointment of the first Ketema Shum (Town Chief or Mayor), and rudimentary town planning and distribution of urban land, as well as the construction of roads and bridges, had begun in earnest in Dessie (Haile Selassie 162–168). This promising developmental effort of Ras Imru, who was soon transferred to Gojjam, did not last long. Two years after his coronation as Neguse Negast on 2 November 1930, Emperor

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23 St. Mikael Church was built by Ras Kebede Mengesha.

Haileselassie I (the former Ras Teferi) appointed his 16-year-old son, Crown Prince Asfa Wossen, the great-grandson of Negus Mikael, Chief Governor-General of Wollo.

Some people naively believed that it was out of genuine conviction and respect for the Wollo public that Haile Selassie in December 1932 bestowed on his eldest son Asfa Wossen, who was crowned heir to the throne, the title of 'Meridazmach' on 2 November 1930 (Chief-Governor-General of the province). Others believed that Asfa Wossen's choice was part of a calculated strategy to mend and nurture the loyalty of the disgruntled Wollo lords as a whole and, in particular, to create a lasting harmonious relationship with the Wore Himano (Mamadoch) and Ambassel (Jantrar) ruling families, with whom Asfa Wossen himself as the great grandson of Mikael had blood relations through his mother Menen, the daughter of Jantrar Asfaw of Ambassel and the granddaughter of Ras Mikael of Wore Himano. It appears that the main objective of Asfa Wossen's appointment was to water down and stave off the long-standing tension that beleaguered relations of the Wollo people with the Haile Selassie regime (Oral informants).<sup>24</sup>

The young Crown Prince with his advisor Dajjazmach Wodajo, a Shewan aristocrat who was known to have captured Negus Mikael at the battle of Segelle, lived in Dessie until its occupation by the Italians in April 1936. Initially, Asfa Wossen resided in the palace of Negus Mikael for some time and then moved to the present Meriho Gebbi around 1935. Abuna Petros, who was later assassinated by the Italians, and military commanders such as Fitawrari Sahle Dinkie and Fitawrari Faris, also resided in Dessie. During this time, the province's Deputy Governor-General under the chief-governorship of Meridazmach Asfa Wossen was Fitawrari (later Dajjazmach) Fikre Mariam Yinadu (Abba Techan), a renowned anti-Fascist patriotic resistance fighter, while the Dessie Ketema Shum was Blata Bekele Wolde Mikael with Ato Desta as Director and Nagadras Tesfaye as Customs Officer. Head of Public Works at the municipality was Fitawrari Dejene with his assistant Engineer

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24 Oral informants.



Comte F. L. Bietry, and Ato Mekuriya Wolde Selassie as Director of Roads.

A crucial point worth remembering is that the seven successive Enderassie who had been appointed to govern Wollo in the post-Segelle period up until the Italian invasion: Ras Abate Buayalew (1917); Ras Kassa Hailu Dargie (1918); Ras Kebede Mengesha Atikem (1918–1925); Fitawrari Aregay Becherie (1925–1927); Dajjazmach Seyum Desta (1927–1930); Dajjazmach Imru Haile Selassie (1930–1932) and Dajjazmach Wodaje Wube (1932–1936) were either Shewan origin or non-Wolloyes (Oral informants).<sup>25</sup>

Around the Italian Fascist invasion there were about 850 foreign nationals living and working in Dessie. About 50 of them were Arabs (Ahmed 31–37).<sup>26</sup> These foreign residents were teachers, merchants, medical personnel, government advisors, bankers, engineers, journalists, writers and missionaries.

### **Evolution of Administrative and Social Services**

It was during Ras Imru's governorship of Wollo (1930–1932) that the first Dessie town administration was established. Its first Ketema Shum or Town Chief, who presided over the seven village heads or Sefer Shums, is said to have been the Italian-educated Aleqa Mekonnen.

The Italian Franciscan Fathers Catholic Mission and the American Seventh-Day Adventist Mission were also established in the mid-1920s.<sup>27</sup> In 1925, Dr. G.C. Bergman of the White Memorial Hospital in California came to Dessie to supervise the construction

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25 Oral informants.

26 The majority of these Arab residents were Yemenis who came to Dessie in search of employment in the early twentieth century. For a brief discussion on Arab residents in Dessie, see Hussein Ahmed, "Archival Sources on the Yemeni Arabs in Urban Ethiopia: The Dessie Municipality," *History in Africa*, V, 27 (2007): 31–37.

27 There was also a mosque (Zawiya) of the Qadiriyya Order in Dessie. The Qadiriyya was the oldest, more widespread and fastest-growing Sufi order in Wallo.

of the Seventh-Day Adventist Mission Hospital, which was completed in 1928. The hospital, known popularly as 'Teferi Mekonnen Hospital', has been remembered as the provider of the best quality medical care. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church also opened an elementary school.

There was an Italian Scuole Elementari Imperatrice Elena, Empress Elena Elementary girl's school, which was renamed 'Etege' (Empress) Mennen Primary School after the liberation. The first public school in Dessie, the Woyzero Siheen primary school, named after the mother of Etege Menen (consort of Haile Selassie), was established in 1922 E.C. (1930/01) at the precinct of present-day Negus Mikael School. The Negus Mikael Elementary School had begun functioning following the shift to the present location of the Woyzero Siheen School in 1942 (1934 E.C.) (Oral informants).<sup>28</sup> The French Catholic Lazzarist missionaries also opened one of the first modern school attached to their church in 1929.

The first modern clinic attached to the Italian commercial agency was opened in 1911. On the eve of the Italian invasion, the commercial agency (which later became the Italian legation in 1932) was renamed 'Meriho Gebbi'. It was in 1912 that piped water was first introduced in Dessie (Melake 13). The source of this piped water was Sere Minch, spring water from a locality in the Dawdo area, and the pipeline was stretched from there to Mikael's palace at Ayteyefe. Ras Abate was the one who singlehandedly initiated and consummated this project. Hence, it was known as 'Ras Abate Wuha' (Water) (Teshome and Getachew 231). The Italians also did some extension works on the Dessie water supply infrastructure. This additional public supply was connected to a water source at a place called 'Qurqur' (Tassew 79). In the 1920s a post office was opened; and a very limited road and air transport, and telephone and radio broadcasting services had also been initiated prior to the Italian invasion.

## DESSIE ON THE EVE OF THE ITALIAN INVASION

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28 Oral informants.

Haile Selassie left Addis Ababa on 26 November 1935 and reached Dessie on 30 November 1935 (Engeda Work 20). The Emperor used the former Italian Consulate as his “forward operation base” or “a compound for dispensing directives.” Hence, the name ‘Meriho Gebbi’ emerged. Meriho Gebbi, which still retains this name, was the only place inside the town worthy of his persona. In an effort to withstand the Italian invasion, the Emperor temporarily established a radio and telegraph station in the Meriho compound. However, the presence of the emperor in Dessie at this crucial period posed a serious threat to the town and its inhabitants (Oral informants).<sup>29</sup>

On 3 December 1935, the Italians, in an attempt to assassinate the Emperor, bombed Dessie for the first time. In this bombing incident, the Seventh-Day Adventist hospital, which was already transformed into a Red Cross camp and had a big Red Cross insignia on its roof, was not spared. Of the 40 bombs that fell on the mission compound, only “five bombs hit the hospital” causing “no severe damage to the building” (*British Advent Messenger*). On that day alone, more than seven tons of bomb was said to have been dropped over Dessie. “Immediately after the disappearance of the Caproni bombers, the Emperor visited the hospital and spoke a word of cheer to each injured person. This he did frequently throughout his stay in Dessie,” wrote the London-based Seventh-Day Adventists newspaper. “The three-room school building has been turned into a hospital ward [and] . . . the hospital was full of bomb victims and soldiers. The soldiers were from armies passing through on their way to the front,” the newspaper added” (*British Advent Messenger*). An Ethiopian gentleman who was marching to the war front told Dr. Bergman, a man in charge of the Seventh Day Adventist hospital, has been quoted as saying: “Ethiopia has many shortcomings and has sinned many times, and God will punish us until we turn to Him, but the Italians [as Christians] must not do it” (*British Advent Messenger*).

As bombing continued the next day, many of the residents of Dessie fled the town. During this time, some thirty foreign war

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29 Oral informants.

correspondents were in Dessie. At or near Meriho Gebbi, Emperor Haile Selassie, who the Italians targeted to kill, was photographed with his foot resting on one of the undetonated bombs and aiming his anti-aircraft machine gun at the tri-motored Caproni bombers of Regia Aeronautica (Engeda Work 22–23). It is to be noted that bombers or “flame throwers” of various models were also used in the conquest of Ethiopia, such as Stella and Savoia-Marchetti of the Regia Aeronautica (Baker 64–67).

When the Italians again bombed Dessie and destroyed an Ethiopian Red Cross airplane near the town in February 1936, the Emperor was in Dessie with his two sons, the Crown Prince and the Duke of Harar. A few days after, his military advisors Ras Getachew Abate, Fitawrari Biru Wolde Gabriel, Dajjazmach Haile Selassie Abayneh and Dajjazmach Adefresew left Dessie for the northern front on February, 21 1936, while the Emperor remained in Dessie.<sup>30</sup>

### DESSIE DURING THE ITALIAN OCCUPATION, 1936–1941

On 14 April 1936, owing to the eminent danger posed by the advancing Italian forces, the Crown Prince, escorted by Dajjazmach Wodajo and Dajjazmach Fikre Mariam hastily left Dessie for Addis Ababa. The next day, that is, early on the morning of April 15, 1936, an Eritrean army contingent, supported by the Italian air force that supplied it with arms and rations, easily captured the defenseless town (Toynbee 296). They did not encounter any resistance at all. Marshall Badoglio, sitting on a white horse, entered the Italian consulate jubilantly. Sending his advance forces to the capital city first and setting up a military base on April, 21 1936, Badoglio stayed in Dessie for about a week. He eventually left Dessie for Addis Ababa on April 27, 1936 (296). After the fall of Addis Ababa on May 4, 1936, a small group of patriotic forces “momentarily recaptured the city of Dessie . . . but [they] had to retire in the face of an Italian counter-attack with air support” (Greenfield 175).

The Italians made Dessie the seat of the Commissariato dell’Uollo (Commissariat of Wollo), within the Federazione dell

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30 Oral Informants.

Amhara, one of the regional administrative divisions of Africa Orientale Italiana (Italian East Africa). In October 1940, Wollo was made part of Governo Della Scioa or the Governorate of Shewa. Dessie also became the seat for Prefettura Apostolica of Padri Cappucini. Following their entry into Dessie, the Italians confiscated all the previous government institutions; and they made, for example, the Gebbi of Negus Mikael the office of the Commissariat. The former Italian Consulate, one of the finest buildings in Dessie that was made the headquarters of Emperor Haile Selassie for some months on the eve of the war, was renovated and renamed 'Villa Italia' (Balcha n.d. 11).

The Italians commenced a number of public projects aimed at developing the city in line with their racist colonial objectives. The preparation of the city's master plan was one of the many tasks that they initiated to implement. The master plan was framed on the racist segregation policy of dividing the city into black and white quarters. The execution of the master plan was a hallmark of fascist racial policy. The northern part of the piazza area (previously Yeferenji Amba or "Whites' Quarter", wherein some Greek and Armenian businessmen lived and worked before 1935/36) was designated for whites only; while the southern part, which retained most of the old quarters, had been allocated for natives. The central area where the Italians built Casa Del Fascio (House of the Fascists) was also known as 'Piazza del Littorio', a square for the Fascist Party emblem. Various shops and cafés were also found around this central square. After liberation, Casa Del Fascio (now demolished) became the headquarters of the provincial police.

Owing largely to the construction of residential and administrative office buildings, and infrastructural facilities during the occupation, the city had shown considerable growth in terms of physical size. Most, if not all, the construction activities and infrastructural facilities were concentrated in the piazza area and in the northern section of the city, which was envisaged to be "a garden city" for the Italians. From Villa Italia (the previous Italian Consulate) northwards, several institutions and residences were

established. An Italian residential quarter known as 'Casa Incis', an acronym for 'Casa Istituto Nazionale per Case Deli Imiegati Cello Stato', a construction company that provided housing for employees of Italian East Africa (Bowers 200), was found in this area. Banko di Roma, Banko di Napoli, Banko di Italia, postal and telephone offices, and the municipality were built around the piazza. In between the Medhane Alem Church and the piazza area, there were the Ospedole dermoceltico (Dermatological Hospital) and a venereal disease clinic.<sup>31</sup> Along the street to the south of the piazza, the municipality office, and out-patient clinics for local and Italian nationals called 'Ambulatorio per nazionali e indigeni' were set up.

In addition to Albergo C.I.A.A.O (renamed Touring and Ghion Ambassel Hotel after liberation and recently demolished), a movie hall (Cinema Impero, today's Dessie Cinema), printing press (Poligrafio Del Impero), mills, schools, a hospital and a stadium were built north of the piazza along the eastern and western sides of the Dessie-Mekelle road. Along the eastern side of the main street running northwards, there were barracks for the Intendenza, a school and church of the Franciscan Lazzarists Catholic Mission, an Italian cemetery, a fountain, a sports field (Albergo Bella Milano), and an Italian workers' camp of 18 wooden pavilions with a capacity of 200 persons each, a mill, the camp of Milizia Forestale, and Casa Del Preti (House of the Preachers). Moreover, manufacturing firms for soap and candles, and an oil-producing factory, wood-working shops, hollow block and brick factories were also founded. This quarter was also well supplied with clean water and electricity (Socioeconomic Study Team Development Partners 25).

As the Italians sought to play on the ethnic and religious differences among the Ethiopian public, they purposefully "favored the Oromo over the Amhara and the Muslims over the Christians." In addition to the building of mosques, they encouraged Muslims to make pilgrimages to Mecca (Greenfield 175). The big mosque at Shewa Ber was among the projects the Italians approved in Dessie.

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31 The Italians expelled the SDA hospital staff from Dessie and the hospital resumed its services in the late 1950s.

They also constructed food-processing plants (for macaroni, biscuits, flour and for oil production) and a modern market center. To produce durum wheat for the food-processing plant, a modern farm in Valle di Gerado or the Gerado basin was made operational. A number of minor asphalt roads were built to connect the various parts of the city. The city's main bridges that had been initially erected during Ras Imru's time were upgraded. About 16 miles of the Dessie–Gondar road was also graveled and stabilized by 1938 (Socioeconomic Study Team Development Partners 26).

The presence of the Italians in Dessie conspicuously accelerated the town's commercial growth. Because of its strategic location linking Addis Ababa, Asmara, Assab and Gondar, the Italians were interested in beefing up their commercial activities in Dessie. The Assab–Dessie road and the overall improvement of road transport facilities attracted a number of local merchants to Dessie to start up their own businesses (Berhanu 141). As Teferi alluded, in addition to local businesses, the opening up of bars and pubs made Dessie a commercial hub next to Asmara and the town with its beautiful women was to become a paradise for Italian heavy truck drivers (141). Several Italian firms had also begun functioning. The two companies involved in the construction sector were Giuseppe Bruno and Dioguardi & Figli, while Soc. An. Salvatore dell'Oca was a registered enterprise for providing a road transport service. By 1939, Lsona-Fraschini, a motorcar enterprise had its sub-station in Dessie. Though Dessie was visibly divided into industrial and commercial zones, the number of business establishments, constituting hotels, restaurants, general merchandise, import-export firms, among other things, reached more than 150 during the Italian period.

Around 1938 there was an airport at Kombolcha and bus transport to and from Asmara. Besides restaurants such as Aquila, Berenice, Bologna, Faro, Gambrinus, Impero, Neghelli, Primavera, Salvietti, Stella D'Italia, Tringale, Venezia and 9 Maggio, there were also street lighting, a public bath (Ufficio d. Lavoro) and a laundry service. In general, Dessie's urban development was speeded up during the Italian occupation. Even if the momentum was not

maintained thereafter, as has been argued, there were unprecedented inner-city changes in Dessie during the Italian period. The presence of hotels and restaurants acquainted the town's people with Italian cuisine. The taste for Italian dishes has been one of the long-lasting Italian colonial legacies. Few locally-owned hotels in the post-Italian years used to serve Italian foods, such as *pani* (white bread), *pasta al forno*, *pasta spaghetti*, *tagliatelle*, *minestrone*, *bisteca*, *espezzatino* and various types of *frutta* (mixed fruit and salad or *salata*); and it became common to see a *carte du jour* of Italian dishes along with Ethiopian traditional cuisine in the different hotels and restaurants of Dessie. Even today, Italian lexical borrowings are being retained in auto mechanics, electro-technical and in the construction field (Oral informants).<sup>32</sup> However, such cultural intrusions and admixtures had been abruptly discontinued with the expulsion of the Italians from Ethiopia in 1941.

Between April 17 and 27, 1941, the Italians, despite their fierce resistance at Kombolcha, were forced to capitulate and hand over Dessie to the Ethio-British joint forces. The Italian garrison in Dessie was taken over by Brigadier Pienaar's 1st South African Brigade, which was assisted by 500 Ethiopian patriots (some of whom were Abebe Aregai's men) under the command of Captain Campbell. Right after the war, Dessie served as an internment camp, which became "definitive camp No. 410," a transit camp for evacuees awaiting repatriation (Socioeconomic Study Team Development Partners 27).

## DESSIE DURING THE IMPERIAL ERA: 1941–1974

### Administrative Backdrop

With the restoration of Ethiopia's independence in 1941, Crown Prince Asfa Wossen, replacing Liqa Mekwas Abegaz Chufa who had been appointed as interim overseer, was reinstated as Chief Governor-General of the province, together with Balambaras Mahteme Selassie as his tutor and secretary. The restored government had again adopted the previous policy of depriving the

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32 Oral informants.



Wollo lords from top governorship positions. With the exception of Ras Gebre Hiywot Mikael, Iyassu's eldest brother who was installed as Enderassie of Wollo for some seven years (1943–1950) in the post-liberation period, almost all governor-generals appointed over the newly restructured Wollo right from the restoration of the imperial rule in 1941 to the downfall of Haile Selassie in 1974: Nagadras Berhane Selassie Abba Yirre and Brigadier General Asfaw Wolde Giyorgis (June 1941–December 1942); Dajjazmach Mengesha Wolde Giyorgis, a Wolloye by birth and related to Teferi through his mother, (1950–1955 and 1957–1959); Dajjazmach Dereje Mekonnen (1955–1957); Dajjazmach Demiss Wolde Amanuel (1959–1962); Fitawrari Belay Mersha (1962–1964); Fitawrari Mamo Seyum (1964–1971); Dajjazmach Solomon Abraham (1971–1973); Dajjazmach Legesse Bezu (1973–April 1974); and Fitawrari Mahrene Minda (May–September 1974) in the early days of the Darg, were non-Wolloyes (Gashaw Muhammed 39–40; Wolde Meskel 21–22).<sup>33</sup>

It was to prevent the Crown Prince from creating an “independent” or an alternative power base outside of the capital, Addis Ababa (Clapham 59) that Haile Selassie continued to appoint “natives of Shewa” as Enderassie for the province, as he had done before he became Emperor (Negusa Nagast) in 1930, argued Clapham (59). Earlier, this same argument that had been told and retold was intentionally used as a rallying cry against Abéto Iyassu. The strained relations with Haile Selassie seemed to be a blessing in disguise for the crown prince. Though he received a purely nominal position in Addis in 1947, the Crown Prince retaining Wollo as his personal fief enabled him to reap “considerable financial benefits” (60).

John Spencer (332), a long-time legal advisor to the Imperial Ethiopian government, has depicted the august Crown Prince as an indecisive individual, who could not deter his corrupt retinues from exploiting the province ravenously by taking advantage of his

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33 The other exception was Ras Gebre Hiywot's nephew, Dajjach Belay Ali Mikael, who had been appointed Governor of Wadla Delanta, one of the twelve Awrajas in Wallo; Oral informants.

lethargic and indifferent persona. Spencer also alluded that the Crown Prince was not loved by the Wollo people because of the deposing of Lij Iyassu by his father Haile Selassie, in 1916, and the grudge that had been seething among the population since then (332).

Serving as a onetime personal advisor to the Crown Prince, the British diplomat Wilfred Thesiger Jr., the son of Wilfred Thesiger Sr. the renowned minister of the British Legation in Ethiopia (1910–1919), described him as a nonchalant officeholder with very little interest in developmental matters. During his stay in Dessie, and until his subsequent resignation after a year's service (1943–1944), the only thing Thesiger claimed to have accomplished was the improvement of the sewerage system of the penitentiary. Thesiger also indicated the encirclement of the Crown Prince by rapacious and conservative officials, who defiantly opposed any modern developmental ideas. Owing to his acrimonious relationship with the Emperor, he added, the Crown Prince lacked real political power (Thesiger 149–154). It was with the approval of the Emperor that the Crown Prince would even appoint *awraja* and *woreda* governors of proven decent and loyalty to the regime and the Imperial throne. In addition, these governors, being remotely controlled by the Crown Prince, were at liberty to use and abuse their power. The various administrative blunders of both the higher- and lower-level officials, and their insensitivity to the plight of the people were by and large responsible for the surfacing and resurfacing of wide-ranging grassroots disappointments in the province. After reiterating the exploitative nature of Asfa Wossen, Tilahun Berhane Selassie (368) has summed up that even if the people of Wollo swore in his name, the Crown Prince did nothing to them.

Asfa Wossen spent most of his time in the capital city, with very little or no physical presence in Wollo. It was with the Emperor's prior consent that he would be able to travel to Wollo (Berhanu 154). It was often during the two-week fasting time in August called 'Filseta' that the Crown Prince would come to Dessie to meet with his administrative duties. Even then, he did not dispense justice

quickly; he indefinitely postponed many of the legal issues presented to his Chilot (Court of Appeal), and several cases were inevitably transferred to the then Supreme Court, the Emperor's Chilot or the Crown Court. Using his politico-administrative authority emanating from his supreme governorship of Wollo, however, Asfa Wossen managed to own a vast amount of urban and agricultural land from which he collected considerable personal income. Apart from granting government lands to members of the landed gentry and the Territorial Army, he collected money by selling urban lands to a select few individuals. People even accused him of undermining the Wollo resistance fighters (Amharic: Arbegnoch) and favoring those who collaborated with the Italians (Amharic: Bandawoch) and to whom he bequeathed some of the farmlands which he appropriated from the patriots.<sup>34</sup>

### **Socio-economic Landscape: 1941–1974**

After the restoration of Ethiopia's independence in 1941, Dessie continued to serve as the political and administrative center of Wollo. The former Italian office blocks later became public offices of the restored Imperial government. In a decree of 1942, Dessie was listed as one of the six "Schedule A" municipalities in Ethiopia. In 1945, Dessie was put under the jurisdiction of the Municipality Department in the Ministry of Interior. This period also witnessed the restructuring of the Dessie administration with which the city was divided into eight *sefer* (six of which were pre-Italian) with their respective village heads (Yesefer Shum). The Sefer Shums were appointed to help the municipality in matters of tax collection, and maintaining peace and order. This sub-division lasted until the Derg government introduced the Kebele administration in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup> Despite such benign efforts of the immediate post-1941 period, the restored Imperial government, which was believed to have been apathetic to Wollo, did not allocate the necessary capital that would

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<sup>34</sup> Oral informants.

<sup>35</sup> Outlasting the Derg regime in 1991, still the Kebele administrative structure is more or less retained.

enable the Crown Prince or the provincial authorities to plan and execute any infrastructural or developmental works (Oral informants).<sup>36</sup>

During the occupation, about “20,000 Italians lived in Dessie and [only] 40 of them stayed to live there after the war” (Palmgren and Sjostrand 34). Among the 40 Italians who remained in Dessie after the occupation: Mario Bigna (also called ‘Mario Aqua’) of water works; Parini, Nigri, Ferrari, Burzedini and the brothers Renato and Fantini of automotive/mechanical works; Saviatari and Iskarati of watchmaking/repairing works; Jakomino of electrical and construction works; Mario Marketi of wood works; Olivelli Ventura of electronic works; Vichenso, Johanny and Bascolini of milling works; Janolio and Nicola (Biccola) of road works; Rozetta and Junolio of Engineering works; Valenti Lodoviko of spare parts and gas distribution; Guido, Bibo, Bianco and Richi of transportation works; and the physician, Dr. Belezia, are still remembered (Oral informants).<sup>37</sup> A few of them had even married Ethiopian women and bore children of mixed blood or adopted local children. Sbacchi wrote about the shortage of Italian women and the widespread culture of “*madamismo*: the illegal cohabitation of an Italian man with an Ethiopian woman” (Sbacchi 170–172) Lentakis (69–70) wrote that lust for captivating Ethiopian women was a “problem of the highest magnitude,” as a result; the ordinary soldiers and high-ranking colonial officials breached racial laws. The Italian officer O’Kelly (113) noted on the problem facing the Fascist government in applying the 1937 law prohibiting miscegenation that almost half of the colonial army had “a native mistress” and “no disgrace had been attached to these liaisons” before the introduction of the law (113). In short, the efforts of the Italian colonial officials to prohibit “social intercourse” with the “natives” came to naught and no racial purity of the white blood/race was achieved.

Even if several Italian administrative and residential houses have recently been demolished, one may argue that they truly

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36 Oral informants.

37 Oral informants.

represented until recently (only a few of them are still standing) the Italian legacy in Dessie. There are no traces of food-processing and other manufacturing firms the Italians had established in and around Dessie. There is very little knowledge about what happened to them. Some of them were believed to be dismantled and transferred to other places, while others were simply left to rust or were closed. This situation compelled the town's residents to ponder why these "colonial" establishments could not have operated and contributed to the city's development in the post-Italian period (Oral informants).<sup>38</sup> According to Teferi Berhanu (150), legal advisor to the Crown Prince, it was in a deliberate act of sabotage that all the socio-economic developmental works that had been established by Fascist Italy in Wollo were put under the central government, suspended from functioning or dismantled. This state of affairs obliged several local and foreign business owners to leave Dessie for Shewa, and the city ceased to become a business hub. This signaled the end of Wollo's halcyon days and Dessie was destined to become "like an empty dining hall" and rapidly descended into darkness (150). While a limited number of modern infrastructural services were initiated in other provinces, Wollo was deliberately unheeded, noted Berhanu (150).

The absence of public institutions bearing Emperor Haile Selassie's name (disregarding the few privately-owned bars and hotels) as customarily seen everywhere to display his paternalistic persona may provide a clue to what extent Dessie as a major city was ignored when it came to developmental works. The near zero employment opportunity in the public sector not only pushed people to engage in the business area, but it also fostered a widespread negative outlook towards public servants. The saying "Being a civil servant means living in perpetual poverty. So, why would you work and waste your time in public office?" Such an attitude requires no further explanation.

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38 According to Oral Informants, the printing machine was dismantled and taken to Addis Ababa by Balambaras Mahteme Selassie Wolde Meskel, a one-time personal aide of Prince Asfa Wossen.

Until recently, transportation problems were a daunting challenge in Wollo. There was no road transportation network connecting Dessie to most *awrajas* (districts) and *woredas* (sub-districts) in the province. Many rural areas in Wollo were also infested with *shifta* (brigands), some of whom had even outlived the imperial rule. Banditry was an endemic problem that hampered the movement of goods and services too.<sup>39</sup>

A letter Fitawrari Amedie wrote to Crown Prince Asfa Wossen on 25 Genbot 1958 E.C. (June 3, 1966), may give an insight into the complexity of developmental problems facing Wollo at the time. After eulogizing the provincial governor, Dajjazmach Mamo, for his personal efforts in connecting the different *awrajas* with the provincial capital Dessie by rural roads, Fitawrari Amedie described how the endeavors of Dajjazmach Mamo had been obstructed by *awraja* governors and local officials who deliberately misled the people by telling them how the construction of roads would affect their “decent” life. In order to resolve the chronic problem of road transportation, Fitawrari Amedie humbly demanded the Crown Prince to extend his wholehearted assistance to the Enderassie (Lemma 258–259). This indicated that the socio-economic development of Wollo did not substantially improve, and the vast majority of its people remained poor and destitute overall. This economic stagnation, coupled with the repeated visitations of drought and famine, negatively impacted the wellbeing of the population. The human losses during the famine of the early 1970s, estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands, were largely attributed to the weaknesses of the Crown Prince and his higher- and lower-level officials. Informants alluded that the Crown Prince, being Chief Governor-General of Wollo right from his reinstatement in June 1941 until his final flight to England in 1974, just a few months before the revolution, could have done so much to prevent the famine and the tragic human death in Wollo (Oral informants).<sup>40</sup>

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39 Oral informants.

40 Oral informants.

In contrast, several business-minded individuals actually succeeded in opening up businesses, creating jobs and making Dessie a commercially thriving urban center. This resulted in an observable growth in the city's population and its commercial activities. There were about 787 commercial establishments in 1968 against only 158 during the Italian period. Of these, 259 were retailers. Arada, Segno Gebeya and Robit markets were expanded hosting traders from Asmara, Jimma and the coastal areas of the Empire.

The Woyzero Siheen School, originally founded in 1930/1 (1922 E.C.), was one of the oldest public schools in Ethiopia along with the Menilik II School in Addis Ababa and Ras Mekonnen School in Harar. Soon after the liberation, it was transferred to its present location, following the construction of modern classrooms and office buildings by a Greek contractor called Mussie Hector.<sup>41</sup> The Crown Prince, Meridazmach Asfa Wossen, inaugurated the newly-built school. The school was upgraded to a Secondary School in 1957, making it the first high school in the region. With the Woyzero Siheen's financial endowment of 153,000 Ethiopian birr, additional buildings were constructed for vocational education; in 1960 it was officially inaugurated by Emperor Haile Selassie. Since 1961, the school had begun offering the best-quality vocational training, which made it one of the leading comprehensive schools in the country (Oral informants).<sup>42</sup> In the subsequent years, the school, being famous for running the legendary marching band and music performing unit, was to become a renowned institution for breeding political activists and socialist-oriented revolutionaries as well.<sup>43</sup> In 1950, the Memhir Akale Wold Primary School, named after the renowned cleric of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, was opened.

In the area of public health, the only hospital that provided modern healthcare services to the Dessie public after 1941 was Asfa

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41 He became a permanent resident of Dessie, engaged in a motel business, married a Wolleye and died there.

42 Oral informants.

43 It was popularly known in Amharic as *Yewoyzero Siheen Yemuzica Guad*.

Wossen Hospital, formerly Ospedale Civile Campo Allogio of the Italians, which eventually became the first government hospital. After the construction of a new 50-bed hospital at Hotie with the financial support of USAID in July 1962 (1954 E.C.), bearing the same name, Asfa Wossen, the old hospital at a place called 'Qurqur' was left to provide a limited medical service for the people of the surrounding communities. It later became a treatment ward for tuberculosis patients up to c. 1977 (Oral informants).<sup>44</sup> Crown Prince Asfa Wossen offered the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) a beautiful site at Boru Meda and the mission had established the Selassie Leprosarium in 1955. Moreover, one of the two provincial Desert Locust Control headquarters inside Ethiopia, which was founded in 1953, had its office in Dessie. As regards electric power supply, there was a 200 kW power station in the early 1950s; and it was later replaced with a new steam turbine plant that produced 280 kW. In the early 1960s, a new diesel-powered generator with a capacity of 635 kW was purchased; and a power line was also installed to supply the town of Kombolcha with electricity.

As to the private sector, there was a dynamic public transport firm called 'Yawallo Yaneged Yaindustrina Yahezeb Mamelalesha Aksiyon Mahbere' (Wollo Trade, Industry and Public Transportation Share Company), best known by its nickname 'Wollo Feres'. The company started its transport services by leasing two Italian-owned buses. By 1949 E.C. (1957), Wollo Feres bought two (new) buses of its own (Oral informants).<sup>45</sup> Wollo Feres, using a white horse as its logo, turned out to be a flagship, a source of pride and a symbol of identity for the whole province. It was the first share company in the country in the transportation sector founded by entrepreneurial individuals, the majority of whom were

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44 Oral informants.

45 Among the various motor vehicles being used in Dessie, informants remember automobiles such as Volkswagen, Opel, Mercedes, Citron, Peugeot, Land Rover, Jeep, DKW, Austin, Tanus (Ford), Themes, Chevrolet, Mustang, Toyota, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Volga, Pontiac, Renault and Saab.



businesspeople working in Dessie. The survival of Wollo Feres was not at all trouble free; at the time of the 1974 revolution, it had eight buses with more than a thousand shareholders. Its fate was finally sealed when the military government confiscated all the white horse carrier buses in 1980 (1972 E.C.) (Lemma 158–164). Besides Wollo Feres, several individuals did actively engage in the public transportation sector. There were also several individuals serving the town's people with horse-driven carts or *garri*.<sup>46</sup>

A couple of civic organizations were established in the 1960s called 'Wollo Welfare Association' (WWA), which was aimed at working in famine relief activities, and the Dessie Urban Development Association (DUDA) that was founded to build schools, urban roads, and sports facilities, among other things, in Dessie. In fact, WWA and DUDA, in 1968 and 1969, "mobilized the residents of Dessie to plant trees on the slopes and hillsides between Dessie and Kombolcha, and in the Harego area" (Rahmato 24). Even if they were set up and made operational under the auspices of the then provincial governor Dajjzmach Mamo Seyum, both associations that were expected to tackle many communal issues proved to be ineffectual and had very little success (Oral informants).<sup>47</sup> Similar initiatives had been aborted in the post-Imperial regimes, and this compels one to ask why people in Wollo would not be allowed to organize self-help associations and help themselves. For instance, Dajjzmach Mamo was the one who replaced the old, corrugated iron sheets of Ayteyefe hall with his own money; and his request for reimbursement was said to be rejected by the Emperor (Oral informants).<sup>48</sup> After serving for seven years he was transferred in 1971, and this move abruptly suspended his multi-faceted developmental initiatives in Wollo. As Taffara asserted, Dajjzmach Solomon Abraham, the Provincial Governor who replaced Dajjzmach Mamo, was "the wrong choice for the problem province: he was only interested in showy displays instead

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46 Oral informants.

47 Oral informants.

48 Oral informants.

of resolving the pressing needs of the people” (Degeufe 292).<sup>49</sup> Dajjasmach Solomon’s removal from office was attributed to his authorization of the dreadful execution in broad daylight in the Dessie Central Square in May 1973 of eight Woyzero Siheen School students who had joined a rally to demand provision of emergency relief assistance to the famine victims. Dajjasmach Legesse Bezu replaced him. Though not formally indicted, both Solomon Abraham and Legesse Bezu, being implicated for not doing enough to forestall the catastrophic Wollo famine, were executed by the Derg in November 1974.

In the mid-1960s, the city’s population, constituting different ethno-linguistic groups, was estimated to be more than 39,000 (of which 3.5% were foreigners); it grew to more than 97,000 in 1994; and in 2005 it jumped to about 170,000. During this time, eight schools were built, including two secondary schools (now more than quadrupled). Water, electricity and health services that had been installed before or during the Italian period and being maintained from time to time were functioning in the 1960s.

Dessie, in 1967, was among the 40 Ethiopian towns selected to be covered by a Grand Master Plan preparation project at national level. Though it was one of the biggest urban centers with a population size of more than 40,000, and the fifth-ranking town in the country, Dessie did not show significant physical changes during this period. Even after piped water had become available in most parts of Dessie, the absence of treated or chlorinated water remained a serious problem in the 1970s. As the 1984 census showed 23.6% of households in Dessie had access to the municipal water supply (Teka 183).<sup>50</sup> This made the per capita water consumption of

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49 In 1971, Dajjach Solomon had “organized an exhibition in Dessie when signs of famine were already evident.” Taffara Deguefe, *Minutes of the Ethiopian Century*. Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2006, 292.

50 Many families washed their own clothes, or they hired washer folk to do the job at the Borkena River using either *endod* (*Phytolacca dodecandra*) or soap, as detergent, and *jendie* (dried hide) or locally-made washbasins manufactured by artisans in the Arada area. People

households very small, and it impeded the regular bathing and washing of clothes. The supply and distribution of electricity was no better than the supply of drinking water. The topography has been a serious challenge in changing the cityscape. As some observers reported, being hemmed in between steep hills, Dessie, consisting of a jumble of buildings and rocky alleys, seemed to defy any effort to introduce orderly town planning. A notable individual worth mentioning in connection with the Dessie town planning is Kegnasmach Tesfaye Teklewold. The city's two-lane main highways with streetlights and the few internal asphalt roads can be attributed to this enlightened person who happened to be the mayor of Dessie since the late 1960s and remained so for a few years even after the 1974 regime change.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, Dessie's moderate weather conditions and its strategic location linking Addis Ababa, Asmara, Assab and Gondar significantly helped the growth of the city and its business activities. Several commercial enterprises emerged, along with a few manufacturing or processing industries, such as the Dessie Soft Drinks and Candy Factories and various types of retailing and service rendering establishments. Most of all, Dessie's cordial and multicultural sensibility of its inhabitants, together with an astonishing interfaith harmony and coexistence, attracted both Ethiopians and foreigners alike, and this helped Dessie become a much more preferred urban center to most other cities in the whole of Ethiopia. Besides hundreds of Eritreans, Italians and Arabs, other foreign nationals (*ferenji*): Greeks, Armenians, Indians (known locally as 'Banyans'), Americans, Britons, French, Yugoslavs, South

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sometimes bathed their bodies in nearby springs (e.g., Ras Yimer; Ras Yazew; Liqa Mekwas Abegaz; Boqequesa, Arera, Sholaw, Qegaw, Sire Minch, Asfa Wossen) or in Desso and Borkena rivers.

- 51 For a comprehensive history of Dessie in the post-Italian period, see Abdu Mohammed, "The History of Dessie Town, 1941–1991," M.A thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1997.

Africans, Filipinos and Swedish origin also resided and worked in Dessie.<sup>52</sup>

Besides the pre-Italian commercial firms, such as Singer (importers of sewing machines) and A. Besse & Co. Ltd. (providers of general merchandise, including corrugated iron sheets and exporters of hides and skin) that had already begun functioning in the early 1930s; Paul Ries & Sons (supplier of Peugeot and pesticides); Seferian & Co. Ltd. and Mitchell Cots (dealers of Volkswagen and Land Rover respectively); Hagbes Pvt. Ltd. Co. (supplier of grain mills); and Amalgamated Ltd. and Ries Engineering (suppliers of mills, agricultural implements and machineries), along with retailer firms such as Elias Papasinos (liquor); Awash Winery; Philips; Rol; Romer and Oris, were among the prominent ones operating in Dessie in much of the post-Italian period.<sup>53</sup> It is worth remembering those who initiated and helped sustain the different manufacturing, business and service-rendering firms in Dessie.

Through relentless personal efforts, many successful business people invested their capital in wholesale trade, service delivery and the provision of essential merchandises, such as coffee,<sup>54</sup> salt,<sup>55</sup> spices and condiments,<sup>56</sup> red pepper,<sup>57</sup> supermarkets/groceries,<sup>58</sup> as well as

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52 Oral informants.

53 Oral informants.

54 Hajji Ali Bayan, Kebede Seid, Ali Mahmud, Hajji Yimam Tessema, Seid Ali Abuye, Nagadras Mohammed Hassen, Sheikh Amenu Soba, Zegeye Worku, Aragaw Ali, Asfaw Tessema, Yimer Tessema, Mohammed Ahmed Kayo.

55 Hajji Mohammed Yesuf (Leslasie), Hajji Mohammed Hassen, Fedlu Mohammed Nur, Hussein Ahmed, Ato Ibrahim, Eshetu Mekonnen, Yimam Mashele, Assen Quorate, Kassaye Woldie.

56 Hassen Korerima

57 Assen Ali, Ahmed Berberie, Sheikh Seid Abdella, Sheikh Hussein, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein.

58 Yilma, Tefera Woldie, Temelso Kahsay, Balila, Tsegaye Gebre Meskel, Zewge and Legesse Araya were the grocers at the forefront.

running different businesses such as gas stations,<sup>59</sup> drug stores/pharmacies,<sup>60</sup> buses, freight<sup>61</sup> and public transport,<sup>62</sup> stationery stores,<sup>63</sup> ready-made garments,<sup>64</sup> fabric,<sup>65</sup> tailors,<sup>66</sup> shoes,<sup>67</sup> kitchen/household utensils,<sup>68</sup> building materials,<sup>69</sup> factories,<sup>70</sup> oil

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- 59 Blata Abdel Malik Gonafer (Total), Valenti (Agip), Habte (Mobil) and Besse Co. initially and later others (Shell).
- 60 Shimeles Adal, Genet Gebre Selassie, Tariku Tamrat, Yimer Abebaw, Ayele, Tessema (Asir Alaqa), Bezabih and Bezuye.
- 61 Hajji Ali Bayan, Badahman, Balambaras/Sergenti, Temelso Kahsay, Abdella Mohammed, Mussa Abdu, Kebede Abegaz, Kassa, Aragaw Ali, Ali Mussa, Ibre Mussa, Hussein Yassin, Hussein Ibrahim, Kebede Bese, Yirgu, Mohammed Seid, Zewge, Amare, Kelifa (Bekri), Johanny, Bekele.
- 62 Mussa Abdu, Usman Sheikh, Gonafer, Bibo, Guido, Berhanu Beshir, Nurayu, Gorfu, Abadi, Yimam Hassen, Ahmed Piccolo, Yimer Adem (founder of *Mashilaye* Transport S.C.) and Ato Abbay are worth mentioning.
- 63 Muqbil, Abdul Latif, Hassen.
- 64 Abdul Latif, Abdul Kerim, Mohammed Amin (James Bond), Mohammed Addis, Marqos Ali.
- 65 Zergaw G/Tsadiq, Alemayehu, Ahmed Ali, Bezabih Aragaw, Ilala Checheso, Yimer Mekete, Worku Siraj, Ato Tekle, Memerie Yemane, Muqabish, Haile Mariam Aragaw, Shiferaw Aragaw, Kassa Kelil, Tefera Kassa, Gebre Yohannes, Beyane, Haile Asege, Waka Debebe, Aragie Chekol, Haile Afata and Several Yemenis.
- 66 Abegaz Asfaw, Assefa Kersima, Balcha Negwo, Kebede Kassa, Melke Gessesse, Getachew.
- 67 Kebede Alwabe, Tesfaye Wolde Mariam (Central), Meskelu, Nuru, Gelaw, Gurara, Haile Giyorgis.
- 68 Gosaye, Mitiswa.
- 69 Ibrahim Dawd, Seid Mussa and Ibre Mussa.
- 70 Soft Drinks Factory producing Teka Cola, Arenchata and Snap Cola of Temelso Kahsay; And a Processing Firm for producing candies (Yegebse, Teter and Djibouti Caramella) of Adam Fedlu and Ali Legasse jointly, and Berhie Araya of Mar, Saat, and Dula Caramella are worth noting.

mills,<sup>71</sup> flour mills,<sup>72</sup> grain cleaning and sifting,<sup>73</sup> laundries,<sup>74</sup> cabs,<sup>75</sup> import–exports, tearooms/cafeterias, <sup>76</sup> hotels/bars/restaurants, <sup>77</sup>

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- 71 Dimitri (Greek); Mohammed Berhan and Hajji Salah Kahsay were pathfinders.
- 72 Ali Afasho; Mohammed Berhan; Vichenso and Johanny; Ras Gebre Hiywot; the brothers Alemu and Molla Gebre Yohannes; Zergaw Gebre Tsadiq; Mohammed Liben; Abdu Yesuf; Aregay; Gerazmach Wolle; Aragie; Hajji Said Rashid; Tefera Woldie; Liben; Ibrahim Gurgie; Yeferenju Wefcho at Robit were some of the individuals working in the field.
- 73 Mahfuz; Mahmud Abdel Wuhab, Badahman (both Yemeni Arabs), and Asfha Wolde Selassie,
- 74 Saba (Temelso Kahsay), atomic (Abegaz Asfaw) and sport (Hassen Ayele)
- 75 Pioneers in the area of taxi (cab) service were Tessema; Seid Ali; Yesuf Mohammed; Redi and Johanny
- 76 Wollo; Andinet; Sheikh Issa; Mitiswa; Sheikh Tahir; Dankalia; Wollo Betaem; Zeray Derese; Amena; Sualih; national sport; Aregay; Gebre Hiywot; creamery (Abdul Menan) were some of the tearooms/cafes in Dessie.
- 77 Lielit Egigayehu (an Italian hotel called Touti per Touti) and Negus Mikael (of Kebede Abegaz); Kadamawi Haile Selassie (Temelso); Asfa Wossen (Yilma); Asmara (Yifru); Aksum (Molla); Teqle (Ilala); Leul Mekonnen (Alemash); Menker Alemu; Yezareyitu Ethiopia; Zacharias; Kifle Mariam Giday; Kebede Abegaz Hotel (still working); Genet (Tenagne); Zerayaqob; Wanza; Dejach Yosef; Etege (Getahun); Touring; Kebede Desta; Belete Alemu; Dessie Hotel (of Ato Abate); Olympic Motel (of Mussie Hector and still in operation) were pioneers in the sector.

water wells,<sup>78</sup> taverns,<sup>79</sup> butcheries,<sup>80</sup> night clubs,<sup>81</sup> movie theatres,<sup>82</sup> bakeries,<sup>83</sup> weapons,<sup>84</sup> jewelry stores, garages,<sup>85</sup> woodwork firms,<sup>86</sup> warehouses/grain stores,<sup>87</sup> barbershops,<sup>88</sup> photographic shops,<sup>89</sup>

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- 78 Abba Kebede, Mesale Solomon, Yatalian Gudguad, Kebede Abegaz, Arab Genda Masjid, Balambaras Mekonnen Gebbi, Liqa Mekwas Abegaz, Touring Hotel, Ato Yesuf and others.
- 79 Taytu Fedlu, Menen Amedie, Emahoy Alemush, Etagegn Woreta, Lakech, Bezunesh Aregeh, Tadelech, Askebiw Mengistu, Basha Wolde Gabriel, Yelfign Teshale, Zeni (Afedest), Zeyneba Awol, Ansha Awol, Zewde Awol, Abba Hagoy (Seraye), Woyraw, Mereb, Nagadras, Gumed were among sellers of Tej (a local beverage made from fermented honey, water and hops (*Rhamnus prinoides*)).
- 80 Amare Tefera, Mekonnen Beyene, Tassew Amenu, Tefera Abegaz, Gezahegn, Cherenet and others
- 81 Kassech Retta, Tsehaynesh Reddie, Ayalnesh College, Aselef Retta, Abebu Jewi, Beletu Woldie, Zufan, Alemitu and Yeshi Neway and Negesti were among the many business women in the area.
- 82 Gregory, Bekele Gebre Meskel
- 83 Hebste Manna (Tefera Woldie), Alene Faris, Dessie Dabbo as well as the famous Wollo Dabbo Bet of Sheikh Indris (still functioning) were at the forefront.
- 84 Marqos Ali, Mohammed Sanni, Hajji Ibrahim.
- 85 Fantini, Parini, Alemu Kassie, Tsehaye Gebre Hiywot, Guido and Burzedini.
- 86 Mario, Deneke, Gebre Kristos, Mengesate Ab, Kiar, Teferra.
- 87 Hajji Yimer Dawd; Hussein Ahmed (Inqulal); Hajji Seid Dawd; Ato Habte: Hajji Mohammed Ahmed; Hajji Yimam Tessema; Abera Ahmed; Habib Mohammed Yayu; Mekonnen Kassa; Ato Kasseye.
- 88 Assefa Shiferaw; Ato Dagne; Ato Zegeye.
- 89 Gebru Negussie; Gebre Tensae; Arefaynie Yimer; Gustabo.

house rentals,<sup>90</sup> and foreign currency (Maria Theresa) exchanges<sup>91</sup>. Despite the various challenges they faced during the Imperial regime, itinerant Muslim merchants travelling to as far as Jimma and beyond in the south, Asmara and Massawa in the north, and Matemma and Humera in the west contributed much to the increase in the number of the entrepreneurial class in Dessie; and this speeded up Dessie's development as a vibrant commercial and metropolitan city. Had it not been for the *joie de vivre* of the business community, Dessie in all probability could have remained a backwater or a semi-urban center. Documenting the role and achievements of the entrepreneurial class in Dessie can be an exciting subject of research in and of itself (Oral informants).<sup>92</sup>

Prior to the 1974 revolution, Dessie was home to a number of football (soccer) clubs, many of which were sponsored by public offices, the business community and private organizations. Football was the major pastime of the Dessie public. At one point in time Dessie had more than 20 football clubs. Mebrat Hayl (of the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority); Negade (of the Dessie Chamber of Commerce); Abba Shanqo, Abba Yitref; Abbay

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90 Among the well-known individuals who built houses and rented them out to businesses, included Hajji Ibrahim Yesuf, Ato Betre, Hajji Abegaz Mussa, Hajji Hassen Reshid, Ato Messele Molla, Balambaras Mekonnen, Kegnazmach Ayehu Jemberie, Blata Abdel Malik (Gonafer), Hajji Ali Bayan, Afe Negus Atnaf Seged, Ras Gebre Hiywot, Sheikh Indris, Haile Afata, Hajji Ibrahim Turie, Hajji Salah Kahsay, Dajjazmach Mohammed Yayu Hanferie, Retta Bisewere, Ayele Goshu, Hajji Mohammed Dawd, Hajji Ibrahim Yesuf, Dajjazmach Mengesha Aboye, Mekonen Lemlem, Hajji Abdu Yesuf, Gerazmach Mussa Abdu, Dejjazmach Yosef Birru and Zebiba Abdella.

91 Beyene Wolde Mariam, Gebre Amlak Godie, Haile Amedie, Alemu Mera, Baye Beyene, Ayehu Mera, Menker Alemu; Gezate Mekonnen. It was due to the currency exchange that the surrounding business area has been known as 'Sheref Terra'. Besides, there were also specific areas supplying coffee, salt, *chat* and red pepper called 'Buna Terra', 'Chew Terra', 'Chat Terra' and 'Berberie Terra'.

92 Oral informants.



Minch; Tekle Haymanot; Walia (of the Provincial Police Department); Merha Tibeb (of the Provincial Teachers' Association); Awra Godana (of the Ethiopian Highway Authority); Tendaho (of the Mitchell Cots Co.), Dessie Wotatoch (of the city's youth), Cheffa (of the Cheffa Agro Industry), Tossa (of Teka Cola Soft Drinks Factory), Tele (of the North Eastern Regional Telecommunications Office), Genzeb Minister (of the Provincial Finance Office), and Gabarie (of the Provincial Agriculture Office) were the proverbial ones. Football matches continued in the post-1974 period, and the clubs: Pepsi; Sopral, Cherqa Cherqe, Mebraq; Hinsta; Zeray Derese; Negade; Police; Andinet, Kefteгна 1, 2 and 3, and Tena were prominent (Oral informants).<sup>93</sup>

### THE DERG PERIOD: 1974–1991

By labeling Wollo 'a disaster-prone zone' and a bastion of 'counter-revolutionary insurgent forces', the Derg regime assigned military officers to administer the province and all twelve the *awrajas* (or districts) of Wollo. With few exceptions, this system of administration lasted until the Derg's demise in the early 1990s. As there was a huge military presence, women from different areas flocked to Dessie to work in the informal sector. Owing to the marginalization of the private sector and the growing dependence on government financing of public institutions, Dessie's development, as happened elsewhere in the country, slowed down greatly. Nonetheless, some developmental projects had been executed. The city's main roads were upgraded; the Teachers Training Institute was established in 1980; office buildings for agriculture (recently demolished), plans and the economy (now Dessie City Administration), Ethiopian pharmaceutical industry, commercial banks, the development bank, and headquarters of the

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93 The Dessie Soccer Clubs of the pre- and post-1974 revolution had produced a number of famous footballers who would play for the national club in Addis Ababa. Ground tennis, volleyball, basketball and even a kind of bowling called *boucha* were also played. Oral informants.

ruling Workers' Party of Ethiopia (currently the Zone Administration) were built. The shop buildings around Mugad were renovated and makeshift structures at Segno Gebeya were also constructed; a significant number of residential houses were built by the Agency for the Administration of Rental Houses (AARH); and three elementary schools (Bilen, Mettero, and Menbere Tsehay) were also built (Oral informants).<sup>94</sup>

Even if there were no remarkable changes in the expansion of urban services in general, Dessie had begun to experience significant demographic and spatial growth. The proclamation of July 1975, which nationalized urban land and extra houses, though thwarted the booming private sector economy, enabled many individuals to build their own residential houses, which had been extremely difficult in the previous regime. The number of *kebeles* rose to twenty with three higher or sub-city administrations. The city expanded in the direction of the Teachers Training College, Dawe Meda, and Karagutu areas. In 1983, about one-tenth of the households in Dessie were supplied with piped water, whereas the majority of the urban dwellers had to collect water either from their immediate neighbors or from the twenty-two distribution points the municipality had erected throughout the town (Tassew 179). A new hydroelectric supply line, replacing the old diesel generator and a microwave telephone network were introduced. The half-baked sports stadium and the widely-renowned Lalibela artistic band were also the result of this period. In the area of healthcare facilities, the military government confiscated the SDA mission hospital in Dessie (also the Leprosarium at Boru Meda), as it did elsewhere, and for the second time its staff was expelled from the country and the hospital was soon reduced to a health center (Oral informants).<sup>95</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Despite its contemporaneousness with Addis Ababa, the newly-founded capital city of the Ethiopian Empire, Dessie, enjoying geo-

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94 Oral informants.

95 Oral informants.

political, commercial and climatic advantages, and harmonious socio-religious interaction of its inhabitants, along with a hard-working entrepreneurial and business community, could not have developed as had been expected. This was due largely to the removal from the political scene of Negus Mikael soon after the overthrow of his son Lij Iyasu in 1917, and the negligent and lethargic attitude the central government had adopted towards Wollo since then. This indifference was expected to be reversed during the Derg regime, a regime that came to the helm of power using the 1973/74 Wollo famine as a political rallying motto to overthrow the purportedly divinely-sanctioned Solomonic Dynasty in Ethiopia. However, in reality, it introduced an unprecedented economic and political tragedy that beleaguered the country for the coming seventeen years. Besides the appointment of military officers throughout the width and breadth of the province, the Derg, like its predecessor which was bent on dismantling what the Italians had installed in the area and systematically preventing the development of Dessie, was unwilling to succor the business class and expedite the economic growth of the city. The same is true of the incumbent administration that came after the Derg in 1991. The government, espousing a system of governance based on ethno-linguistic division of the country and the pervasively corrupt, parochial, nepotistic and massively inefficient local administration, deprived Dessie of capable leadership that would readily provide infrastructural and other social services to the city's fast-growing residents. This has been a serious challenge to most ethnically- and religiously-mixed cities. Thanks to its energetic entrepreneurial and business-savvy individuals, Dessie has been facing up to the challenges posed by the three successive repressive regimes; and it will hopefully overcome the socio-economic and political hurdles that stunted its enormous potential for development.

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# ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHIDO CHURCH AND ITS LINK WITH STATE: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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## **Abstract**

*Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (hereafter, EOTC) is an ancient Church that has passed through several progresses. This review article describes brief historical accounts of the origin and development of the Church in connection to Ethiopian states. When organizing the paper, published and unpublished sources from religious and historical fields were critically reviewed. Sources from Amharic versions were carefully translated to English; and yet Amharic versions were directly used where it is difficult to find equivalent English version. Despite all the efforts made to use the sources cautiously, the reviewer honestly alleges that the data in this review article is by no means exclusively indisputable. There are significant inconsistencies among writers. The sources of the variation could attribute to the authenticity level of the sources and long-established stories the writers used, as well as to the personal and religious prejudice and subjectivity of the writers. To minimize the inconsistencies of facts and figure (dates), maximum efforts were made to follow the most reliable sources and the most accepted traditions.*

*The reviewed sources indicate that the Ethiopian state system and Christianity had been functioning in strong harmony since their inception to the half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As far as the history of introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia is concerned, several hypotheses are put forward, both before and after the Christ Era. The coming of Jews with Menelik I in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B. C. and the arrival of the two Syrian boys in the 4<sup>th</sup> century are the most overwhelming traditions. It was also reviewed that the Christological dispute that emerged among Christian theologians in the 3<sup>rd</sup>*

*and 4<sup>th</sup> century was finalized dividing the theologians into Orthodox and Roman Catholic horizons. Further, it was described that EOTC had been under the Patriarchate leadership of Alexandria, Egypt for 16 centuries until the diplomatic effort of Atse Haile Silassie made it possible to have local Patriarch in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **1. Introduction**

The ancient history of Ethiopia in general and that of Ethiopian states and religions in particular is debatable as sources, both religious and secular, come perhaps from hypothetical myths. Despite the debate, the history of religions is inseparable from the history of states as the state configuration is related to religion activities, specifically Christianity, in Ethiopia in one way or another. As ፍሰሐ ያዜ (2003) and others argue, both social entities have mythological tie with the descendants of Noah, which may probably signify the far antiquity of Ethiopian Christianity and state formation. Other prominent hypothesis regarding their configuration also refers to the pilgrimage of Queen of Sheba of Aksum to the King Solomon of Israel and their son, Menilik I. As some writers assert, it was said to be difficult to determine even which of the two had ultimate power. On one hand, it was observed that in reality the Emperor had more actual political and military power than the Archbishop. The imprisonment, exile and the execution of Abunas in the Ethiopian history could prove the supremacy of Emperors over the Church. On the other, it was the Archbishop who anointed the emperor which the power of the emperor would not be legitimized, otherwise. This could witness the intrinsic power of the Church over the Emperor.

The church came to be related and worked together with the imperial state of Ethiopia mainly after the restoration of the Solomonic Dynasty by Yekuno Amlak in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding the introduction and expansion of the Christianity to Ethiopia, though the Ethiopian people were known to worship different traditional gods before the introduction and expansion of Christianity, the practice of Judaism was believed to start side by side with practice of polytheism since long. Beside the tradition related to the coming of Jewish with Menilik I, there are important historical



myths in this regard. They include the attendance of an Ethiopian pilgrim on the sermon of Peter in Jerusalem, the meeting of Philip with Ethiopian eunuch, the disciple Mathew's pilgrimage to Aksum, and the arrival of the Syrian boy (Frumentius). These may portray that there is accepted tradition that 'belief in one God, the God of Israel' and circumcision were introduced to Ethiopia centuries before Christ Era while baptism and the Eucharist began since the first century.

In the course of its progression, EOTC faced three circumstances. Regarding the first circumstance, the 'Nine Saints' and other foreign saints played significant role for the development of the Church, particularly in the establishment of Monasteries and teaching monks. The second one is the heretic movements emerged in its early age of establishment that caused theological division which laid strong foundation for the other anti-Orthodox movements, notably Catholic Church that would come to challenge EOTC in the long run. As the third condition, the Church was led by foreign Metropolitan for about 1600 years, from 4<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While the fact that the assistance it obtained from Alexandria helped the Church to establish it as a legitimate religious institution, it is also claimed that this dependence on non-native leaders for so long period might have impeded the evangelization magnitude of the Church.

## **2. Ethiopian State Systems in Relation to Christianity**

Historical accounts of Ethiopian state governance links with Christianity from its antiquity. Some myths trace Ethiopian history and its state systems back to the time of Adam. According to some traditions, beginning from the year of 970 after the creation of the world, 22 kings ruled Ethiopia until the time of Noah (ዮሳፍ), the first ruler being Ory (አሪ or ኣሪም) (ፍስሐ ያዜ፣ 2003፣ 12). Other traditions trace it to the time of Noah, the 10<sup>th</sup> generation from Adam, especially after the period of the Flood of Water that is 1656 years after the creation of world or in 3844 B. C. This numerical analysis has some alignment with the religious myth that claims that there was 5500 years between the creation of world and the birth of Christ (3844+1656=5500).

According to the Bible, Noah had three sons (Shem (ሰም), Ham (ሃም), and Japheth (ያፌት)) (Genesis: 6:10), and when the Flood of Water occurred, Noah was at the age of 600 years (Genesis: 7:6). According to ፍስሐ ያዜ (2003: 12) and ኢኦቲቤ (2000:4), after the flood of water, Noah divided the world into 3 regions and shared them to his three sons, central (Asia) for Shem, left side (Africa) for Ham, and right side (Europe) for Japheth.

In the related history, it was believed that after the Flood of Water, Noah came to Ethiopia with his wife (named Aikel) and one of his sons, Ham, while the two sons, remained in their regions. Noah's wife died and was buried at a village called Chilga, near Gonder, whose town was named later 'Aikel' and still called so. While ፍስሐ ያዜ (2003, 20) wrote that Noah stayed in (and ruled) Ethiopia for 350 years (3844-3500 B. C.) and died in Gondart, it was simply stated in Bible that Noah lived 350 years after the flood of water, and died at the age of 950 (Genesis 9:28). Where he lived and where he died is not mentioned in the Bible. It was also believed that after the death of Noah, his son, Ham (3500-2787B. C.) and his grandson, Cush (2787-2545 B. C.) overtook and ruled Ethiopia. Ham and Cush were followed by 22 more consecutive rulers of same ancestors, the last ruler being 'ጲኦሪ 1ኛ' (2000-1985 B. C.). These rulers settled their imperial seats at different locations of the present Ethiopia and further areas. Therefore, the period from Ham (3500-2787 B. C.) to 'ጲኦሪ 1ኛ' referred to Imperial period of Ham's Clan (ካም ዘመነ መንግስት).

During the reign of 'ጲኦሪ 1ኛ', it happened that three clans who were the direct constituents of 'የቅጣን' (the 4<sup>th</sup> generation from Shem), fled from Yemen to Ethiopia escaping from Indian invaders. These clans were Saba, Abal, and Afer; and they settled at Tigray, Adal and Ogade respectively. In the meanwhile, the Indian invaders invaded Ethiopia, too, and overthrown 'ጲኦሪ 1ኛ', the king from the Ham clan. This time, the three clans in the line of Shem, who had settled earlier in Ethiopia confronted and conquered the Indian invaders, freeing the Ham people from the invasion. Then they overtook the empire of 'ጲኦሪ 1ኛ' and crowned Aknahus Saba II (አክናሁስ ሳባ 2ኛ) from Saba clan

of Tigray in 1985 B. C. Aknahus Saba II ruled for 55 years (1985-1930 B. C.) and was followed by other 51 rulers (kings), the last one being Queen of Sheba (1013-982 B. C.) (ፍስሐ ያዜ፡2003፡51-60፤ ኢአተቤ፡2000).

The kings from Saba clan of Tigray (from Aknahus Saba II to Queen of Sheba) were named 'ኢጋዝያን' which means 'liberators'. In Ge'ez, 'ኢጋዝ' means 'to liberate'. Thus the area was named 'ብሔረ ኢጋዝ' and their language was named 'ግዕዝ' (Ge'ez). Hence, the Imperial period of Ham's Clan (ነገደ ካም ዘመነ መንግስት) was shifted to the Imperial period of Shem's clan (ኢጋዝያን ዘመነ መንግስት/ነገደ ሴም ዘመነ መንግስት). This could be one of the hypotheses that Ge'ez was descended from Saba language. In general, following Queen of Sheba (1013-982 B. C.), a total of about 163 rulers ruled Ethiopia until the advent of Zagwe Dynasty in 920. From these rulers, 68 kings were before Christ Era, the last king being Bazin (6 B. C. to 9 A. D.), and about 95 rulers were after the Christ Era, the last king being King Del Naod (910-920). These rulers were also believed to descend from 'ኢጋዝያን፣' (ፍስሐ ያዜ፡2003፡95-98፤ 145-147፤ መሪኔታ አዕምሮ በሪሁን፡2000፡109-115).

Before discussing the Rise of Zagwe Dynasty vis-a-vis EOTC, it seems sound to make brief observation about the governance of Aksumite Kingdom during the reign of King Caleb (Elasbah) (514-543) as its role in the history of Ethiopian state system in relation to Orthodox Church was significant. According to historians and traditions, during the earlier times, vast areas in the world, including Yemen area, were under the rule of Aksumite Kingdom, which was listed as one of the four kingdoms in the world, along with Rome, Persia, and Sileons. There was also a belief that King Caleb of Ethiopia and King Justinian of Rome were once destined by God to meet in Jerusalem and divide the earth between them (Rome and Ethiopia) (Ephrem, 2013:21-23; ብሉታ መርሰዔ ኅዘን፡2011፤ ፍስሐ ያዜ፡2003፡173-179).

Accordingly, under the Caleb's empire, there were different kings at different areas. 'አፌታስሃ', for example, was a Christian king ruling Yemen who was once in conflict with a Jewish king called Phinhas. When the king was conquered by Phinhas, St. Thomas, bishop of the Yemen Christians escaped from the war and came to Aksum to report

the incident to Caleb. Being encouraged by King Justinian of Rome, Caleb marched to Yemen crossing Red Sea with huge troop and completely suppressed the army of Phinhas in 525. Caleb proposed Abreha (EL-Aiba) as a king of Yemen area, but the people did not accept him, rather, they requested the King to crown one of Arabian Christians. Caleb accepted people's request and crowned Ariat (አርያት); however, Abreha protested against Ariat and killed him, after which he made himself a king. Caleb was later made a saint of Ethiopian Church and is still honoured in the Roman calendar on October 27<sup>th</sup>. During those periods, Ethiopia is believed to have been ruled by forms of governor such as *high priests* (Mukarib) like the Melchisedek (Genesis 14:18); then by *Malkanas* (kings); this later adopted the title *Negashi* (originally 'treasurer' or 'tax collector,' which later came to mean simply *king* or *ruler*); and then by the imperial title, *King of Kings* (Neguse Negast), which was used to the recent time by rulers of Ethiopia (ibid).

Since Zagwe Dynasty had significant place in the Ethiopian States and the movement of EOTC in any case, it is praiseworthy examining the Rise of this Dynasty vis-à-vis EOTC. Beginning from the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Ethiopian new Christianity was well spread in the Aksumite Kingdom, and this Christian kingdom put pressure upon the Jews, who were believed to come to Ethiopia long ago, to convert them to the new Christianity. However, the Jews refused to accept the new Christianity and insisted to their religion. In resistance to the imposition of consecutive Christian kings to change their religion, they moved from Aksum area to Semien in Northwest Ethiopia (that is why they are called 'Falasha,' meaning migrated people) (Ephrem, 2013). About three centuries later, they were well settled and populated in the area and elected a leader called Gideon whose daughter was called Aster (later called Yodit). Yodit was married to Christian governor of Lasta Bugina, called Zere Yaeqob, (later named Solomon), who had not recognized her being Jewish, but was later convinced and accepted her. Yodit replaced her father and received the responsibility of leading Jewish community (ፍሰሐ ያዜ፣ 2003; ኢሉተቤ፣ 2000).

In similar Area lived Agaw residents who were believed to be descended from Cushitic race and speak Cushitic language. The people had also been resisting the Christian dominance for long time. In order to liberate the people from the dominance of the Christian Kingdom, the Jews led by Yodit and the Agaw residents living in the Lasta area led by the Zagwe local rulers, began protesting against the Aksumite kings. Yodit, who was said to rule from a fortress, became prominent protester and was able to control Christians in the area using the weakening of Aksumite kingdom by the expansion of the Islamic movement and her marriage to a Christian governor as an opportunity. At this time Ethiopian (Aksum) ruler was ‘ደግኖሃሃ’ (830-849), who was later replaced by his son, Anbesa Wedem, crowned at a very young age. Considering the resisting capacity of Anbesa Wedem, and the weakened army of Aksum, Yodit, marched to Aksum to overthrow the young king, but he escaped to Showa, Menz. Yodit was crowned as a Queen in 850 (some sources say she ruled beginning from 950) in Aksum and began to destroy all Churches, religious treasures, and massacred Christians and clerics in Aksum and the surrounding (Ephrem, 2013; ኢኦተቤ፣2000)

Because of her cruelty, she was given the name ‘Gudit-Judith’ or ‘Isato’, means ‘fire’. Later, she sent her troops to Showa to encounter Anbesa Wedem, but her troops were defeated. She herself also marched to him with other troops, yet could not conquer him for the great support of the surrounding Showa peasants. Hence she returned to Aksum devastating Monasteries and Churches she encountered on her way. It was this time that Arks of the Covenant from Aksum moved to Zeway Islands. Queen Yodit, who ruled for 40 years and died in 890, was believed to be a cruel and destructive woman, as in fact it was asserted that the destruction that took place during her reign took centuries to rehabilitate. Nevertheless, others suggest that she was the first strong ruler after three centuries of the dark age and dormancy creating the centralized Aksum, and eventually giving rise to the Zagwe Dynasty. When Queen Yodit died in 890, Anbesa Wedem returned to Aksum and ruled for 20 years. He devoted to reconstruct the damaged churches and rehabilitate the

Christians and was succeeded by his son, Atse Del Na'od (910-920) (Ephrem, 2013: 219; ፍስሐ ያዜ፣ 2003, 191-195; ኢኦተቤ፣2000፣ 268).

It is to be noted that during the reign of Atse Del Na'od, the last king from solomonic Dynasty, the protest by Lasta Agaw residents and the Jews that started long ago to liberate themselves from the Aksumite dominance continued unsolved. This time, a Lasta Bugina descendent and Atse Del Na'od's chief army, named Mara Tekle Haymanot, married the daughter of Atse Del Na'od and fled to Lasta Bugina. Hence the name 'Zagwe' means 'fled'. (በግዕዝ፣ ዘጉዋዩ ወይም ዘጎዋ ማለት ያሸሸ ወይም ያኮበለለ ማለት ነው) (አባ ሐይለ ገብርኤል፣ 2004፣ 2). Later he marched to Aksum and conquered Atse Del Na'od, while Del Na'od was forced to flee to Showa. Mara Tekle Haymanot, therefore, took over the imperial position and became the first king from Zagwes in 920 and ruled for 13 year. He shifted the imperial seat to Lasta area (mainly Roha and Lalibela). Note that the imperial seats of kings before Zagwe were at Aksum and other towns in the north while after Zagwe, it was shifted to Showa, Gondor and later to Addis Ababa (ፍስሐ ያዜ፣2003፣ 201; Taddesse Tamrat, 1968).

Therefore, Zagwe Dynasty is an imperial system that was ruled by 11 kings crowned from Zagwes/Lasta Bugina residents. The name of the kings ranges from Mara Tekele Haymanot to Yitbarek. Regarding the duration of the dynasty, however, there are two conflicting traditions. One is that it lasted for 333 years (920-1253) (አባ ሐይለ ገብርኤል፣ 2004፣ 2) and the other one gives it only 133 years (12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>). This review paper takes the former into account. Since it was mandatory to be anointed by a bishop to be an emperor, Mara Tekle Haymanot had to request Alexanderian Patriarch to send him a bishop. However, claiming that it was illegal for the non-Solomonic line (out of the house of Esirael) to be emperor, Egypt refused to send a bishop for some time but later the king succeeded to have the bishop and got anointed (ፍስሐ ያዜ፣2003).

Despite its strength, Zagwe Dynasty began to decline mainly because the rulers were unable to solve their internal conflicts. The characteristic weakness in the system of Zagwe succession to the throne greatly facilitated the anti-Lasta movement. The last king of

the Dynasty, King Yetbarek (1245-1253) repeatedly fought with Yekuno Amlak and was finally killed in 1253 at Gaint (መላቀን ታሪኩ፤ 2008፤ 35; Taddesse Tamrat, 1968, 127). Yekuno Amlak, who was the eighth generation of Atse Del Na'od's family, was believed to establish an independent kingdom of his own comprising Amhara and Christian communities of Showa on the eve of the fall of Zagwe Dynasty. Conquering the Zagwes, he took the imperial position and restored Solomonic Dynasty in 1253, after 333 years. Abba Tekle Haymanot, the first Etchege of EOTC, was believed to contribute to the collapse of the Zagwe Dynasty. Thus, the period of Zagwe Dynasty was followed by the second round Solomonic Dynasty and lasted to 1974. However, there was interruption of the central governance during Zamana Masafint for about 86 years (1769-1855). Zamana Masafint was a period of civil war, regional sovereignty and rule by regional chieftain kings (Ephrem, 2013; ፍስሐ ያዜ፤ 2003; ኢትዮጵያ፤ 2000፤ 18-19). It should be noted that the Ethiopia state systems and progress of EOTC, particularly after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is more logical to be judged with the introduction and expansion of the other religions, notably Islamic religion and Catholic Christianity, as it has passed through frequent hostilities with those religions.

In general, the Ethiopian rulers before the revolution of 1974 were undeniably involved in the matter of the Church and the Church in the matter of the state. The important document that led the rulers in the line of religious orientation was 'Kebra Nagast' that was believed to be compiled from legends and traditions (some historical and some mythical) derived primarily from the Old Testament, Jewish *haggadah* and other sources in the first 4 centuries of the Christ era. These traditions first came to be written down in Coptic in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and subsequently translated into Arabic and finally to Ge'ez (Ethiopic) sometime in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that kings are concerned with the conduct of the religious activities and give full protection to the Church and its possession since its establishment also clearly shows their strict association. It was argued that the imperial success of the kings was judged on the basis of their devotion to establish and secure churches and monasteries besides

securing the national sovereignty. Even some kings, including Caleb, Yimrana Kiristos, Gebre Mariam, Lalibela, and Nakuto Leab, were granted the rank of both king and saint (considered as both King and Cleric) recognizing their significant contribution in Church construction and expanding Christianity in Ethiopia.

### 3. Origin and Development of Christianity in Ethiopia

There seem divergent hypotheses about the origin of Christianity in Ethiopia. According to some traditions, the history of the origin of Christianity traces back to the coming of Noah with his wife, Aikel and his son, Ham to Ethiopia (ፍስሐ ያዜ፤ 2003፤ 19; ኢኦተቤ፤ 2000). However, it seems more reliable to trace it to the 10<sup>th</sup> century B. C. traditions. It was believed that Queen of Sheba of Aksum (1013-982 B C) went to Israel to learn government and religion wisdom from King Solomon where she conceived and came back to Ethiopia and gave birth to a son, Menelik I. Her name varies as Maceda in Kebera Negast (The Glory of Kings), Queen of Saba in Metsafa Negast, and Queen Azeb (means 'of south') after Christ. When Menelik I was at the age of 22 (or 20), he went to Israel to visit his father, Solomon. Having acquired the royal wisdom and management, he came back to Ethiopia after three years and became a king at Aksum (982-957 B. C.). Hence the Solomonic Royal Dynasty was founded in Ethiopia (ብሩክ መኮነን፤ 2012; ሙሉቀን ታሪኩ፤ 2008; ኢኦተቤ፤2000).

There is a belief that when Menelik I came back from Israel, he brought the Original Ark of the Covenant of Tsiyon to Aksum with with deacons and priests as well as thousands of descendants of Jews, who brought Holy Books and reserved them for centuries. It was also believed that the religion of Israel (of Jews or of Beta Israel) was introduced to Ethiopia during that time. Basically, Judaism shares a number of customs with Ethiopian Christianity, except that they do not believe in Trinity or do not recognize Jesus as Messiah. Thus there is strong belief that Ethiopia believed in God a thousand years before Jesus Christ Era (Ephrem, 2013; ሙሉቀን ታሪኩ፤ 2008).

Other sources assert that Ethiopia was connected to Christianity during the time of Apostles. Even before the coming of St.



Frumentius to Ethiopia, and before the conversion of King Ezana, it is probable that there were some Christians among the foreign residents of Adulis, Coloe and Aksum and other few converts among their Aksumite servants and commercial associates. The messengers of the kingdom of Aksum, who were travelling to and from Mediterranean countries and Middle East through the Nile and Red Sea, had already spread Christianity in Ethiopia. The Greek-Egyptian traders in transit through Ethiopian ports of the Red Sea were also believed to contribute to the evangelization of Christianity during the earlier times in Ethiopia. Still other stories relate the origin of Ethiopian Christianity to the sermon of Peter (ሐዋሪያው ጴጥሮስ) (one of the 12 disciples of Christ) in the Jerusalem on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14). This time Ethiopian Jewish pilgrims heard a new religion from the sermon of Peter and were converted and spread Christianity in Ethiopia (Ephrem, 2013; ሙሉቀን ታሪክ፣ 2008).

Yet, others trace the origin of Ethiopian Christianity to the meeting of Philip (ፊልጶስ), the deacon, with Ethiopian eunuch (named ባኩስ) of Queen Candace Aksumite court in the first half of 1<sup>st</sup> century, and the eunuch's subsequent baptism, as recorded in the Bible (Acts 8:26-40). Another hypothesis was that disciple Matthew (ደቀመዝሙር ማቴዎስ) travelled to Aksum to preach Christianity, which thereafter spread throughout the land. On the basis of the above hypothetical descriptions, there is a belief that when St. Frumentius arrived at Ethiopia, he found considerable Christian Communities (Ephrem, 2013, 277-280; Taddesse Tamrat, 1968). According to Dr. Aba Ayele (2000), St. Jerome (349-420), writing from Jerusalem says that among the pilgrims, there were many Ethiopian monks (literarily he says: 'We welcome every day many monks coming from India, Persia and Ethiopia').

Well sourced proposition of the establishment of Ethiopian Christianity is associated with the arrival of Frumentius. In the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (others say in the first half of 4<sup>th</sup> century), when Aksumite Kingdom was at the height of its power, two Syrian Christian boys (Aedesius and Frumentius) from Tyre (an ancient city

and capital of the Phoenicia kingdom on the eastern coast of Mediterranean Sea) were captured from trade ship and taken to King Ell-Amida's court at Aksum. When king Ell-Amida died, Frumentius became the advisor for the wife of the king. Some years later, when Ezana became a king, Aedesius went back to Tyre while Frumenatius began to encourage the spread of Christianity. He preached and baptized King Ezana and his brother, Saezana (also called Abreha and Atsebeha), sons of king Ell-Amida.

In the first half of 4<sup>th</sup> century, King Ezana became the first Christian king of Aksumite Kingdom and he sent Frumentius to Alexandria to request Archbishop for his Kingdom. Frumentius told Patriarch Athanasius (328-373), the 20<sup>th</sup> head of Coptic Church of Egypt, of the future promising predictions of the Church in Aksum appealing to him to send Archbishop to guide these worshippers. The Patriarch considered the enthusiasm of the young Syrian and consecrated himself and sent to Aksum. Frumentius, the first Archbishop of Ethiopia, was named Abuna Salama (Father of Peace) and Kesate Birhan (Revealer of Light). Some historians, however, argue that the conversion of the king to Christianity in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century was also motivated by the economic and cultural influence of Eastern Mediterranean area (Ephrem, 2013: 19; ብሉታ መርስዔ ኅዘን:2011: 2; መሉቀን ታሪክ: 2008: 21).

Hence in the fourth century A.D., Christianity became the official state religion of the Aksumite kingdom and was recognized internationally as legitimate national religion to the end of the Imperial Regime in 1974. In Aksum and other areas, along the major routes to the coast, former temples were converted into churches, and new places of Christian worship were established. St. Mariam Tsiyon Church, the first Ethiopian Church, which was privileged to host the original Ark of the Covenant, was built by Abuna Salama in Aksum, the Holy City. As religious scholars agree, since the EOTC was established in Ethiopia, no substantial doctrinal change took place (Ephrem, 2013:19; ብሉታ መርስዔ ኅዘን:2011; Taddesse Tamrat, 1968).

In relation to the early history and expansion of Ethiopian Christianity, the other most important development was the

introduction of Monasticism into Ethiopia. More than a century later, after Ezana's conversion (479-487), the traditions of the Christianity show significant progress in the Kingdom of Aksum with the arrival of groups of foreign missionaries. At the beginning, 100 saints were sent to Aksum to weaken Aksumite governance (but other writers say they were forced to migrate to Ethiopia and Egypt when they were persecuted by the Byzantine Empire because they rejected the anti-monophysite decision of the Chalcedon Congress held in 451). While one saint died on the travel, 99 reached Aksum in 479/480. However, 90 of them were detected acting against the doctrine of Ethiopian Orthodox Church and were exiled, but 9 of them, who agreed to the doctrine of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, remained at Aksum. These monks were called "The Nine Roman Saints," or 'Nine Saints' (Tasatu Qiddusat, Zetegnu Menekosat) (ፍስሐ ያዜ፣ 2003, 171; Dr. Aba Ayele; 2000, 280; ኢኦተቢ፣ 2000፣ 17).

These saints contributed to the institutionalization of monasteries and the life of monks. During this time, famous Monasteries were built by the 'Nine Saints' in Ethiopia. Debre Damo Monastery was founded by Abba Za-Mikael or Aba Aregawi Manfasawi (the older, from Rome). Abba Pantalewon (from Rome) founded his monastery at Asabo near Aksum. Abba Isaaq (Gherima) (means performing miracles) (from Rome) founded a monastery in Medera, east of Aduwa. Abba Afse (from Asia) founded a monastery in the pre-Aksumite Sabeen capital of Ethiopia, Yeha, some 25kms from Aksum. Abba Guba (from Greece) founded his hermitage near that of Abba Gherima, West of Medera. Abba Alef (from Kisaria) founded the monastery of Dabra Haile Luya to the northwest of Aksum. Abba Yem'ata or Mata (from Italy) founded famous church of Debre Libanos in the region of Gheralta (Hausien) northern Eritrea. Abba Liqanos (from Constantinople) founded the monastery of Dabra Qonasel, on the hill north of Aksum. Abba Sahma or Os (from Syria) (Sahma means 'bearded,' settled on a plateau, similar to that of Dabra Damo, southeast of Aduwa (ibid).

It was also believed that most of the holy books used then were the translations of the books they brought to Ethiopia. They

strengthened Ethiopian Christianity by learning Ge'ez language and, along with Ethiopian scholars, translating Bible and many other religious books from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages into Ge'ez language of Ethiopia. For instance, the Gospel of St. Matthew is believed to be translated by Abba Mata. Although there was lack of trained candidates for the services of the church, and the absence of books in Ethiopic that had faced the church in its evangelization scheme, the foreign monks' initiative generally contributed a great deal to alleviate these problems and to strengthen the position of the church in the country. In response to the favour they made, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has designated many Churches by the name of these saints that include Abba Gerima, Abba Pentelion, Abba Aregawi etc. (Dr. Aba Ayele, 2000, 280; Taddesse Tamrat, 1968).

Though Orthodox Christianity became an institutionalized religion right from 4<sup>th</sup> onwards, its progress from mid-7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by latent development and tolerance for it was overwhelmed by the Islamic dominance. Moreover, because of the lack of sufficient sources, very little is known about the history of EOTC at that time. Regarding the development of EOTC after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as was pinpointed in the forgoing section, it seems to be better observed with the movements of religions other than Orthodox Church, mainly Islamic and Catholic movements.

#### **4. Early Theological Dispute on the Christology and the Stand of EOTC**

The appearance of the heretical doctrines against the Orthodox Christianity traces back to the time before the Council of Nicean of 325 E.C. The first heretics were called Dynamic Monarchianists, Gnostics, Ebonists, and Dosetists. Dynamic Monarchianists preached saying that Christ was not originally divine in nature but it was because of His good cause and during His baptism that He was ordained and became Son of God (በመንፈስ ቅዱስ በፀጋ ከበረ). This faith was excommunicated and rejected on the conference of Antioch in 268 E. C. and also on the council of Nicean. This faith was also reappeared

during the reign of Emperor Susenyos and confused Christians in the name of 'ቅባት፤ ፀጋ' (መጋቤ ሐዲስ ሮዳስ ታደሰ፤ 2012).

Gnostics were those who had deviant perception about human flesh and then denied the 'True Man True God' nature of Christ (ፍፁም ሰው ፍፁም አምላክ). Ebonists on their part believed that Christ was ordained during His baptism and they degraded the divine nature of Christ to human nature though they accepted that He was born from St. Mary. Other than this, Dosetists denied the incarnation or 'True Man' nature of Christ ('ፍፁም ሰው' ወይም 'የክርስቶስን በስጋ በእውነት መገለጥ'). The other heretical belief was the faith preached by Arius (አርዮስ) that completely denied the divine nature of Christ. The implication of this faith was against the Holy Trinity, the 'True Man True God' nature as well as divine features of the Christ. Arius as well as his belief was rejected on the Council of Nicean during the reign of Pope Sylvester and Emperor Constantine by the 318 clerics/fathers including the archbishops from Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople and Antioch (መጋቤ ሐዲስ ሮዳስ ታደሰ፤ 2012).

The serious heresy in the post-Nicean Conference was the sermon of Nestorius (ንስጥሮስ) (the Patriarch of Constantinople) denying the fact that Jesus Christ was born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of the man, but of God, and the Word became Flesh (John; 1:13-14 of Bible). Nestorius preached the two nature of Christ. This faith was excommunicated and rejected by 200 clerics on Council of Ephesus (ጉባኤ ኤፌሶን) in 431 E. C. Following this portrayal, the Roman pope, Lion, strengthened the teaching of Nestorius that resulted in the important council held to the doctrine of the two nature of Christ, Council of Chalcedon (ጉባኤ ኬልደዶን) in 451, carried out by 636 clerics (Ephrem, 2013; መጋቤ ሐዲስ ሮዳስ ታደሰ፤ 2012፤ 463; Dr. Aba Ayele, 2000).

On the Council of Chalcedon, the proposed doctrine was rejected by the five Oriental Churches that include Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, the Coptic Church, Armenian Church, Syrian (Antioch) Church, and the Indian Malabar Church. The doctrinal position held by these churches at this council is generally Monophysitism, the doctrine that in the person of the incarnate

Christ there was but a single, divine nature (የአንድ ባህርይ ሐይማኖት), not Eutychism, the doctrine of the two nature of the Christ (የሁለት ባህርይ ሐይማኖት). Abuna Dioscorus, the 25<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of Alexandria, who was banished as a heretic on the council, was the chief exponent of this doctrine at the council, and he is regarded as a saint and is still commemorated in Ethiopian liturgical calendar on 4<sup>th</sup> of September and 14<sup>th</sup> of October (ibid).

As the result of the Christological question that is the disagreement between the stand of Roman Catholic Church and Oriental Churches including EOTC on the nature of Christ, there became division between the two religious doctrines, Orthodox Church and Catholic Church since 451. Therefore, the theology of the EOTC today is the theology of the first three major councils of Christendom (Council of Antioch, Council of Nicea, and Council of Ephesus). In contrary to the decision on the 4<sup>th</sup> council at Chalcedon in 451, it is not Eutychian but Monophysitism; it teaches the ‘True Man True God’ (ፍፁም ሰው ፍፁም አምላክ) theory.

## 5. The Archbishopric Headship of EOTC: The History of Quest and Success for Independence

As it was discussed in section 3, the history of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church depicts that the Church began to be led by Archbishop or Abuna who had been sent from Alexandria (Egypt) since 4<sup>th</sup> century. The first Ethiopian Abuna (Archbishop) sent from the Alexandria was Abuna Salama (Kassate Berhan) in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. According to ብሉታ መርሐኤ ጎዘን (2011, 2) since then, 110 Archbishops came to lead EOTC until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the last Archbishop being Abuna Qerlos V. The figure and chronological order of the Egyptian Archbishops, however, vary in different sources. For example, Dr. Aba Ayele (2000, 150-156) lists 113 Egyptian Archbishops who led EOTC.

Despite the large contribution of Egyptian Archbishops to the development of the EOTC for the 16 centuries, the Ethio-Egyptian relation in this regard was not without hardships for different reasons. Some Archbishops were observed acting against the

Ethiopian interest resulting in significant interruptions. For example, according to ዲ/ን ፋንታ ታደሰ (1997), Aba Sawiros made agreement with the Wazir of Egypt to encourage the propagation of Muslims and allowed them to build 7 Mosques without the permission of the king. There was also observation of the limitation of the evangelization by foreign leaders of Orthodox Church to the satisfaction level of Ethiopian people. As the result of these and other inconveniences, there were intermittent assignments of Ethiopian abbots as Metropolitans. Among these is Aba Mikael I, towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Anbesa Wedem (890-910). The other Abbot was Abba Salama (nick-named “ZaAzeb” (of the south) during the rule of Del Na’od (910-920). There was also interruption because of the reluctance on the side of Alexandria to send bishop when the imperial seat was shifted from the ascendants of House of Israel to the Zagwes until the reconciliation was made later towards the end of 10<sup>th</sup> century (Ephrem, 2013; Dr. Aba Ayele, 2000: 162).

Moreover, after the death of Aba Matewos, in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, Abba Tekle Haymanot (1215-1313) (the first Etchege) was said to have led Ethiopian Church as an Archbishop for some time, until Aba Yohanes was sent. This time it was difficult to obtain Archbishop from Alexandria because of the crusade, the battle carried out by Western Christians to liberate Jerusalem, the holy city, from Muslims that lasted from the end of 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Others, however, argue that Abba Tekle Haymanot was not Abuna (Archbishop) but an influential Abbot (Etchege) of Debre Libanos Monastery and decision maker with the existing kings on the fate of Ethiopian Church. It was also believed that there was no Egyptian Archbishop from 1546- 1632, during the prominent period of Catholic missionaries in Ethiopia (ጥበቃ መርህ ግዛት: 2011; Dr. Aba Ayele, 2000).

Note that the Etchege was a Church hierarchical authority who was appointed by the emperor and was always a native of Ethiopia. Theoretically, Etchege was second in rank to the Abuna while, in actual practice, he exercised more power than the Abuna. He served as an administrative head of the church and has jurisdiction over monasteries, and was also considered as a government official. The

first Etchege was Abba Tekle Haymanot of Debre Libanos whereas the last was Gebre Giorgis the Mida (Showa), who later became the first Ethiopian Archbishop and the Patriarch of EOTC. Altogether, there were 58 or 59 Etchege from 1268-1959. Thereafter, the role of Etchege and that of Patriarch has been consolidated and carried out by the Patriarch (Ephrem, 2013, 202; ብሉታ መርሰዔ ኅዘን፣2011).

The Ethiopian desire to have Ethiopian Archbishop and Patriarch was a long time wish that passed through long process and finalized in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. During the reign of Harbe (Gebre Mariam) (1125-1164), there was strong attempt to have Ethiopian Episqoposes to preach the people moving at different provinces in the country and expand Christianity. Hence the king requested the Ethiopian Archbishop, Aba Mikael to assign 10 Episqoposes to give this service. However, Aba Mikael had to take recognition from the Egyptian Patriarch, Aba Gebriel, for the assignment, but the Egyptian Patriarch was unwilling to do so. The intention of the Patriarch was that if Episqoposes were assigned from Ethiopians, Ethiopia would clam for complete independence that would interrupt the Egyptian hegemony and would block the gift sent from Ethiopia. The desire of the Ethiopian king to shift the EOTC head from Alexandria to Ethiopia resulted in conflict with the Egyptian Patriarch. This further extended to the disagreement between the Ethiopian King and the people (ብሉታ መርሰዔ ኅዘን፣2011; ፍስሐ ያዜ፣2003).

Other Ethiopian kings were also consecutively making efforts to have Ethiopian Archbishops to lead EOTC. After the death of Abuna Athanasius, Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) also wrote letter to Egyptian Patriarch to consecrate one Archbishop and several Ethiopian Episqoposes. Nevertheless, the Egyptian Patriarch appointed an Archbishop, Abuna Petros and other three Episqoposes (Abuna Markos, Abuna Lukas and Abuna Matewos, all are Egyptians) at Cairo in 1881. Abuna Petros was replaced by Abuna Matewos in 1882. Later after the death of Abuna Matewos in 1926, Ras Teferi, the would be emperor, requested Egyptian Patriarch to send one Egyptian Archbishop who had to come and choose a candidate from Ethiopian abbots to be metropolitan to lead EOTC.



After successive discussions and Ras Teferi's diplomatic effort, Abuna Qerlos V was sent, and five Ethiopian bishops were consecrated by the Egyptian Patriarch at Cairo on September 25, 1929 to assist Abuna Qerlos V (ብላታ መርስዔ ኅዘን፣ 2011፣ 5; Dr. Aba Ayele, 2000; ኢትዮጵያ፣2000).

These bishops were:

1. Abuna Mikael (West Ethiopia)
2. Abuna Yeshaq (Tigry and Semien)
3. Abuna Petros (Wollo and Lasta)
4. Abuna Abreham (Gojam and Gondor)
5. Abuna Sawiros (As he was unable to travel to Cairo for sickness, Abuna Sawiros was consecrated 7 months later when Egyptian Patriarch visited Ethiopia in January, 1922 E. C.)

Note that Abuna Petros and Abuna Mikael were the ones that were ruthlessly assassinated by Italian Fascist).

Abuna Qerlos V crowned Teferi as Haile Silassie I in St. Georgis Church on November 2/1930. When Italian occupied Ethiopia in 1936, it banished Abuna Qerlos V and appointed Abuna Abreham of Gojam and Gondor in his place, while Abuna Qerlos V remained in office until 1947. This issue was narrated by ብላታ መርስዔ ኅዘን (2011, 13) differently. He said that Abuna Qerlos V went to Rome in July, 1937 and then to Egypt and stayed there. Since the patriarchate seat became vacant for months, the Ethiopian church leaders coming from different corners of the country convened conference and assigned Abuna Abreham as Ethiopian Archbishop in November, 1937. Whichever the way may be, Abuna Abreham's appointment was true and he consecrated soon other bishops to assist him. These appointed bishops were:

1. Abuna Yohannes - Showa
2. Abuna Marqos - Eritrea
3. Abuna Salama - Harer
4. Abuna Matewos - Welo, later Wolayta

5. Abuna Gabriel - Gonder
6. Episcopos Abba Luqas - Welega

Though Italian occupation somehow helped the realization of the Ethiopian desire for the religious autonomy, the Egyptian Coptic Church reacted to the action of Italians and excommunicated the newly elected Ethiopian Archbishop, Abuna Abreham in December, 1937. When Abuna Abreham died in July, 1939, 72 Ethiopian Church leaders made a conference and assigned Abuna Yohannes of Showa as an Ethiopian Archbishop in September, 1939. The new Archbishop also appointed four more bishops and one Episcopos (ብላታ መርሰዔ ጊዘን፣ 2011፣ 14; ኢኦተቤ፣2000). They were:

1. Abuna Matias - Showa
2. Abuna Gorgorios - Wolo
3. Abuna Filipos - secretary of the Archbishop
4. Abuna Atenatewos - Gojam
5. Abba Qerlos - Eritrea

However, when Haile Silassie returned from exile in England in 1941, he banned Abuna Yohannes and other bishops from their work to give recognition to the Egyptian excommunication and to maintain the relation between the Egyptian patriarchate and EOTC, before the negotiation for the independence began in February, 1942. In May, 1942, Abuna Qerlos V, who left the Ethiopian Patriarchate seat during the Italian invasion, and other three delegates came from Egypt for negotiation. While the three delegates returned to Cairo in June, 1942, Abuna Qerlos V was let take over the seat of Archbishop and Abuna Yohannes left the Archbishop position until the agreement was reached (ብላታ መርሰዔ ጊዘን፣2011፣ 17; ኢኦተቤ፣2000፣ 22-30).

As the result of the death of Egyptian Patriarch, Abuna Yohannes in June, 1942, the negotiation delayed for some years. Although the negotiation continued after one and half a year, during the new Patriarch, Abuna Makarios, it was once again interrupted because of the death of the new Patriarch in September, 1944. The consecutive

discussions during the Acting Egyptian Patriarch, Abuna Athanasius was not fruitful. When the new Egyptian Patriarch, Abuna Yosab II was consecrated in May, 1946, a protocol of agreement that forbids the right of Ethiopian Archbishop to consecrate bishops and Episkoposes was provided for discussion but Ethiopian discussants rejected the protocol. For this reason, the negotiation was interrupted for two more years. Nevertheless, in July, 1948, an agreement was signed and 5 Ethiopian bishops were consecrated by Abuna Yosab II at Cairo, Egypt on July 29/1948 . It was also reached an agreement that from these bishops, one would be consecrated as an Ethiopian Archbishop that would be realized after the death of Abuna Qerlos V (ብሉታ መርስዔ ኅዘን፣2011፣21). The five bishops were:

1. Abuna Basilios (Gebre Giorgis, the last Etchege) - Showa
2. Abuna Mika'el (Memihir Gerima) - Gondor
3. Abuna Timotios (Memihir Getahun)-Sidamo
4. Abuna Ya'qob (Memihir Zefere Berhan) -Wellega
5. Abuna Tewoflos (Lika-Siltanat Meliktu) – Harer

When Abuna Qerlos V died on October 22, 1950 in Cairo, based on the agreement signed earlier, Abuna Basilios was consecrated as the **FIRST ETHIOPIAN ARCHBISHOP** of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church at Cairo on 13/5/1951 (6/5/1943 E. C) (ብሉታ መርስዔ ኅዘን፣2011፣21).

Later on, to set a policy and procedure as to how to develop the status of the EOTC leadership to Patriarch level and the electoral procedure of a patriarch, several discussions were held with Egyptian Patriarchs which took more than eight years. Finally, the protocol was signed between the delegates of the two churches and approved by the Patriarch, Abuna Qerlos VI of Egypt on June 25/1959 (ሰኔ17/1951). Four days later, on 29/10/1959 (ኢሁድ፣ ሰኔ 21/1951 E. C.), Abuna Basilios was consecrated at Cairo, Egypt as the **FIRST ETHIOPIAN PATRIARCH** of EOTC (ብሉታ መርስዔ ኅዘን፣ 2011፣ 48; ኢ.አተ.ቤ፣ 2000፣ 22-30; Dr. Aba Ayele, 2000).

Therefore, Ethiopia declared the independence in consecrating its Archbishops and Patriarchs of EOTC from within in 1959. Abuna Basilios served from 6/5/1943 to 21/10/1951 E.C. as a first Archbishop and from 21/10/1951 to 1/2/1963 E.C. as a first Patriarch of EOTC. This was a big success of the efforts exerted for centuries in the history of EOTC headship. From then on, the Church has been consecrating its own Patriarchs and Bishops by its own right. The Ethiopian Patriarchs and their patriarchate time are described in the Table below.

**Table 1: Name of Ethiopian Patriarchs of EOTC and their Consecration time**

No.	Name of the Patriarchs	Consecration Period (E.C.)
1	Abuna Basilios	6/5/1943 - 1/2/1963, both as Archbishops and Patriarchs
2	Abuna Tewoflos	1/9/1963 - 9/6/1968
3	Abuna Tekle Hymanot	23/12/1968 - 28/9/1980
4	Abuna Marqorios	29/12/1980 - 28/12/1983
5	Abuna Pawolos	5/11/1984 - 10/12/2004
6	Abuna Matias	2005- present

Note that Abuna Marqorios was deposed from the patriarchate seat during the overthrow of Derg by EPRDF in 191983 E.C. and was exiled until 2010 E.C. Since 2010 E.C, his holiness returned back to Ethiopia and is considered as an Ethiopian patriarch along with Abuna Matias. However, his role is limited to blessing service with no administrative role on the Church activities.

## Conclusion

There are several hypotheses regarding the introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia. The prominent hypothetical sources include the history of the coming of Bete Israel with the son of Queen of Sheba and Solomon (Menelik I) in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B. C., the sermon of apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and the arrival of the Syrian boys in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Although there is strong belief that Ethiopians believed in

one God long before Jesus Christ Era and Christianity began to spread early after Christ Era, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church was established as a religious institution in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the expansion of Orthodox Christianity and institutionalization of Churches and Monasteries, the role of the 'Nine Saints' and other apostolic missionaries from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards was significantly recognized.

The Christological dispute that emerged in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century brought about the disagreement among Christian community. The source of the dispute was mainly the issue of the nature of Christ that called for different conferences, namely Council of Antioch, Council of Nicea, Council of Ephesus and Council of Chalcedon. This last council, held in 451, came up with theological division between Roman Catholic Church (the followers of the Two nature of Christ or Eutychians) and the five Oriental Orthodox Churches including EOTC (the followers of the One nature of Christ or Monophysitians, 'True Man True God' (ፍፁም ሰው ፍፁም አምላክ)). This further resulted in the isolation of EOTC from Rome for several centuries.

Traditions prove that the Ethiopian Christianity was tied with the state system in Ethiopia from its very antiquity. The fact that the assumed descendants of Solomon through Menilik I ruled Ethiopia from the 10<sup>th</sup> century B. C. to the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century verify Ethiopia as the legitimate successor of Israel and that the kings of Ethiopia are of Devine origin could indicate the case. The welcoming, accommodating and full protection that the kings used to grant the missionaries/saints coming from abroad, for example, the 'Nine Saints', also show clear association. Besides, the role that Aba Tekle Haymanot played in the restoration of the Solomonic Dynasty in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was another indicator of the strong amalgamation of the two. Specifically, since the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the dethroning of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 (for about 700 years), Christianity became state religion and the church came to be related and worked together with the imperial state of Ethiopia.

Despite the strong support it gained from the state, EOTC had never succeeded in ensuring autonomy for 16 centuries (4<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>) as

far as the Church Patriarchate administration is concerned. In this period, 110 or 113 patriarchs led EOTC until Abuna Basilio replaced the last Egyptian Patriarch, Abuna Qerlos V. Various kings, particularly Gebre Mariam (Harbe) and Atse Yohanes IV, are known for exerting much effort to bring about the autonomy of EOTC in terms of Patriarchate leadership. Thanks to the diplomatic capacity of Atse Haile Silassie, it was made possible that the first local EOTC Patriarch was consecrated in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## **POST-1991 INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN WOLLO: THE OROMO AND THE AFAR**

Endris Ali Haider

### **Abstract**

*The article deals with inter-ethnic tensions between the Afar and the Oromo in southeastern Wollo following the introduction of the new federal form of government in Ethiopia. The region Southeastern Wollo has been historically inhabited by the Afar, Oromo, Argobba and Amhara ethnic groups. These ethnic groups had been interacting for the last several centuries. Before 1991, there were changes in the territorial restructuring of this region for administrative convenience and for easing tensions that erupted from time to time. The communities inhabiting this region had lived peacefully except with some intermittent conflicts due to their competition for grazing and agricultural lands. The situation had been largely changed with the introduction of the new ethno-linguistic regional administrative structure in 1991. Data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Besides consulting written materials, valuable data from field work and archival sources of the various administrative offices of the Oromia special zone in Amhara region have been closely examined. In addition, knowledgeable oral informants were also interviewed to collect information pertinent to the issue under consideration.*

**Key Words:** Afar, Oromo, Ethnic Conflict, Ethiopia, Ethnic Interaction, Southeastern Wollo

## INTRODUCTION

Historically, Ethiopia is a home for several ethnic-groups speaking different languages and espousing different religions and culture. The peoples of Ethiopia had been involved in different socio-political-economic interactions among each other for many centuries. "This complicated pattern of contacts and relations between the various groups can be understood on the basis of specific ethnic and religious structures rooted in Ethiopia's historical development."<sup>1</sup>

Ethiopia as a sovereign country was able to successfully deal with foreign aggressors and was able to protect its culture and national interest for a long period of time. Ethiopians have a good experience of setting aside their disagreements and standing together whenever foreign aggressors invaded or threatened to invade their country. As described by Rubenson, "there was a resemblance of the idea of nationhood in the guise of hatred against the whites."<sup>2</sup> This was the result of a skillful leadership of its leaders, the strong nationalistic pride and solidarity of its people that eventually kept the impregnability of the country to external aggressors.<sup>3</sup> The Italians in an attempt to invade Ethiopia in the 1890s believed that Ethiopians were incapable of acting out as patriotic nationalists; hence, they assumed incorrectly that tribalism could divide Ethiopians which would eventually make it hard for them to fight against European colonialism.<sup>4</sup> However, their assumption was proved to be futile as the Ethiopian people successfully repulsed the Italian aggression with a strong sense of unity in diversity. "It is not difficult to imagine how the history of Ethiopia would have turned out if the people were

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1 Alexander Krylow, "Ethnic Factors in Post Mengistu Ethiopia." In Abebe Zegeye, et al (eds.) *Ethiopia in Change, Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.231

2 Sven Rubenson, *the Survival of Ethiopian Independence*. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University press, 1976), P.241

3 Ibid.

4 Ayele Bekere. "Remembering Adwa: Ethiopia's Victory in 1896 Halted Italy's Ambitions in Africa" *Tadias Magazine*, March 2, 2009

locked in their respective ethnic particularism in the face of foreign aggression,”<sup>5</sup> argued Rubenson.

The Ethiopians particularly since the early 1990s have been entangled with various forms of ethnic conflicts. These internal conflicts pose serious challenges to maintain their best collective experiences of resisting outside enemies and to work towards bringing national unity, economic prosperity and building a democratic system. “Ethiopians in particular are now embroiled in ethnic conflicts more than a century after a victory [at Adwa] that was seen by many as the conclusive proof of the existence of an Ethiopian nation free from the kind of conflicts.”<sup>6</sup>

Following the demise of the Derg regime in 1991, the newly established EPRDF government had introduced an ethnic-based federal system of state structure. This transformation was seen by some analysts as “both radical and pioneering.” It was radical because it came up with the principle of allowing self-governance rights to regional states which were used to be administered under a unitary state, and pioneering because “Ethiopia has gone further than any other African state in using ethnicity as a fundamental organizing principle.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the new political arrangement and the subsequent restructuring of regions based on ethnic lines was not without problems as it brought “sets of opportunities and challenges” in the process of managing inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts in the country.<sup>8</sup> One of the serious challenges that the Federal Government

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5 Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, p.3

6 Paulos Milkias and Getachew Metaferia (eds) *The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory Against European Colonialism.*, (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), p.5

7 Donald, Levine, *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian experience in comparative perspective*, David Turton (ed), (Ohio University Press, 2006). p.1

8 Asnake Kefale, *Federalism: Some Trends of Ethnic Conflicts and their Management in Ethiopia*, in *the Quest for Social Peace in Africa: Transformations, Democracy and Public Policy*, (Addis Ababa: OSSREA, 2002), p.67

cannot still resolve is delimiting the boundaries of the regional states. This is mainly because the system is proved to be incompatible in dealing with the complex administrative and political issues arising from the diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups inhabiting the newly carved administrative regions.<sup>9</sup> This in turn had produced interminable inter-ethnic confrontations and violent conflicts in almost all places where geographical boundaries were redrawn by dividing ethnically contiguous areas.

According to Abbink, “insecurity over boundaries, and over local authority and in the absence of strong central political administration have led to violent confrontation” among the various ethnic groups.<sup>10</sup> Some of the reasons for violence include robbery, cattle raiding, claiming the territory of others by force, and at times they escalated from small skirmishes to large scale warfare.<sup>11</sup>

### **Ethnic Relations between the Oromo and the Afar**

The problems indicated above have been very common in the escarpment areas of Southeastern Wollo and Northeast Shewa where there has been an intense competition over access to natural resources among the Afar, Oromo and Argobba ethnic groups. When the EPRDF seized power in 1991, the boundary of these ethnic groups was decided on the basis of their habitation where the majority of the Oromo in Northeast Shewa and Southeastern Wollo were to be incorporated into the Oromia zone of Amhara Regional State. The previous regimes in the past had made frequent changes in the administrative divisions. This was mainly done to ensure their

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9 Ibid.

10 Jon Abbink, “Ethnic conflict in the Tribal Zone: the Dizi and Suri in Southern Ethiopia”, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 31.4(1993), p.675

11 Getachew Kassa, “the Gari and Borana Conflict in Southern Ethiopia: Past and Current Attempts of Mediation and settlement”, in *the Quest for Social Peace in Africa, Transformations, Democracy, and Public Policy*, (Addis Ababa: OSSREA, 2002) p. 53.

political control over the population.<sup>12</sup> In the 1880s and 90s the Oromo who inhabited Cheffa were ruled by the Wollo and Shewan rulers.<sup>13</sup> In the imperial period and in the early years of the military regime, the area to the northeast of Borkena River was put under Wollo administrative region while south and west of Borkena River was part of Shewa governorate general. During the Derg, the major part of the now Oromia zone was placed under south Wollo administration.<sup>14</sup> Under the current zonal administrative structure, among the 10 Amhara Regional State zones four of them have common borders with the 3 administrative zones of the Afar National Regional State. This had profoundly changed the pattern of relationship among the various ethnic communities living in the various administrative regions. As Ali has clearly stated the situation:

The current political context has also exacerbated the traditional competition over access and use of resources (pasture and water) and territorial disputes. Claims and counter claims over the control and ownership of resources found at the frontier between the pastoral and sedentary areas have escalated after the introduction of ethnic federalism. The nature of competition over land and natural resource is changing from access and use to permanent claim to own land excessive control of critical natural resources found at the frontier.<sup>15</sup>

Like the pastoralists, the highland farmers, due to environmental degradation and scarcity of resources, recurrent drought, increased poverty and demographic pressure, began to infringe into the

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12 Degefa Tolossa, *Rural Livelihoods, Poverty and food Insecurity in Ethiopia: A Case Study at Erenssa and Garbi Communities in Oromia zone, Amhara National Regional State*, (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science & Technology, 2005) P. 15

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ali Hassan, "Vulnerability to Drought, Risk and Famine: Local Responses and External Intervention Among the Afar of Ethiopia: A Study on the Aghni Pastoral Community," (Germany: University of Bayreuth, 2008), p.225

territories owned by the pastoral communities.<sup>16</sup> In the region under consideration, there have been many places of contention between the Afar and the Oromo over grazing lands or agricultural lands. For instance, in Bati the Afar and the Oromo often clashed in places like Chachatu and Burqa right from the introduction of the new ethno-regional administrative system.<sup>17</sup> The Afar people have had a historical claim over the area as it was their grazing land for many years in the past. On the other hand, as the Oromo have been expanding their agricultural farmlands into this area, they frequently clashed with the Afar pastoralists.<sup>18</sup> Before fifty years ago the Oromo had largely inhabited the area extending up to Wore Wayyu and Wore Qallu and they were part of the Awssa district or *Awraja*.<sup>19</sup> Their neighbors were the Aghini, Abusamara and Doda Afar clans.<sup>20</sup>

In June and July 1991 a bloody fighting erupted between the Afar and the Oromo which resulted in the death of many people from both sides. The area was heavily destroyed and many of the Oromo left the area and retreated to Bati. According to oral informants a significant number of cattle were also looted from both parties. For instance the Afar had lost around 200 camels. Reconciliation was finally reached through government intervention and the traditional dispute resolution methods headed by the *Abbagars* and religious leaders in 1994.<sup>21</sup> But no clear cut boundary demarcation had been made by the government officials and the area still remains one of the contested spots with a strong claim and counter claim by the Oromo

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16 Dessalegn Rahmato, "Customs in Conflict: Land Tenure Issues Among the Pastoralists in Ethiopia", (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2007). P. 6.

17 Yassin Mohammed, "Regional Dynamics of Inter Ethnic Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: An Analysis of the Afar – Somali Conflict in Ethiopia and Djibouti." PhD Thesis, (University of Hamburg, 2010) p.225; Oral Informants

18 Oral Informants

19 National Archives and Libraries Agency(NALA),Folder No.64/ File No. 440/1 30/2070

20 Ibid.

21 Oral Informants

and the Afar. Later on, higher regional and zonal administrative officials, though unsuccessful, made some attempts to delimit the disputed boundary.<sup>22</sup>

In most cases, attempts to draw the boundaries along ethnic lines could not resolve the recurring clashes between the neighboring Afar and their Oromo people because they were carried out without taking into consideration the local system of resource use.<sup>23</sup> The absence of long lasting solution in one way or the other contributed to the persistence of claims and counter claims over grazing or non-grazing lands, water points and forests.<sup>24</sup> The pastoral way of life has been under threat as a result of drought and environmental degradations which eventually forced them to make a gradual encroachment into the territories of their neighbors in search of water and grazing lands.<sup>25</sup> This has been very apparent in the dry seasons where the lowlanders moved their livestock into the agricultural fields and plantations of the highlanders which often led into conflict.<sup>26</sup> For instance, in October 1990 the Afar made incursions into Daway Rahmado where it sparked a bitter confrontation at Bora and it resulted in a number of human casualties.<sup>27</sup> Similarly the Rasa Amhara (in Northeast Shewa) were also faced this Afar incursion in February of the same year which triggered ethnic tension and conflict. The Argobba communities of the escarpment in Southeastern Wallo and Northeast Shewa had also suffered from the pastoral Afar incursion. In 1988 – 1989, the inter-ethnic conflicts between the Oromo, Argobba, Afar and Amhara in Northeast Shewa and Southeastern Wallo had contributed to the destruction of many

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22 Dawe Harawa Police Office Archive(DHPOA), Folder No.37/File No.478/94

23 Ali Hassen, "Vulnerability to Drought ...", p.226

24 Ibid

25 Dessalegn, "Customs in Conflict...", p.6

26 Ibid.

27 Abebe, "The Dynamics of Rural Polity...", p.142

villages and the displacement from their territory of some Argobba communities.<sup>28</sup>

Beginning from 1991, there had been an outbreak of armed clashes between the Afar and Oromo Afar communities of the escarpment in Southeastern Wollo and Northeast Shewa.<sup>29</sup> According to Dessalegn, these armed clashes had been increasing from time to time where there was considerable damage on properties and loss of dozen of human lives.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes small scale altercations between two individuals may have conflagrated in to large scale conflicts. For instance on 3 September 1993 a minor encounter that broke out in Bora between an Afar and an Oromo had grown into a large scale conflict where large groups of people were involved and different kinds of weapons were used.<sup>31</sup> The incident at Bora Saturday market was started with the death of two Afar men.<sup>32</sup> In revenge for this, on 4 Oct. 1993 the Afar mobilized a large number of armed men with different weapons and destroyed about 200 Oromo houses, killed many peoples and took a significant number of cattle and camels.<sup>33</sup> The Oromo inhabitants were forced to retreat to distant places for fear of being persecuted by the well-armed Afar men.<sup>34</sup> In Daway Rahmado and Essaye Goula districts peace and security was jeopardized as the two ethnic groups were engaged in a full-scale confrontation. In a letter addressed to south Wollo administrative regional and police head office, it was indicated that, the Daway Rahmado police office was reluctant to notify higher governmental bodies and it was held responsible for the death of people and destruction of properties.<sup>35</sup> This might be attributed to “the prevalence of poor governance at local level where both the

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28 *Ibid.*

29 Oral Informants

30 Dessalegn, “Customs in Conflict...”, p.6

31 Oral Informants

32 Dessalegn, “Customs in Conflict...”, p.6

33 DHPOA, Folder No.37/ File No.470/95

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*



Oromo and the Afar accused local officials for their inability to intervene or to contain conflicts and seek legal solutions".<sup>36</sup>

Many of the ethnic-based conflicts between the Afar and the Oromo were exacerbated by the availability of arms circulated and sold illegally in the area. This was mainly associated with the "large inflow of arms into the area" during the civil war between the insurgents and Ethiopian army. This had contributed to inter-ethnic feuds and frontier skirmishes after the down fall of the Derg and the introduction by the EPRDF regime of a federal state structure.<sup>37</sup> Informants also relate the instability in the regions due to the general political crisis in the country following the overthrow of the military regime and coming to the helm of power of the new government in 1991.<sup>38</sup> There was a problem in the restoration of peace and order particularly in the Oromo inhabited regions along the escarpment. In the rural areas of Dawway and Artuma, there were also armed bandits roaming around who created serious peace and security problem in the area.<sup>39</sup> The instability in the region was also exploited by ethnic-based armed resistance movements such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which became abnormally aggressive.<sup>40</sup>

In Garfa, Werra Wayyu and Dawway, OLF had gained a strong hold where it garnered considerable political support from the Oromo inhabitants of the region. Thus, OLF would become active in aggravating the ethnic tension between the Oromo and the Amhara and it even instigated the former to rise against and attack the latter.<sup>41</sup>

According to oral informants in Dawway the attempts of local government officials to maintaining peace and order was not as such successful. In the first two to three years of the transitional period, in areas where this study has been conducted, a significant amount of

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36 Ali Hassen, "Vulnerability to Drought...", p.228

37 Oral Informants; See also Dessalegn Rahmato, "Customs in Conflict..." p.6

38 Oral Informants

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

armaments was openly sold by local traders in Bati and Bora markets. After a powerful order was passed to the local communities, many individuals began to hand over their arms to local officials. Particularly from Gerfa, Worra Wayyu, a huge number of different types of armaments were collected. While no attempt was made to disarm the Afar they remained armed. However, the majority of the Oromo accused the government of favoring the Afar not to disarm them.<sup>42</sup> Many of the conflicts that broke out after 1991 between the Oromo and the Afar had significantly affected their economic transactions. After the outbreak of the conflicts people from the Afar lowlands refrained from coming to the Bora and Bati markets. In this regard it was the Afar community not the Oromo who suffered most. Moreover, in normal times, when there was such ethnic strains and fears of outbreak of disturbances there was an occasional ban on market gatherings where many of the Argobba, Afar and the Oromo ethnic groups would normally attend.<sup>43</sup> For instance, in a letter dated 8 October 2000, the Daway Rahmado district of the Afar Regional Sate had notified its neighboring Dawa Cheffa district that the Afar people were prevented from entering into the Oromo territory and, as a result, they were exposed to severe economic problems due to their inability to have access to the market centers.

The relation between the Afar and the Oromo living around the escarpment in Southeastern Wollo and Northeast Shewa had been historically characterized by ephemeral peace and hostility. What Abebe Kifileyesus observed about the relations between the Afar and the Argobba, is also true between the Oromo and the Afar. "The Afar and the Oromo are not really enemies in the strictest sense of the term but are not best friends either".<sup>44</sup> In most cases the Oromo have seen the Afar with suspicion. After reconciliation has been made, the Afar often violated the terms of agreement which they conceded with the Oromo.<sup>45</sup> In spite of the sporadic conflicts in times of drought and

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42 Ibid.

43 DHPOA, Folder No.37/File No.477/1993 and Oral Informants

44 Abebe, "The Dynamics of Rural Polity...", p.142

45 Ibid.

when pasture was in short supply, harmonious relationship between the two communities is still maintained through trade, inter-marriage and through other social bonds and alliances.<sup>46</sup> But during violent conflicts “ethnicity or clan membership can become a significant factor around which forces can be mobilized.”<sup>47</sup> The two ethnic groups came into conflict on account of territorial claim; they mobilized themselves to seize the contesting places by force. The Oromo highland cultivators would start clearing forests and expanding their agricultural lands, diverting streams and rivers that flowed into the Afar territory. The Afar on their part would make every effort to maintain the flow of these rivers and get an easy access to the grazing lands and water points.<sup>48</sup> These are the two major existential problems that bedeviled the two ethnic groups. In the summer of 1994, a serious clash broke out between the Afar and the Oromo in Dawway. The Afar being better equipped began penetrating deep into the Oromo territories. In this conflict the Afar had lost 7 of their men while the Oromo lost one person. It was with the mediation of elders, religious leaders and the *Abbagars* that the situation was finally settled. As *Sheikh* Mohammed Riyan, a well-known arbitrator in the area, narrated the situation “it was the most serious and arduous one because large number of Oromo and Afar were involved.”

A reconciliation process was started at Berinsa Qori by *Hajji* Mohmmmed Sofian, a respected local religious leader. Consensus had been reached on condition that the Oromo should first collect their farm production. The two groups agreed not to enter into any kind of dispute until a general reconciliation was made. The reconciliation process was supported by the involvement of a joint peace committee established by local government officials and representatives from the two ethnic groups.<sup>49</sup> The intervention of the third party, i.e. the joint peace committee in the conflict resolution process is not,

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46 Oral Informants

47 Ali Hassen, “Vulnerability to Drought ...”, p. 228

48 Ibid.

49 Oral Informants

however, without problems. Given the absence of clearly demarcated ethnic boundaries, however, the government's reluctance to officially delimit the boundaries on several contesting places had been a contributory factor for the recurrence of conflicts in the frontier areas. One of the serious problems for local officials to delimit the boundaries along ethnic lines was the presence of strong territorial claims in the frontier areas of the two ethnic groups and their constant encroachment into each other's territory.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the Oromo looked at the Afar officials with suspicion and as being partial to their community; and even some of them were accused of assisting the Afar to rise against the Oromo.<sup>51</sup> In most of the reconciliation attempts, the Oromo accused the Afar officials that they would not be willing to expose the culprits or to return looted cattle and camels.<sup>52</sup> Given such mistrust and suspicion between the two communities which remained an obstacle to establish a long-lasting solution to the problem, sporadic and individual conflicts also aggravated their hostility. For instance in Sep. 1996, a conflict had occurred in the border of Qallu *Wereda* where an Oromo killed one Afar herder while moving his cattle for grazing. The Oromo inhabitants of the region therefore began to retreat for fear of retribution from the Afar.<sup>53</sup>

On 30 October 1996, there was a plan to hold a meeting at Wodiragi in Afar region in which many district officials and other participants were expected to attend in order to discuss about the prevalent security issues in the border areas and the repatriation of cattle raided from both parties in the past. However, representatives from the Afar region were reluctant to return the cattle looted from the Oromo. In a letter sent to the Oromia Zone Administration Police, the Daway Rahmado police officer noted that the reluctance of the

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 DHPOA, Folder No.37/File No.488 /1988

53 DHPOA, Folder No.37/File No.475/ April 1987

Afar officials would probably lead to an outbreak of another conflict between the two ethnic groups.<sup>54</sup>

On November 1997 another meeting was held at Harawa, a small district in Dawway where in several religious leaders, *Kebele* administrators, police officers from both the Oromo and the Afar had discussed issues regarding the conflict which flared up between the Afar and the Oromo. The long-existing antagonism and hostility between the Afar and the Oromo due to their traditional practices which included mutilating the genitalia as a trophy and the customary cattle raiding had posed serious challenges to improve their relations. In the many armed conflicts that broke out in the 1990s several people from the two sides were killed, countless number of cattle and camels were looted and many huts were burnt or destroyed.<sup>55</sup>

After a series of peace initiatives made by religious leaders, *Abbagars* and the joint peace committee, the two neighboring communities agreed to settle their dispute at Birensa Qore.<sup>56</sup> With the help of a renowned religious leader, who has been recognized by both the Afar and the Oromo, the two ethnic groups were finally reconciled at Birrensa Qore on 4 February, 2002. Many regional and zonal officials from the Amhara and Afar National Regional States had been involved in this reconciliation process.<sup>57</sup> However intermittent conflicts continued to erupt between the Oromo in Bati Woreda and their Afar neighbors. Attempts of reconciliation at different times by the Administrative bodies from the two regional states were found to be futile. Due to lack of strong commitment from the political leaders and adherence to their own ethnic groups, several peace initiatives through traditional means of conflict resolution methods and the involvement of government officials were proved to be ineffective to bring an end to the recurring conflicts. Recently, excluding the government leaders, acknowledged

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54 Ibid.

55 Ibid

56 DHPOA, Folder No.34/File No. 457/A/19 85

57 DHPOA, Folder No.37/File No.475/A/1985

religious leaders from the Afar Regional State and representatives from Oromia Special Zone of the Amhara Regional State initiated a new attempt of mediation.

## **Conclusion**

Historically the inhabitants of southeastern Wollo had been interacted in various ways. The Afar and the Oromo had been interconnected through trade, marriage and other forms of alliances. With the exception of intermittent conflicts due to their competition over scarce resources, they had developed a kind of mutual friendship and alliance in times of difficulties such as famine and other forms of natural disasters. Following the demise of the Derg and the subsequent establishment of the new ethno-regional administrative structure in Ethiopia, inter-ethnic relations took a fundamentally new character. In Southeastern Wollo and Northeastern Shewa, there had been protracted conflicts between the Oromo and the Afar on account of competition for scarce resources. The two communities had been involved in claims and counter claims over the control and ownership of resources which had been apparent in the frontiers of the newly created regional boundaries. This problem is even more exacerbated by absence of good governance at the local level. The two ethnic groups involved into armed confrontations on account of territorial claims they espoused and their repeated attempts to seize the contesting places. Attempts of local government officials to contain conflicts along the frontier regions, if not to ensure long-lasting peace, were mostly unsuccessful. When there is an attempt to delimit the boundaries along such ethnic frontiers, it often resulted with a fresh flare up of clashes between the Afar and their Oromo neighbors. This has been largely due to the inattentiveness, deliberate or otherwise, of the mediators to take in to consideration of the local system of resource use. As a result, claims and counter claims over access to grazing lands, water points and forests still persist. The new federal form of government which has given self-administration to the newly carved regions, has unforgivingly failed to provide solutions to the recurrent conflicts

between the two ethnic groups. As a result of economic problems—limited resources and insignificant overall growth,<sup>58</sup>—creating and delineating new boundaries has failed to solve the challenge of peaceful interaction of the two ethnic groups. Due to the incapability of the local governors to resolve the instability and violence that occurred in the frontier regions frequently, the central government sometimes deployed a military force to the area. This clearly indicates that the implementation of the new system of governance remains to be a source of dispute and conflict rather than a source of peace and coexistence. Unlike the various forms of interactive relationships they maintained in the past, the ethnic-based administrative arrangement has bred fear and insecurity between the two ethnic groups. It appears that this challenge may not be resolved in the foreseeable future.

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## **BÊTE AMHARA: THE PRE-OROMO RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF WOLLO**

Misganaw Tadesse

### **Abstract**

*Wollo, formerly called 'Bête Amhara', refers to a region of Amharic-speaking Christians in Ethiopia. It was one of the oldest provinces in Ethiopia; located in the north-eastern part where the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Sudan, and Central and Southern Ethiopia meet. Its geostrategic location has made it a focal point of historical dynamics in Ethiopia. Several writers of the medieval period referred to Bête Amhara as the "center and the heartland of the Abyssinian Empire." It served as the political and cultural center of the Ethiopian Empire during the medieval period. As the political center shifted to the Lake Tana area following the expansion of Islam and the Oromo towards the region, the centrality of Bête Amhara came to an end. In spite of its historical importance, the political and religious backdrop of Bête Amhara has been neglected by scholars. Putting the geographical and historical developments in context, the central argument of this article is aimed at verifying how the medieval province of Bête Amhara had served as a political and cultural center of medieval Ethiopia. The methods employed in this research were principally qualitative, extensive reading of relevant literature, and field observations made in the different districts of Wollo Province between 2016 and 2017.*

**Keywords:** Bête Amhara, Christianity, Islam, medieval period, Oromo, Wollo

## INTRODUCTION

The region that came to be identified as ‘Wollo’ in Ethiopia after the settlement in the area of the Oromo, was known as ‘Bête Amhara’ (translation: The House of the Amhara), which literally means home of Amharic-speaking Christians. It was a central Christian Amhara area (Begna 1). The area is claimed to be the origin of the Amhara ethnic group. The *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* identifies Bête Amhara as “a region of historic Ethiopia” (Ulig and Bausi 230).

Bête Amhara was the largest province of medieval Ethiopia. Though the exact date of its establishment is not known, the province has been mentioned in the literature since the Aksumite period. For instance, Tamrat (35) wrote about a campaign led by the king of Aksum to the province of Amhara. He remarked: “The king led 150 priests from Aksum to Amhara and assigned them [to evangelize] there. As he came out of Tigre he camped at Woyna-Dega [and had] with him 60 tabots.” While discussing the political and cultural geography of Wollo, Hussein Ahmed (5) also refers to the Amhara Province. He states that Amhara was one of the political administrative units of the Zagwe Kingdom but its political significance heightened during the so-called Solomonic period. Though there is no definitive and adequate information about its genesis, many scholars have touched on the geographical limits of the medieval Amhara Province.

As regards its territorial extent, local sources and European travelers who visited Ethiopia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made reference to Bête Amhara and its geographical location. The Portuguese traveler Francisco Alvarez, who visited the region in the 1520s, indicated the territorial size of Bête Amhara. According to Alvarez, Bête Amhara stretches to the Bashilo-Mille River in the north, the Wanchit (Wahit) River in the south, the Abay (Blue Nile) River in the west and in the east, it extends to the escarpment where the drainages of the Awash River originate (Beckingham and Huntingford 250).

Ludolphus, in his 1684 account, provides similar geographic identification of Bête Amhara. He wrote: “[Bête Amhara] lies almost

in the center of Habesha, having on the north the kingdom of Begemder; upon the west, Nile; and beyond that the kingdom of Gojjam, upon the south, it views Woleka and east beholds Angot" (Ludolphus 13).

The eminent historian, Merid Wolde-Aregay (35), in his study on the medieval history of Ethiopia remarked that "the boundary of the Bête Amhara began somewhere to the north of Lake Haik, perhaps where the Mille River turns eastward. The full length of the Bashilo River constituted the boundary with Begemder. In the East, Amhara seems to have extended beyond the Zaguol River to include Wore-Illu, the district where the famous churches of Genete Giyorgis and Mekane Selassie were found" (Wolde-Aregay 35).

Another important source, a microfilmed manuscript at the National Library and Archival Center of Ethiopia, gives fragmented information on the medieval province of Bête Amhara. In the text it is stated that the territory of the province stretches from the River Bashilo, which borders it from Begemder, to the River Jemma in the south, which borders it from Shewa. According to the manuscript, Bête Amhara includes the territory from Amhara Sayint in the southwest to the monastery of St. Stephen at Lake Haik in the northeast (Tarik 33–38).

According to Arab Fakih, the territorial limit of Bête Amhara extended over a distance of twenty days of travel from west to east. He also narrates about the gates to the region: "[I]t has five entrances, one gate on the Woleka road, another one on the Aheyya Fajji<sup>1</sup> road, another on the Menz road, a fourth on the Miyat road from the land of the Gidim, and the fifth from the direction of Wassel" (Stenhouse 219).<sup>2</sup> When one looks at the places that Arab Fakih differentiates as gates to Bête Amhara, the aforementioned area is the present-day south-western part of Wollo.

All of the above-mentioned sources agreed that the region was bounded by the Nile (Abbay) River to the West, Wanchit River to the

1 Aheyya Feji located at the border of the Wollo and Shewa provinces.

2 Wassel was found in the southern province of Bete-Amhara in present-day Wore-Illu.

south and Mille River to the north. Even in the present rivers, Wanchit and Abbay are the boundaries that separate Wollo from Shewa and Gojjam respectively. Generally, the region that was bounded in the west by the Nile (Abbay) and its tributary the Bashilo River; in the north by Mille River; in the east by the escarpment leading down to the Danakil Desert (Afar); and to the south by the Wanchit River is the present-day south-western part of Wollo Province.<sup>3</sup>

## STATE AND RELIGION IN BÊTE AMHARA

The enthronement of Yikuno Amlak in 1270 marked the shift of power from Zagwe to the so called *Solomonic* dynasty. It was in the monastery of Haik Stephen, in Bête Amhara, that Yikuno Amlak was crowned. As a result, Bête Amhara had a significant place in the political history of the newly “restored” dynasty. The dynastic transfer of power was followed by the shift of the political center from the Lasta area to Amhara and then to Shewa. Thus, from the

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3 Some other sources implied that Bête Amhara was wider than the above explained borderline. According to these sources, Bête Amhara was very wide up to the wars of Imam Ahmed (*Gragu*). It became smaller due to the migration of the Oromo people which followed this invasion. Another source indicates that the earliest description of Amhara, which refers to a large Amharic-speaking region constituting several subject provinces (Tesfaye Mekonen. “The Role of Religion in the History of South Wollo”, BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa. 1990. 12. Print). As to Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, Bête Amhara was a vast region covering a vast area that extends from Begemder to Gidim and after the sixteenth century it became narrower to the southern part of the present-day Wollo. According to him, the districts of Wollo in the twentieth century were more or less parts of historic Bête Amhara (Tekle Tsadik Mekuriya 374). Even, in some of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church hagiographies, Midre Qegga, in Northern Shewa is mentioned as being part of the province of Bete Amhara. However, these sources are not convincing as contemporary primary sources and informants disagree with these narrations.

thirteenth century onwards, the provinces of Bête Amhara and Shewa became the political and cultural center of the newly restored Solomonic dynasty (Tamrat 100–110). According to local sources, many of the Solomonic emperors of medieval Ethiopia used to spend much of their time in Bête Amhara. Many of them had granted land for the monastery of Haik Stephen and other royal churches in the region as well. Emperor Made Tsion, for instance, granted a considerable amount of land for the monastery of Haik (Kibret 48).

Hence, Bête Amhara became the residence of kings during the medieval period. In local sources it is mentioned that “እስመ ምድረ ኣምሐራ ለነገሥተ ኢትዮጵያ ወለንግሥታት ወለመኳንንት ወለዓቢይት ቤተመንግሥቶሙ ወርሰቶሙ ወማዕለልቶሙ ውኣቱ,”<sup>4</sup> which literally means “Bête Amhara was the center and seat of Ethiopian emperors, and nobilities.” Oral and written sources indicated that Emperor Lebne Dingel constructed his palace at a place called ‘Agwa’, in Bête-Amhara, now ‘Wollo’ (Molvaer 30). The ruins of the palace of Emperor Lebne Dengel, which are found in the Wore-Illu district of Southern Wollo, may serve as a living witness in this regard.



Figure 1: Ruin of the palace of Emperor Libne Dingel

Source: Photograph taken by the researcher on 25 February 2017

4 YeWollo Tarik [The History of Wollo], Microfilm, National Library and Archival center of Ethiopia, File No. 653, 41.

In confirmation of the centrality of Bête Amhara, the chronicler of Imam Ahmed, Arab Faqih, who visited the region during the reign of Lebne Dingel, noted that Bête Amhara was the residence of the kings of Abyssinia. He further mentioned that “no king who reigns over Abyssinia can exercise his rule unless he has been enthroned in Bête Amhara” (Stenhouse 244).

De Almeida also stated that Bête Amhara was “the center and the heartland of the whole Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Empire” (100). Ludolphus likewise said that “Amhara is now the noblest kingdom of all Ethiopia, by reason of the inaccessible fortified rocks, the royal prison of Amba Gishen<sup>5</sup> where the kings’ sons were secured and is, therefore, the native country of kings and of all the nobility” (13).

The renowned sociologist and social theorist Donald Levine referred to Bête Amhara as “the political and cultural center for Greater Ethiopia” (72). He further remarked that until the Muslim invasion of the 1530s, Bête Amhara was the nucleus of the Abyssinian kingdom, a region where the royal palace and residence was located (72).

Two reasons can be traced for the selection of Bête Amhara as a center. The first one is the stability of the area. At that time it was a relatively peaceful area when compared with other regions of Ethiopia where continual wars were waged for submission or to take central power (Mekonen 18). The second is the vast wealth of the region. Bête Amhara was a vast region of flat arable lands producing a variety of crops, a number of perennial rivers and it enjoyed bountiful rain. Owing to the growth of agricultural production and trade, the region was believed to be prosperous. Especially Lebne Dingel’s reign was characterized as a period of economic and cultural prosperity (Stenhouse 219–222).

Bête Amhara was not only the center of state but also of Christianity. The major episode that paved the way for intensive Christianization of Bête Amhara is said to have been the founding of the Haik St. Stephen Church in the ninth century, which eventually

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5 The royal prison of Amba Gishen was an institution devised to keep royal sons in order to prevent court intrigues and problems of succession.



became a monastery under Abuna Iyasus Moa, one of the renowned church fathers, during the mid-thirteenth century. According to written sources and informants, such as Tadesse Tamrat and Sergewu Hable-Selassie, the presence of this church attracted many church scholars and religious students or disciples to the area. One such church father who came to the monastery of Haik and contributed much to the growth of religious education and the expansion of Christianity was Abuna Iyasus Moa<sup>6</sup> (Tamrat 1970: 90).

His arrival at Lake Haik is regarded as a turning point in the history of monasticism and of evangelization of Orthodox Christianity. Abuna Iyasus Moa had established a monastic school. After the arrival of Abuna Iyasus Moa, Debre Haik became a center of education and pilgrimage. Many students flocked to learn advanced religious lessons from the school Abuna Iyasus Moa had founded. He thus opened up new opportunities of learning for students from Amhara and Shewa, and many appear to have taken advantage of this. Many young Christian men from faraway places also joined the monastic school (Haile-Mikael 24). For teaching thousands of students, Abuna Iyasus Moa is referred to as “ወላደ ለሰፍ”, a Ge’ez term that literally means ‘Instructor of Thousands’.

During his 44-year stay at Haik, Iyasus Moa collected several manuscripts from different monasteries and thereby established the first modern Ethiopian church library. Similarly, he produced about 800 disciples. Thus, from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries the monastery became the most famous religious school in Ethiopia. It emerged as an important religious educational and cultural center for the region and the country as well. The majority of proselytizers of medieval Ethiopia who expanded Christianity across the country

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6 Abba Iyesus-Mo’a, one of the saints of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, was the founder and the first abbot (head) of the famous monastery of St. Stephen of Lake Haik in Wollo, about 267 miles north of Addis Ababa. Abba Iyesus Mo’a is one of the most eminent personalities of Ethiopian monasticism and is said to have been the spiritual father of many disciples who stayed with him on the island and who, in turn, established other monasteries.

studied at this monastery. The lessons taught at the monastic school were advanced religious education; therefore, the school's main objective was to train students for higher-level church services (Haile-Mikael 32).<sup>7</sup>

For medieval saints, it was compulsory to attend the monastery of Haik for their education and to serve at the monastery before they set out for church services. In the “Gedle Iyasus Moa” manuscript it is mentioned that “እስመ አልቦ እምቅዱሳን ዘፈጸመ ገድሎ ዘእንበለ ይርዳዕ ወዘእንበለ ይትመሀር ሥርዓተ ምንኩስና ወግብረ ብህትውና በገዳማተ ምድረ አምሐራ,” meaning: “No saint [of medieval Ethiopia] has served [the church] without serving, qualifying, and getting ordained at the monasteries of Bête Amhara” (n.a. 18–19).

When the disciples graduated from Haik and left the school, they established their own monastic centers in different areas. They also carried out missionary activities among their communities and built new churches. While some of them expanded Christianity within Bête Amhara, others went to other provinces in the country. Among the disciples of Iyasus Moa, the following were the most prominent: Abba Tekle Haymanot of Debre Libanos, Abba Hirute Amlak of Lake Tana, Abba Giyorgis of Gasicha, Abba Ze Iyyesus, Abba Betselote Michael, and Abba Aron of Zedebre Daret (of the Parish of Daret).

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7 Informant: Aba Gebre-Sellassie Belay, Manager of South Wollo Diocese (of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church). The traditional school of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the foundation of knowledge and wisdom. Before the introduction of modern education in the country in 1908, these schools played the overall role in the spreading of literacy to the people. People were taught the skills of reading and writing, arithmetic, art, architecture, law, governance, medication, and other talents and skills in these traditional schools. These schools have been institutes of architectural, governance, leadership, philosophical, legal and other developmental skills of the society. The schools are still playing immense roles in personality development, patriotism, heritage management and transmitting the currently available spiritual wealth of one generation to the next. Generally, no part of life is untouched in this traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox churches.

According to Tadesse (115, 187), Batsalota Mikael actively expanded the church in Woleka, the western part of Wollo. He is also said to have started a series of reforms in the monastic practices in Bête Amhara. The other disciple, Anorewos, is said to have founded the church of Debre-Gol and preached among the local people of Woleka (western Wollo). He is responsible for converting many of the local people to Christianity (115, 187). Ruins of buildings and caves of these medieval churches in Wogdi and Kelala districts of the southern and western part of Wollo are living witnesses to this fact. This period between the thirteenth and sixteenth century is referred to as the 'Golden Age' of the Ethiopian Church. This is so because Christianity had been expanded while religious schools and the literature of the church had also flourished (Tsegaye 20).

Owing to the construction of several churches in the region, Christian culture had been expanded and consolidated in Bête Amhara. Arab Faqih referred to Bête Amhara as "a region where numerous sanctuaries had been built by the Ethiopians housing priceless treasures belonging to church and state" (Stenhouse 219). Francisco Alvarez, who saw the region in the 1520s, had also expressed the presence of churches in Bête Amhara by saying that "there is no span of land where there are not churches" (257).

Many of the churches were built by the emperors. As Arab Faqih revealed, every king who ruled Abyssinia built churches in Bête Amhara and when he died he was carried there to be buried in a tomb inside the church (222). Generally, constructing churches was a common practice among Ethiopian monarchs. Almost all of them constructed churches in different parts of the country.<sup>8</sup>

Alvarez, visiting Ethiopia in the 1520s, stated that emperors in the Bête Amhara region had built several great churches, and they endowed each one with large donations (Beckingham and Huntingford 256–257). Subsequently, many of the rulers were buried in the churches they had built. For instance, Emperor Ba'de Maryam was buried in the church of Atronsa-Maryam, and King Naod's

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8 For instance, most of the churches in Addis Ababa were constructed by Emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie.

remains were also taken to Mekane-Selassie in the early 1520s (256–257), all in Bête Amhara.

Among the royal churches built in Bête Amhara were Mekane-Selassie, Atronsa-Maryam, Gishen Maryam, Debre Egziabher, Debre Estifanos, Genete Giyorgis, Debre Negodguwad, Mekane Semayat and many others. Here, it would be appropriate to give a short description of one of the royal churches that was constructed in Bête Amhara called ‘Mekane-Selassie’, which may be taken as a symbol of medieval Christianity.

The church of Mekane-Selassie, which literally means “Place of the Trinity”, was a very large and finely built church around the palace of Libne Dingel near Wore-Illu. Emperor Naod (r. 1494–1508) began construction of the church and it was completed by his son Emperor Libne Dingel (r. 1508–1540) (256). Mekane-Selassie was believed to be the largest and most decorative church not only in the region, but also in the country. Informants mentioned that in terms of its size, adornment, number of staff members and services delivered, it might have been the largest cathedral on the African continent. Contemporary written accounts confirm this assertion. Regarding this matter, the writer of *Futuh Al Habesha* narrates:

There was a church in Amhara that had no peer in Abyssinia. King Naod, the father of King Libne Dingel had built it. He exhausted himself in its construction, in its planning in every detail of the work. He adored it with Gold and spent thirteen years in its construction. He never saw the work completed, because he died after thirteen years. His son Wonag Seged became heavily involved in it and took over its construction after him. He took more pains over it than his father. It was entirely planted in Gold leaf <sup>9</sup> ; it blazed like a fire (Stenhouse 220).

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9 Gold leaf in Ethiopia was highly regarded and skillfully worked. It is reported that Emperor Libne Dingel wrote a letter to King Manoel I of Portugal asking for a supply of craftsmen who could make the gold leaf (Beckingham and Huntingford 501).

In addition to the writer's personal observations and account, one can further realize the greatness of the church from the admiration of Imam Ahmed who demolished it just thirteen years after its completion.<sup>10</sup> When Imam Ahmed and his men saw the church, they were astonished by the workmanship. Arab Faqih explains that "when the Imam saw it, he was almost blinded by its dazzling brilliance (246)." As the Imam was astonished by the church, he asked the Arab soldiers who were with him: "'Is there the like of this church with its image and its gold, in Byzantine, or India, or in any other place?' They replied, 'we never saw or heard of its like in Byzantine, or India or anywhere in the world'" (Stenhhouse 246). Thus, the present researcher argues that Mekane-Selassie could have been the biggest cathedral of medieval Ethiopia.

The construction work is said to have been given greater attention by Emperors Naod and Lebne-Dingel. They adorned the church with gold and other precious ornaments. According to Arab Faqih, the church was embellished with gold and silver plates, covered with pearls. The door panels were made of wood and were 10 cubits<sup>11</sup> long and 4 cubits wide. They were covered with embellishments of gold and silver, and above the gold, there were precious stones of many colors. The interior was decorated with figures of different kinds (246).

Regarding its size, the church was 100 cubits (approximately 164 foot) long and 100 cubits wide. It was 150 cubits high (246). Thus, in modern measurement, the surface area of the church was approximately 26910 square foot. Tekle Tsadik Mekurya suggested

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10 It is unfortunate that this huge and decorative church no longer exists. It was destroyed by Imam Ahmed. Details on the destruction of these and other churches will be given in the next topic

11 'Cubit' is an ancient unit based on the length of the forearm measured from the tip of the middle finger to the bottom of the elbow. The length of a cubit was based on the distance from the elbow to the fingertips, so it varied from person to person (i.e., 16 to 17 foot). The average length of a cubit is believed to be equal to 1.6 foot.

that Mekane-Selassie might have outshone contemporary European churches such as St. Sofia in Constantinople (modern-day Turkey) in terms of its size, architectural design and also in its gold and silver plate (389).

After 25 years of construction, the church was consecrated on 12 January 1521 in the presence of Emperor Libne Dingel, Queens Elleni and Naod Mogasa, Bishop Abuna Marqos and members of the clergy from other royal churches. Alvarez's admiration led him to state that "there is no adequate description to us of the architecture of this church" (Beckingham and Huntingford 38). He described the interior of the church as it was built of stone topped by a wooden roof, with a principal door decorated with metal plates inlaid with stones, and above it two figures of our Lady St. Mary and angelic icons (38).

It is reported that the church had about 450 priests in its service (Mekuriya 388).<sup>12</sup> The large staff complement who served in the church aids one's understanding of just how large the church was.



Figure 2: Part of the ruin of the church of Mekane-Selassie

Source: Photograph taken by the researcher 24 March 2017

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12 Informant: Ato Abate Assefa (interviewed at Mekane Sellassie in Wore-Illu on 23 February 2017).

The construction of Mekane-Selassie and other royal churches in Bête-Amhara shows that the region had long been a center of Christian culture which went hand in hand with the imperial administration. Makana-Sellase had, however, only a few years of service in the Christian faith before its destruction by Ahmad Gagn and his followers in December 1531.

Despite the above-mentioned historical facts, the centrality of Bête Amhara came to an end following the expansion of Islam and the Oromo population expansion in the province during the sixteenth century. These events not only affected the political situation of the country, but they also considerably transformed the socio-political and demographic landscape of Bête Amhara.

According to Davis, the sixteenth-century civil war (1529–1543) that occurred in Ethiopia between the Christian Highland Kingdom under Emperor Lebne Dingel and the Muslim Sultanate of Adal under Imam Ahmed (popularly known as ‘Ahmed Gagn’ or ‘Ahmed’ the left-handed), was responsible for the greatest cultural transformation in the history of Ethiopia (Davis 567). Besides other central and Northern provinces of Ethiopia, it was Bête Amhara that was highly affected by the expansion of Islam. Both Muslim and Christian sources agree that large-scale conversion of the highland population had taken place. An Ethiopian chronicler who carefully preserved a yearly record of the reign of Emperor Gelawdewos (r. 1540–1559) affirmed: “Many of the believers left the faith of the church and entered the faith of the Muslims. Hardly one out ten remained in their faith . . . almost all of the Christian population of the highlands joined Islam under threat of the sword” (275). One of these highland provinces by which Islam had expanded to a larger extent is Bête Amhara. After Ahmed Gagn, Bête Amhara became a predominantly Muslim-inhabited area more than any of the other central and Northern provinces of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the Christian population remained an underdog minority in the area (Begna 1). As a result, Bête Amhara had lost its former Christian glory and identity.

Likewise, the Oromo settlement in medieval Bête Amhara made the region their homeland. The Oromo, who occupied Bête Amhara by the end of the sixteenth century, brought different cultural and ritual practices that resulted in significant cultural and demographic changes in the province. After controlling the region, the new settlers changed the names of the different districts and even villages of Bête Amhara to the forenames of their major clans and sub-clans. (Begna 2) The name changes of the different districts of Bête Amhara also altered the former identity of the province. According to Ndletyana (91), place names are “containers of memory”, a memory of identity and culture of a given society. Place names have special assets of being part of a given cultural heritage in the sense that they tell one something about the locality after which they are named. While the pre-Oromo names informed the original identity of the province, the name changes after the Oromo settlement reflected the province’s new identity.

The above-mentioned events of the sixteenth century transformed the political geography of the Christian Highland Kingdom, and the socio-economic and political identity of Bête Amhara. These events also brought an end to the political centrality of Bête Amhara. After the sixteenth-century civil war, the Christian Highland Kingdom shifted its center to the Lake Tana region in the north-western part of the country and its political geography had been restricted only to the area north of the Abbay River. Above all, the geographical boundary of Bête Amhara had been so greatly contracted that the province disappeared from the medieval map of Abyssinia (Tassew 56).

## CONCLUSION

Bête Amhara, a region where royal palaces and residences were located, was the political and cultural center for Greater Ethiopia. For the kings of medieval Ethiopia, it was obligatory to be crowned in Bête Amhara. Likewise, for the saints, it was obligatory to obtain their education from, and serve at, the monasteries (Haik) of Bête Amhara. As a result, Bête Amhara had a significant place in the political



history of medieval Ethiopia. Being a political and cultural center of medieval Ethiopia, Bête Amhara had served as a nucleus for the expansion of Christianity, Christian culture and education. As Christianity had a strong foothold, people living in the region were exposed to its influence much earlier than other areas, which made them religiously dominant at least since the thirteenth century. That is why the region had been referred to as 'Bête Amhara'.

Following the expansion of Islam and the permanent settlement of the Cushitic-speaking Oromo in the province, the political and religious importance of Bête Amhara came to an end. After the sixteenth century, the province, renamed 'Wollo', had become a predominantly Muslim-inhabited region with substantially Oromo-oriented cultural traits.

The above-mentioned two major events have resulted in many forms of diversity in the province. These happenings not only affected the political atmosphere of the country, but also completely transformed the socio-political and cultural landscape of Wollo Province to a greater extent. The presence of Islam and Oromo made Wollo a more multi-ethnic and multi-religious province than any other northern and central provinces in Ethiopia. The presence of different ethnic and religious groups turned Wollo into a cultural melting pot where a process of constant intermingling and fusion of heterogeneous elements has been ongoing for quite a long time.

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## FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN ETHIOPIA: A HEYDAY OF FRENCH

L'Union Fait La Force<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Aberra

### Abstract

*This study examines the first four decades of the one-hundred-and-twenty years' sociolinguistic roles of the French language in Ethiopia. The study covers the period from 1897, when the first bilateral agreements between King Menilik and the then representative of France, Lagarde, were signed, to 1935. It is noted that in this period, which is the heyday of French in Ethiopia, missionaries from France and diplomatic relations between France and Ethiopia had played significant roles in popularizing French in Ethiopia's education system and print media. The French language and culture also played pivotal roles in moulding emerging urban and elite culture in Ethiopia. French's influence may also be observed in the positive attitude, which the Ethiopian urban people had towards the language.*

**Keywords:** Ethiopia, French, history, education, mass media

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1 The slogan above is one of the three French slogans found in Addis Ababa. It was carved at the Imperial Palace gate beside the memorial trees planted by the founders of OAU and AU, in front of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is uncommon to observe in countries of linguistic diversity the interaction of local and foreign languages. Mapping their interactions either from the local or foreign language's perspective gives us insights into the dynamics of interactions of human languages and how each language carves out its role in these interactions in the multilingual situation. Ethiopia, a country of 110 million people in the Horn of Africa, has its local languages numbered over eighty-five (Ado et al., 2021). Ethiopia is also the country where foreign (European and Middle-Eastern) languages such as Portuguese, Arabic, French, Italian, and English (and also Greek and Hebrew) play a significant role at one time or the other (Aberra, 1998). Their speakers introduce these languages for various sociolinguistic functions but mainly as a medium of modern education. Ethiopia has an education system practiced for an extended period, run by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and fully supported by the respective community and its economy, where the church schools have been established. On the contrary, western-style education has a short history in Ethiopia. It was started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century after the opening of Menilik II school in 1908: "Modern education is believed to be a major factor which allows the introduction and expansion of foreign, European languages in Ethiopia" (Gerencheal & Mishra, 2019:1431).

This study focuses on the first forty years of the one-hundred-and-twenty-year-old sociolinguistic roles of the French language in Ethiopia from 1897 to 1935. However, the functions and statuses of French changed concurrently with the following historical periods of the country (1) pre-1897; (2) 1897-1935; (3) 1936-1941; (4) 1942- 1973; (5) 1974-1990; and (6) 1991 – to the present. These six periods are not only historically significant but also accompanying "major political and ideological changes affect the education system in general, the roles and statuses of foreign languages in particular" (Gerencheal & Mishra, 2019:1432).

## 2. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The study has the following sections. In addition, to the introduction Section (1), data sources have been discussed in Section (2), literature review and a reconstructed history of the French language in Ethiopia in Section (3). Section (4) discusses the period 1897-1935—the heyday of French in terms of education, press and economy. Conclusion constitutes Section (5). The study relies on secondary literature, informal interviews, personal observation, seminar discussions, and interactions with people throughout the country. Various Ethio-France friendship centenary festival posters and booklets have also been consulted.

This study liberally followed Abera's (1998) use of theoretical frameworks in his analysis of English to compare foreign languages places in Ethiopia. The core concepts of the frameworks are three in number. These are 1) a sociolinguistic typology (Stewart, 1968), 2) perspective (Ferguson, 1996), and 3) the descriptions of bilingualism (Mackey, 1968).

A sociolinguistic typology or language profile indicates demographic information of the country's languages and their functions in international relations, education, literacy, religion. The typology describes a nation's multilingual situation.

A perspective is related to the nation's sociolinguistic profile when characterizing the languages of a country. The perspective, the model, offers a convenient way of making gross sociolinguistic comparisons, and it has considerable heuristic value for suggesting investigation and data collection lines.

Descriptions of bilingualism emphasize identifying the speaker's proficiency in the second language. Most countries are multilingual; hence, people speak more than one language (their mother tongue). The degree of bilingualism is likely to be highly influenced by the attitude of a bilingual speaker towards her second language and towards the people who speak it.

Moreover, mastery of a second language depends, first, on the historical relationship, i.e. similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the second language, second on the motivation to

learn and use the language in the given society, and third, on the contact between speakers of the two languages in areas such as the economy, administration, culture, politics, the military, and religion (Ibid).

### **3. RECONSTRUCTED HISTORY OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN ETHIOPIA**

This study focuses mainly on the functional roles of the French in its hundred and twenty years of existence (1897-2019) in Ethiopia. France and Ethiopia celebrated the centennial of their diplomatic friendship in 1997. France's culture, language, economy, and policies have left their imprints on the Ethiopian urban life and culture over these years. At the outset, it has to be noted that these are a triangulated "competition among three languages between French, English and Amharic" in the country (Sumner, 1999:8). The history and use of the French language and culture intertwined with the religious, political, trade, and cultural relations between France and Ethiopia. The socio-political situations of the country and its relations with France can be reconstructed concurrently with the six noted historical periods of the country following Aberra's (1998) classification. Nevertheless, a similar chronological category is used in Gerencheal & Mishra (2019) except the first two periods of Aberra (1998) (1) pre-1897 and period (2) 1897-1935 merged into one- "Pre-Italian Period (1900-1935) (2019:1432). I also believe the pre-1897 period has a different scenario, and it needs to be discussed separately.

In the Pre-1897 scenario, contact between Ethiopia and France and interest in one another started as early as 1313, though it did not come to fruition (Pankhurst, 2005). After 1855, however, King Tewodros II and his successors established contacts with Europe, including France, to modernize the country and import goods. They lured foreigners to reside in the country and share their skills. Those who lived in the country worked in various capacities in religion, private activity, or government. Invariably, foreigners introduced their languages—mainly English, French, Arabic, and Italian—in 19<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia. The languages were used primarily as a medium of education. Some residents, like the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, worked as sales agents



and traders. The majority of the foreigners pursued predominantly (Catholic) missionary activities. They established their versions of Catholicism. For example, the Lazarist Fathers, Capuchins of Toulouse, Brothers of the Congregation of Saint Gabriel, the Franciscan Sisters of Calais, and the Sisters of Saint Vincent of Paul are such establishments (Alberto 1998; Pankhurst, 1997; 2005).

While citizens of these countries are involved in activities they are passionate about, Ethiopia and France signed one of the formal agreements. The signing of the first friendship agreements and trade treaty was in 1843 between King Sahle Sellassie of Shoa and the French government envoy Rochet d'Héricourt (Bureau, 1997; French Embassy website 2002/3). However, the landmark of their relations is not 1843 but the year 1897 when King Menilik of Ethiopia and the French emissary and the first ambassador Léonce Lagarde signed diplomatic, trade and cultural agreements (Bureau, 1997). Those treaties marked a transition to the second period (1897-1935) of their contact history.

#### 4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

By most accounts, the 1897-1937 period can be characterized as the heyday French influence in Ethiopia. Ethiopia and France were involved in transportation, commerce, commercial courts, religion, education and mass media. These were the areas in France's significant involvement and influence. For instance, a railway was constructed from the former French colony of Djibouti to Addis Ababa. Foreign traders are called 'tajurs'.<sup>2</sup> Under the protection of France established themselves in the country. To facilitate transactions and to solve French-national involving conflicts, they created consular courts. The courts aim to ensure the proper interpretation and implementation of trade, commercial and other treaties signed between Ethiopia and France. In modern education, the French language—propelled by French missionary personnel, private French citizens, the French

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2 There is now a word [tujjar] 'a wealthy person' in Amharic, the working language of Ethiopia, which probably originated from (French or Arabic?)[tajjur] by metathesizing the vowels.

government, and enthusiasts of the French language and culture—grew in importance. French also played an essential role in the emerging Ethiopian urban life during these four decades in the press, the modern economy, international relations, and modern culture and communication.

From 1897-1937 French had functioned as a second language of the state, a medium of instruction, and a school subject. Generally, the French language became the core medium in secular education, the press, and other mass communication activities such as advertising and international communication. Therefore, the French influence was significantly observed in education, the press, and the economy.

#### **4.1 Education**

Modern education in Ethiopia is a little older than 110 years. In October 1908, Emperor Menilik established Ecole Impérial Menilik II, Ethiopia's first government-operated, secular, western-type school. In the words of Gerencheal & Mishra (2019:1431), "the beginning of this modern education is believed as the major factor which allows the introduction and expansion of foreign (mainly European) languages in Ethiopia."

In stifling the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOTC), King Menilik imported Egyptian teachers with Coptic faith. The church was the torch-bearer, the handler of intellectual life, storehouse of knowledge, education, and runner of the justice system of the country, which may oppose the establishment of schools and modern education (run by missionaries) as the church was also a staunch opponent of Catholicism (as there had been a feud and bloodshed in the history—which involve Jesuit missionaries in the past). Because of that, the King chose and recruited Egyptian teachers with Coptic faith for a religious reason. Following the then education practice in Egypt, the language of instruction was French. It is a new subject that does not have a societal base. Based on the teachers' account, French was a popular subject. Nevertheless, students also studied English, Italian and Amharic, and mathematics (Pankhurst, 1974). Other educational areas were establishing schools, using French as a medium

of instruction and a school subject, and awarding scholarships for promising students to study abroad.

The elite and other communities have emulated the exemplary action of Emperor Menilik and the French community in the area of education. Fifteen to twenty government-run and private language schools were opened in Addis Ababa and other provincial cities, including Harar, Ambo, Jimma, and Selale. In particular, the *Ecole Française* was opened in 1912 with French as the medium of instruction (Dilebo, 1991; Pankhurst, 1974). However, schools at Asebe Teferi, Gonder, Debre Markos, Adwa and Mekele used English as their medium of instruction (Pankhurst, 1976).

An unprecedented educational advance in the history of the country marked the last decade of the period. Seven more government schools, including Lycée, were set up in the capital. The Lycée (1930) was designed to give technical and linguistic training to about a hundred students. Instruction was in French, and the subjects included modern languages (Pankhurst, 1974). Moreover, in the mid-1920s, Teferi Mekonnen School was inaugurated, markedly more French-oriented than English. Foreign languages such as French, English, and Arabic included as subjects, and its students sat annually for the French government's examination of competency in primary studies (Pankhurst, 1974). Successive French principals ran the school. Ethiopian teachers were also part of the school teaching Amharic and elementary French.

On the other hand, a decade before 1935, movements to stifle the popular French language by instituting the rival language, English as a foreign language, were noted (Pankhurst, 1976; Zewde 2002). People who favoured either France or Britain intervened at one time or another to reverse adverse situations for their preferred languages in the school arena. Gebre Hiwot Baykedagne (a famous writer and thinker of the time with an English education background), who was pro-English, and Andre Jarosseau (who was the private mentor of Emperor Haile Sellassie), who was pro-French, can be cited as spear-headers, of the cases in point (Eshete, 1974; Pankhurst, 2005). Andre Jarosseau went beyond supporting the French. He can be safely called the advocate of

all French interests (see Zewde (2002) for some of Jarosseau's dramatic interventions on behalf of the French). Eshete (1974: 30) envisaged the language use scenario of the period, stating that when King Menilik became Emperor, the European language at the Imperial Court and diplomacy became French. This French role remained the position up to 1935, the eve of the Italian annexation of Ethiopia. All told, before the Italian invasion in 1936, about thirteen schools had been established. Some of these schools used English as media of instruction, while others used French (Markakis, 1974).

Regarding scholarships, the large number of Ethiopian contingents who went abroad went mainly to France and Lebanon. Eighteen stationed in France at St. Michael College in Marseilles. Most of these students later devoted themselves to seminary work, except for one of the returnees, Grazmach Joseph, who became a prominent official for Emperor Menilik II. Scores of youngsters were also taken to different countries by missionaries (Pankhurst 1974; Pankhurst 2005). Sylvia Pankhurst (1955) estimated the number of students who studied abroad to be about forty in 1935. Those students who went to France had acclimatized to French culture at Alexandria Lycée in Egypt.

In conclusion, the idea of modern secular education in a foreign language was essential to Europeans or the Ethiopian government, which looked for functionaries and the Ethiopian intelligentsia. The intelligentsia thought it was crucial for maintaining sovereignty and developing the nation, believing that understanding a foreign language facilitated the transfer of modern knowledge and technical know-how necessary for Ethiopia's survival in the contemporary world. For instance, Baykedagne proposed a current system of education in which the teaching of foreign and local languages would constitute part of the curriculum towards this end (Aberra, 1998). By and large, modern education produced functionaries and intellectuals. Interestingly, Zewde (1991) noted a trend in which functionaries trained in the country while the scholars trained abroad.

## 4.2. Press

The second noticeable involvement of the French language is in the area of the press. Press activities of the period (1897-1935) comprised two entities: establishing religious printing presses and newspapers in the capital city, Addis Ababa, Harar, and Dire Dawa. The first weekly bilingual newspaper was created by the French monks (Gartley, 1994). It was Father Marie Bernard, a Franciscan missionary, who began publishing *Le Semeur Ethiopie*. He also issued 'The Bulletin de la Léproserie de Harar,' a French and Amharic weekly paper, between 1900-1915 (Bureau, 1997; G. Tsadik, 1998). Father Bernard, moreover, securing Emperor Menilik's acknowledgment, expanded his operations into commercial printing by using a duplicating machine Roneograph (Bonsa, 2000). The profits from this venture were channelled to finance St. Anthony's Leprosy Center. Bekele (1982:207), on the other hand, reported that *Le Semeur d' Capucin* missionaries published *Ethiopie*, a monthly magazine, in Dire Dawa since 1905. It continued until 1914, when the French monks called back to France.

Activities of the press include the establishment of printing presses in Dire Dawa, publishing and printing many pedagogical and religious books in French and local languages. It prospered until 1935, the time of the Italian occupation. The Italians took control of it afterwards (Alberto, 1998). In another instance of the press activities, Pankhurst (1955:524-528) enumerated the expansion of the press in Ethiopia, which involved French and France. Many small hand presses were imported into the towns of Ethiopia from various European countries. The French Lazarist fathers undertook a second missionary printing venture, which installed a printing press in January 1879 (G. Tsadik, 1998). One of these printing presses was responsible for printing the weekly journal *Le Courrier Ethiopia* (1913-1936). The founder and editor of the journal until 1924 was Alexis Desvages. He came to Ethiopia "en 1910 alors que la compagnie franco-ethiopienne du chemin de fer de Djibouti a Addis Abeba" (Rouaud, 1994:713). When Desvages liquidated the business and returned to France, Leon de Robilland took the entire responsibility. His daughter Germaine de Robilland served as the editor-in-chief until 1936 (Bureau, 1997;

Rouaud, 1994). By Bureau's (1997) and Rouaud's (1994) accounts, *Le Courrier d'Ethiopie* was at first printed only in French as "a four-page four-column newspaper sold for un quart de thaler, soit 1 fr. 50." It included Amharic advertisements and public notices later. It is said to have had a circulation of 700 initially. This was followed by what Rouaud (1994) noted, "*Le Courrier d'Ethiopie* trait regulierement a 2500 exemplaires ecrit - ilbien que nous ne fussons que 300 francais et ceci in di que l'importance prise par la diffusion de notre langue chez les indigenes".

It is also the case that French was a prestigious language then. Hence, French advertisements and directives and public announcements were standard features in other newspapers in Ethiopia (Bureau, 1997; Dubois, 2005).

In the years following, an Ethiopian press rapidly took shape, a growing number of periodical publications issued in Addis Ababa in Arabic, English, French and Italian. The Ethiopian press as a whole was steadily growing. For instance, *Le Courrier d'Ethiopie* increased to 10 pages from the earlier mentioned four. Two more newspapers were then founded. One was *La Revue Radio National*, a French newspaper publishing current news transmitted from Europe by radio.

In addition to newspapers, books in French, an Amharic grammar book by the Lazarist missionary, "Jospeh Baeteman," and an unmatched French-Amharic and Amharic-French Dictionary by the same author has also been printed and published at the *Des Vages* printing press mainly between 1923 and 1929. Another monthly magazine was also published in 1930 by Weizinger. It consisted of articles in numerous European languages in addition to a section for Amharic articles. This magazine had a circulation of 2,000 copies by 1932 when publication ceased.

To conclude, the beginning of the press and print media in Ethiopia was sporadic and foreign-inspired, catering predominantly to religious matters (Bonsa 2000).

### 4.3. The Economy

In the post-Adwa (the First Italo-Ethiopian War (1895-6)) years, Ethiopia thwarted European powers' political and colonial ambitions. Instead, trade and concessions were expressions of European penetration (Zewde, 1991). Europeans controlled Ethiopia's foreign trade almost wholly. For a start, French traders had the upper hand as they had helped Ethiopia during the war (The Italo-Ethiopian War (1895-6). One of the two remarkable concessions signed by Menilik was the railway construction by a French company, which the government of France later took over. The construction of the railway, as noted earlier, was a significant source of the penetration of the French language and culture, especially since its influence on local languages at the railway line was extensive (Dubois, 2005; Pankhurst, 2005).

Apart from Bekele (1982), Kozicki (2015) did an extensive study on the railway in Ethiopia. He pinpointed that the railway plays a vital role in "the Ethiopian economy and changing the social relations among the Ethiopian nations" (Kozicki, 2015:142).

Kozicki has generalized in one sentence many aspects of the roles and effects of the railway, which was built with France's help: "The Ethiopian railway heavily influenced the economic and social development of the country for many reasons." (Kozicki, 2015:168).

### 5. Conclusion

French and English have been the main European languages used in Ethiopia. French dominated the scene, beginning with the reign of Menilik II and continuing until the first half of Haile Sellassie's ruling, i.e., up to 1935. After the fierce competition between French and English and France's defeat during World War II, the French language had lost its dominant role and was supplanted by English (Aberra, 1998:115). However, the period (1897-1935) is characterized by the intensity of use of French in Ethiopia and its dramatic curtailment due to the Laval-Mussolini Agreement of January 7, 1935 (Bekele, 1982). Regrettably, France sided with Italy on the eve of the second major invasion of Ethiopia by Italy, which lasted five years (1935-1941).

Before 1935, by and large, Emperor Haile Sellassie, other politicians and the various elites had French education, mainly in France and Ethiopia. At that time, practically all the cabinet ministers spoke French with one or two exceptions. In addition, many speakers of French resided in Addis Ababa. In 1935, there were 300 French citizens and 1500 people under the protectorate of the French government in the country. The majority of these 1500 people were Armenians, Lebanese, Syrians, Arabs, Somalis, Russians, Poles, Czechs and Chinese. To this list, asked Bureau, the French historian and anthropologist (1997), 'should not Greeks and Egyptians families who consider French, the language of commerce, culture and civilizations be included?' They should indeed be; at least the Egyptians were using French in their schools in Egypt. Moreover, Egyptian teachers, Menilik recruited for his first school used French as a medium of instruction.

This period is construed as the heyday of the French in Ethiopia. It is characterized on the one hand by the intensity of the use of French in Ethiopia and its dramatic halt due to France's decision to side with Italy. The glory and demise of the French were beautifully penned by the long-time advisor of Emperor Haile Selassie, Spencer (1984) and Bekele (1982).

From King Menilik to that of King Haile Sellassie, France had acquired a dominating cultural, economic, and diplomatic role in Ethiopia. The last Ethiopia King, Haile Selassie, was taught in French, and he is conversant in French. Moreover, French has been used for all significant societal functions, as a medium of instruction in higher education, as a language of the Ethiopian Commercial law was in French. In media, the *Courrier d'Ethiopie*, the one major European language newspaper, was in French. Ethiopia used French for its international communications. Economically speaking, Ethiopia's global access to the sea is via the only railway from Addis Ababa to Djibouti via French Somaliland. The *chemin de fer franco-ethiopien de Djibouti a Addis Abeba* was contracted to a French company. Beyond the social and economic roles French and France have in Ethiopia, France has been a major international ally. However, in the words of Spencer, "the Laval-Mussolini Agreements of January 7, 1935, by which



France gave Italy a free hand in Ethiopia, brought this long period of cooperation to a sudden end" (Spencer, 1984).

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# THE PLACE OF GENDER EQUALITY, ACCOMMODATION OF DIVERSITY AND CIVILIZED SOCIETY (ENLIGHTENMENT) IN CLASSICAL ETHIOPIAN PHILOSOPHY

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## Abstract

*Civilized Society/Enlightened community is a community where development and common affairs are participatory of all, entertaining better opportunities and choices for life. Such community gives proper place and recognition to the views and voices of children, women, the elderly and other historically excluded members of the community. Furthermore, such social fabric entertains diversities pertaining to religion, culture, history, and worldviews. Based on such assumptions, this study is a critical assessment on classical Ethiopian philosophy. The focus is given on participatory development related to gender equality, accommodation of diversity and enlightenment as portrayed in translated philosophical texts of the book of*

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*the wise philosophers (16<sup>th</sup> C) and original treatises of 17<sup>th</sup> C Ethiopian philosophers, Zara Yacob and Wolde Hiwot. As a philosophical reflection, the study uses qualitative research method. Accordingly, we can extract and take lessons for our contemporary aspirations of gender equality, accommodation of diversity and enlightenment from classical Ethiopian philosophy. Genuine development should entertain both material and spiritual aspects. As such, the development projects of certain society are expected to achieve healthy intergenerational communication, common aspirations for common good and desirable intercultural communication (where diversity is a challenge). Therefore, policy makers, practitioners, researchers and all concerned in Ethiopian desirable future need to consult indigenous knowledge systems besides foreign ideas, modern science and technology. This will save us from producing “educated community” who is detached from the self for the sake of embracing the identities of others.*

**Key Words:** Classical Great ideas, Diversity and Gender Equality, Enlightenment, Intergenerational – Intercultural Communications, Sustainable Development

## የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ብዝሃነትና የሠላጠነ ማኅበረሰብ ግንባታ እሳቤዎች በዘመን ተሻጋሪ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ውስጥ

ኢያሱ በሬንቶ

### አህጽሮተ ጥናት

የሠላጠነ ማኅበረሰብ ሲባል ሁሉን አሳታፊና ለሰው ልጆች ሕይወት የተሻለ አማራጭ ያለበት እድገት በማረጋገጥ ላይ ያለ ማኅበረሰብ ነው። ይህም ሴቶችን፣ ህጻናትን፣ ሽማግሌዎችንና ቢታሪክ አጋጣሚ የተገለሉትን አካላት ያካተተ፤ የሃይማኖት፣ የባህል፣ የታሪክ፣ የአስተሳሰብ ብዝሃነትን በሆደ ሰፊነት ያቀፈ መሆን አለበት። ይህ ጥናት ሁሉን አቀፍ ማኅበረሰባዊ ስልጣኔን ለማረጋገጥ የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ብዝሃነትንና የአስተሳሰብ ልህቀትን ለማረጋገጥ ዘመን ተሻጋሪ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና የሚኖረው አስተዋጽኦ ላይ የተደረገ ትንታኔ ነው። ከኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ገጾች በመግለጥ፣ በ16ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን የተተረጎመው “አንጋረ ፈላስፋ” ና በ17ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን የነበሩ ፈላስፎች መጻሕፍት (በግእዝ የተጻፉ ሐተታ ዘርዓ ያዕቆብና ወልደ ሕይወት) መጻሕፍት ላይ ትኩረት አድርጓል። ዓይነታዊ የጥናት ዘዴን የተከተለ ፍልስፍናዊ ምልከታ ነው። የተደረሰውም ደምዳሜ ከዘመን ተሻጋሪ የፍልስፍና አስተሳሰቦች ውስጥ ለዘመናችን የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ብዝሃነትና የአስተሳሰብ ልህቀት አጀንዳዎች ዓይነተኛ ግብአት የሚሆኑ ሙግቶችንና ምክረ ሐሳቦችን ማግኘት ይቻላል የሚል ነው። የአንድ እድገት መለኪያው ቁሳዊና መንፈሳዊ እሴቶችን ሲያሟላ ነው። የተሟላ የአንድ ማኅበረሰብ ሥልጣኔ የሚረጋገጠው ደግሞ በትውልዶች መካከል (በትናንት፣ በዛሬና በነገ ትውልዶች) ጤናማ የሆነ የመንፈስ ትስስሮ እና በባህሎች መካከል በጎ መናበብ ሲፈጠር ነው። ስለዚህ ፖሊሲ አውጭዎች፣ ፖሊሲ አስፈጻሚዎች፣ የጥናትና ምርምር ባለሙያዎች እና ሁሉም የሚመለከታቸው አካላት ከዘመናዊ ሳይንስ ጎን ለጎን ዘመን ተሻጋሪ አገር በቀል እውቀቶችን ቢያካትቱ ለዘመናችን ችግሮችና ለዘላቂ ልማት እቅዶች መፍትሔ የሚሆኑ ምክረ ሐሳቦችን ማግኘት ይቻላል። ከባህሉ፣ ከወላጆቹና ከአገር በቀል እውቀቱ የተነጠለ “የተማረ ማኅበረሰብ” እንዳንፈጥር በዚህ በኩል መካነ አእምሮዎች ትልቅ ኃላፊነት ይጠበቅባቸዋል።

- 2 Multiculturalism
- 3 Enlightenment
- 4 Qualitative
- 5 Intergenerational communication
- 6 Intercultural communication
- 7 Universities

**ቁልፍ ቃላት፡** ብዝሃነትና የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ዘላቂ ልማት፣ ዘመን ተሻጋሪ ሐሳቦች፣ የትውልዶች ተግባቦት፣ የአስተሳሰብ ልንቀት

## ፩. መግቢያ

የሠላጠነ ማኅበረሰብ ግንባታ የሁሉን ተሳታፊነትና ተጠቃሚነት የሚያረጋግጥ ቁሳዊና መንፈሳዊ እድገትን የማረጋገጥ ሂደት ነው። ይህንን ለማረጋገጥ ደግሞ እውቀት ትልቅ ሚና አለው። ምክንያታዊ ያልሆነና ያልተማረ ማኅበረሰብን ይዞ ሁሉን አቀፍና ዘላቂ እድገትን ማምጣት አይታሰብም (ገብረሐይወት ባይከዳኝ፣ 2002)። ዘመናዊ ትምህርት መስፋፋትና ሽፋን ከፍተኛ ቢሆንም በሃገር በቀል እውቀት ላይ ጥረት ሲያደርግ አይስተዋልም። የአንድን ማኅበረሰብ ደህንነት ለማረጋገጥ ያ ማኅበረሰብ በታሪክ ሂደት ውስጥ በተለያዩ ዘመናት ያካበታቸው ቁሳዊና መንፈሳዊ እሴቶችን መጠበቅና ከእውቀት መጋዘኑ ተጠቃሚ እንዲሆን ማስቻል አለበት። ከዚህ በተጨማሪ እንደ ኢትዮጵያ ያሉ ባለ ብዙ ባህል ማህበረሰብ ያላቸው አገራት የብዝሃነትን ጸጋ ሊጠቀሙበት ይገባል። ይህም ለዕውቀት፣ ለምርምር ያለንን አማራጮች በማብዛት በትውልዶች መካከል መልካም መናበብን ከመፍጠሩም በላይ በልዩነቶች መካከል መልካም ተግባቦትንና ጤናማ ማኅበራዊ መስተጋብርን ያረጋግጣል።

በአንድ አገር ዘላቂ ልማት ለማረጋገጥ የበዳይና ተበዳይ፣ የጨቋኝ ተጨቋኝ፣ የእኔና ሌላው ልዩነቶች መጥበብና መወገድ አለባቸው። ከነዚህ ውስጥ የጾታ እኩልነት ጥያቄ፣ የርስ በርስ ግንኙነት ያሉ የእኩልነት እና የሰላም ጥያቄዎችን ሊመለስ ይገባል። ምንም እንኳን የሌላ ባሕሎች እውቀቶች እና ፍልስፍናዎች የራሳቸው አማራጭ ያላቸው ቢሆንም በዘመናዊ ትምህርት አማካኝነት ከአገር በቀል እውቀት ጋር መቀናጀት ይኖርባቸዋል።

ይህ ጽሑፍ በየአሁኗ ኢትዮጵያ ማኅበራዊ መግባባት ላይ የብዝሃነት ጉዳይና የሴቶች እኩልነት ትኩረት ሊሰጣቸው እንደሚገባ ይሞግታል። የችግሮቹን አሳሳቢነት ግምት ውስጥ በማስገባት ዘመናዊ መንገድ ብቻውን ሙሉ በሙሉ ሊመልሰው እንደማይችል በመገንዘብ ከአገር በቀል እውቀት በተለይም ከዘመን ተሻጋሪ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ውስጥ የሚገኙ ምክረ ሐሳቦችን፣ ሙግቶችንና አስተያየቶችን ፈልፍሎ በማውጣት ወደ አካዳሚያዊ መድረክ ያቀርባል። በዚህም በኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ውስጥ ለዘመናችን የብዝሃነት፣ የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ የአስተሳሰብ ልንቀትን ለማረጋገጥ ኢትዮጵያውያን ፈላስፎች (የፍልስፍና ተርጓሚዎች) ያደረጉትን ሙከራና ያቆዩልንን ጥበብ ከዘመናዊው ትምህርት ጋር በማዋሃድ ጉልህ ሚና ያለው እውቀት መፍጠር ይቻላል። ይህ ጽሑፍ ያተኮረባቸው ዓባይነት ርእሶች የጾታ ልዩነትና እኩልነት የሚያስተናግድ፣ የባህል ልዩነትና አንድነት የሚያቅፍ፣ የሰላጠነ የውይይት ባህልና ዘላቂነቱ የተረጋገጠ ሁሉን አሳታፊ ልማት ለማምጣት የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና የሚኖረውን አስተዋጽኦ ማሳየት ነው። ይህ ጽሑፍ በዋናነት በተጻፉ የፍልስፍና ድርሳናት ላይ ትኩረት ያደረገ ነው።

የጽሑፉ ዓላማ የተዘነጉ አገር በቀል እውቀቶችንና ዘመን ተሻጋሪ ፍልስፍናዎችን ከዘመናዊው ሳይንስና ፍልስፍና ጋር በማዋሃድ ከዓለም ያልተነጠለ ከባህሉና ከወላጆቹ ጋር ያልተፋታ ስልጡን ማኅበረሰብ መገንባት እንደሚገባን ማሳየት ነው። ይህንን



ለማሳካት በጥልቅ የመጽሐፍ ይዘት ትንታኔ ላይ የተመሰረተ ዓይነተኛ የጥናት ዘዴን በመከተል የተደረገ ፍልስፍናዊ ሐተታ ነው።

ጽሑፉ ወደ ውስጣችን በመመልከት ለችግሮቻችን መፍትሄ የሚሆኑ ፍልስፍናዊ እይታዎችን ይዳሰሳል። የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ምንድን ነው? የምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ መገለጫዎች ምንድን ናቸው? በልዩነቶች ምክንያት የሚፈጠርን አለመግባባትና የጾታ አድልዎችን እንዴት መቅረፍ ይቻላል? ከኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ለእነዚህን ጥያቄዎች መመለስ የሚችሉ ሐሳቦች ማግኘት እንችላለን? የአንድ ማኅበረሰብ ዘላቂ ሥልጣኔ መገለጫዎች ምንድን ናቸው? የከፍተኛ ትምህርት ሚና ምን መሆን አለበት? የሚሉ ጥያቄዎችን ለመመለስና ሌሎች እንዲመልሱትና እንዲወያዩበት የሚጋብዙ ሐሳቦችን ይዟል።

## ፪. የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና

የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ምንድን ነው? የሚለውን ከማየታችን በፊት ኢትዮጵያ ምንድን ነች? ኢትዮጵያውያን ለእነማን ናቸው? የሚለውን ማየት ያስፈልጋል።

ኢትዮጵያ በታሪክና በመልክአምድር የተለያየ ይዘትና ቅርጽ እየተሰጣት የቆየች ጥንታዊት አገር ናት። ከግብጽ በስተደቡብ እስከ ህንድ ውቅያኖስ የተዘረጋ መልክዓ ምድር ያላት አገር ስትሆን በህዝቡ አወቃቀር፣ ስነ ልቦናና ስብዕና የተለያዩ የታሪክ ጸሐፊዎች የተለያዩ እሳቤዎችን ያስቀምጣሉ። ከእነዚህም ውስጥ በታሪክ ቀደምት የሆኑ ጀግና፣ ለፍትሃዊ፣ ምክንያታዊነት ነጻ ህዝብ እንደሆኑ የሚመሰክሩ አሉ። ለምሳሌ በ16ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን ወደ ኢትዮጵያ የተጓዘ አልቫሬዝ የኢትዮጵያውያንን ፍትሐዊነትና የሥነ ህንጻ ና የሥነ ጥበብ ክህሎት ሲያደንቅ Almeida ደግሞ ኢትዮጵያውያንን “ለፍትህና ለምክንያታዊነት ዝግጁዎች፣ ብሩህ አእምሮ ያላቸው፣ በጥሩ ሥነ ምግባር ያደጉና፣ ታጋሽና ትሁት ለይቅርታ ቅርብ የሆኑና ቂም የማይዘዙ” ሲል ይገልጻቸዋል።<sup>8</sup> ሌላኛው የጥንት ዘመን ጸሐፊ Diodorus ደግሞ “በምንም የውጭ ኃይል ያልተገዙ፣ ሁሉም በነጻነት የኖሩና በፍጹም የውስጥ ሰላምና የርስ በርስ መከባበር የኖሩ ህዝቦች”<sup>9</sup> ይላቸዋል። ሌሎችም እንዲሁ ዓባይን የሚቆጣጠሩ፣ አስፈሪና ጀግና ህዝቦች በማለት የኢትዮጵያውያንን ማንነት ሲገልጹ ይስተዋላል።<sup>10</sup>

ዋናውና መሠረታዊ ጥያቄ እነዚህ ኢትዮጵያውያን እነማን ናቸው? የሚለው ነው። የ1960ዎቹ የብሔር ጥያቄ ኢትዮጵያን እንደ ቅኝ ገዥ ከመመልከት ጀምሮ የውስጥ አድልዎና የብሔር ጭቆና አለ ወደሚሉ የተለሳለሱ አቋሞች ያስተናገደ የቅርብ ጊዜ ታሪክ

8 “very amenable to reason and justice ... intelligent and good natured ... mild, gentle, kind and so inclined to forgiveness that they readily pardon any injuries” (cited in Donald Levine, 1974, p. 10).

9 The Ethiopians “...were never brought into subjugation by a foreign prince, but always remained a free people, at perfect peace among themselves” (in Levine, p.12).

10 Ibid. 6-7

ነው። ይህም ኤርትራን እስከ መገንጠልና ብሔር ተኮር የፌዴራሊዝም ሥርዓት እስከ መከተል ድርሷል። ከነዚህ እሳቤዎች ውስጥ አንዱ ኢትዮጵያን የተለያዩ ህዝቦች ስብስብ አድርጎ የሚያስበው ሙግት ነው። በዚህ ሙግት መሠረት ኢትዮጵያውያን እርስ በርሳቸው ብዙም የጋራ እሴት የሌላቸው ባንድ ላይ የተሰበሰቡ ህዝቦች ናቸው፤ ኢትዮጵያም የብሔር ብሔረሰቦች ቅርጫት ናት ወደሚለው ድምዳሜ ይደርሳል። ይህ አስተሳሰብ ግን ብዙም ተቀባይነት ያለው አይደለም። ባንድ በኩል ኢትዮጵያውያን ለዘመናት በጋራ የኖሩና ደስታና ችግርን ባንድነት የተጋፈጡ ህዝቦች ናቸው። ለዚህም ብዙ ማሳያዎች አሉ። ከነዚህ ውስጥ ሌሊን የኢትዮጵያውያንን አንድነት መካድ የሚጋሯቸውን ብዙ እሴቶች ማጣጣል እና የተሳሳተ ግንዛቤ እንደሆነ ይገመታል። “[...] to see Ethiopia as a mosaic of distinct peoples is to overlook the many features they have in common and the existence of discernable culture areas, and to ignore the numerous relationships these groups have had with one another” (Levin, p. 21).

ይህንን ሐሳብ በርካቶች ይደግፋታል። ለምሳሌ ዲ አባዴ ስለኢትዮጵያውያን ስብጥር “የቆዳ ከለር ለዓይነት ከፈለጋችሁ በዓለም ላይ ያሉትን ሕብረ ቀለማት ሁሉ በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ ታገኛላችሁ። የስፓኒሽ ዝርያ የሆኑ ላቲን አሜሪካኖች ያላቸውን ከመሰለው ነሐሳማ ከለር ጀምሮ የቤርቤር ጎሳዎች ወይም ኔግሮዎች ያላቸውን ልጥልጥ ኑግ መሰል ጥቁር የቆዳ ቀለም በሽ ነው።” (2009፣ ገጽ. 50-51) ካለ በኋላ እነዚህ የተለያዩ የሚመስሉ ህዝቦች እንዴት አብረው ሊኖሩ ቻሉ የሚለውን ጥያቄ የሚመልስ የርስ በርስ ሰላማዊ መስተጋብራቸውን እንዲህ ይገልጻል፤

ከአውሮፓ የመጣው ተጓዥ ግር የሚለው አንድ ነገር አለ። በሚያልፍበት አካባቢ የሚያየው አንድ ህዝብ መካከል ከሌላ ቦታ ተሰዶ የመጣ የሌላ አካባቢ ሰው፤ ቤተሰብ፤ እንዲያውም አንዳንዴ መንደር ሙሉ ሰው ከነባሩ ጋር ሰፍሮ ሲኖር ማየቱ ነው። ከነባሩ ነዋሪ ጋር በዘር ወይም በጎሳ የማይዛመድ ፍጹም የተለየ ብሔር ቢሆን እንኳን ተቀላቅሎ ለመኖር አንዳች ችግር አይፈጥርበትም። ለመልካም አብሮ የመኖር ዘዴ የነባሩን ነዋሪ ወይም ብሔር ሕግና ልማድ አክብሮ መስሎ መኖር ብቻ ሲጠበቅበት በበኩሉ አያት ቅድመ አያቶቹን ሳይክድ ማንነቱን ሳይረሳ ጥንታዊ ልማዱን ሳይሸር መኖር ይችላል። ለዚህም ነው በኢትዮጵያ ባንድ አካባቢ የተለያዩ ባህልና ልማድ ያላቸው ጎሳዎች በጉርብትና በሰላም ሲኖሩ ማየት የምንችለው (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 73)።

በጉዳዩ ላይ ከሚጽፉት ጸሐፍት ውስጥ የኢትዮጵያውያን አንድነት እንደሚታየው የቀለምና የኑሮ ዘዴ ስብጥር የጎሳ ሳይሆን እንዲያውም ሁሉም አንድ ዓይነት ህዝቦች ናቸው። በመካከላቸው የባህልና የነገድ ልዩነት ማግኘት ከባድ እንደሆነ የሚገልጹ ብዙዎች ናቸው። ሌሊን ከነዚህ ወገኖች የሚመደብ ነው። ተክለጻድቅ መኩሪያ እንዲህ ይገልጻል፤

... የጥንት ጽሐፊዎች ግብጾችም፣ እስራኤሎችም ግሪኮችም ግማሾቹ የኩሽ አገር የቀሩት ኢትዮጵያ እያሉ ሲጠሩን አሁን ባለንበት የፖለቲካና ያገር ክፍል የምንገኘውን ኢትዮጵያዊች ብቻ አይደለም[።] ነገር ግን ከዛሬው ቱኒዚያ ማርክ ከሊብያና ግብጽ ከፍልስጥኤም ወደ ደቡብ በኤርትራ ባህር ግራና ቀኝ እስከ ህንድ ውቅያኖስ ጠረፍ ድረስ ያለውን የዛሬውን የዓረብንም የሱዳንንም በመካከል የሚገኘውን ያሁኑን የኛንም አገር አንዳንድ ጊዜ እየለዩ ብዙ ጊዜ እየደባለቁ ነው።

ይህም እንደ ሙሉ ስህተት እንዳይቆጠር በዙሪያችን ከሚገኙት ከነዚህ ህዝቦች ጋር ዘራችን ልማዳችን ቋንቋችን ከሥር ከመሠረቱ እየተገናኘ ተደባልቆ በመኖሩ ነው፤ ደግሞም ረዕብ በተነሳ ጊዜ አንደኛው ነገድ ተሰዶ ወደ አንደኛው ነገድ አገር ሄዶ ይደባለቃል። (፲፱፻፶፩, ነጻ. ፲፬)

በኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ዙሪያ ከፍተኛ ጥናት ያደረገና ከግማሽ ደርዘን በላይ መጻሕፍትን የጻፈ ክላውድ ሳምነርም ይህንን ሐሳብ ይደግፋል።

As there has been so much racial intermixing, racial identifications are limited use in Ethiopia. Periodic migrations of Caucasoid peoples from across the Red Sea and the Negroid peoples from the West have produced a population that predominantly manifests a blend of the two physical types. ... The terms Amhara, Oromo, and Tigre refer to linguistic and to some extent cultural groups, rather than to races or tribes (1985, p. 2).

እነዚህ ሐሳቦች ሰብሰብ አድርገን ስንመረምራቸው ያሁኑ ኢትዮጵያውያን ባንድም በሌላም መንገድ አብረው የኖሩ፣ የተዋሃዱና የተዋለዱ ህዝቦች እንደሆኑ መደምደም ይቻላል። አሁን ባለው ማኅበረ ፖለቲካዊ መዋቅር ውስጥ የሚተዳደሩትንም ሆነ በተለያየ መንገድ ውጭ እየኖሩ ራሳቸውን እንደኢትዮጵያውያን የሚቆጥሩ፣ በህጋዊና በስነ ልቦናዊ ምክንያት ኢትዮጵያውያን ነን የሚሉትን ነው ኢትዮጵያውያን የምንላቸው።

የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ስንልም የነዚህ ህዝቦች በጽሑፍና በቃል ሲተላለፍ የመጣ የአስተሳሰብ ክፍታ ነው። ሐተታ ተፈጥሮን ለመመርመር፣ ማህበራዊ መስተጋብርን ለመበየን፣ ሕይወትን ለመተርጎም፣ ደስታና ሐዘንን ለመግለጽ፣ ሰው ሰራሽና ተፈጥሮአዊ ችግሮችን ለመፍታት ሰዎች ከሰዎች ጋር ባላቸው ግንኙነትና የሰው ልጅ ከተፈጥሮ ጋር በሚያደርገው ቁርኝት በዘመን ሂደት ውስጥ የሚጎለብቱ አገር በቀል እውቀቶች ውስጥ ፍልስፍናን ማግኘት ይቻላል። ከዚህም በተጨማሪ በግለሰቦች የግል ጥረትና ምርምር፣ ተመስጦ የሚፈልቅ ያስተሳሰብ ልሕቀትን የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና እንለዋለን። ከዚህም በተጨማሪ ከፍተኛ ትኩረት ተሰጥቶት የተተረጎመና ለኢትዮጵያ ባህል እንዲመች ተደርጎ

የተዋሐደ የውጭ ፍልስፍና በዘመን ሂደት ውስጥ ኢትዮጵያዊነትን ተላብሶ ይገኛል። ይኸም ከኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና የሚመደብ ይሆናል።

ከነዚህም ውስጥ የጋዳ ፖለቲካዊ ሥርዓት፣ የጋዳ የተፈጥሮ ጥበቃ ሥርዓት፣ የሰለሞናዊ ፖለቲካ ሥርዓት በኢትዮጵያ፣ የየተተረጎሙ የፍልስፍና መጻሕፍት፣ በዘርዳ ያዕቆብና ወልደ ሕይወት የተጻፉ የፍልስፍና ሐተታዎች፣ ሌሎችም የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ቅርሶች ናቸው። ምንም እንኳን በባህልና በቦታ ርቀት ወደሌላው ባይዳረሱም በየትኛውም የኢትዮጵያ አካባቢ የፈለቀና በማንኛውም ቦታ ቢተገበር የወገንተኝነትና የባሕል ተቃርኖ እስካላመጣ ድረስ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ነው ልንለው እንችላለን። ዘመን ተሻጋሪ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና የተሰኙትም በጊዜና በቦታ የማይገደቡ በኢትዮጵያውያን የሚተገበሩና፣ የተነገሩና የተጻፉ የፍልስፍና ሐሳቦችን የሚገልጽ ነው።

ከነዚህ የፍልስፍና ቅርሶች ውስጥ ነው ለአስተሳሰብ ልንቀት፣ ለሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ለብዝሃነትና ለዘላቂ ልማት እሳቤዎች የሚሆኑ መግቶችንና ምክረ ሐሳቦችን ማግኘት የምንችለው። ለምሳሌ የፍልስፍናን ሚና ከሚያትቱት መካከል አባ ሚካኤል የተባሉ የአንጋሪ ፈላስፋ ደራሲ የተለያዩ ፈላስፎችን አባባሎች በሰበሰቡበትና በተነተኑበት መጽሐፍ የሚከተለውን ይላሉ፤

የፈላስፎች ፍልስፍናና የአዋቂዎች ዕውቀት ከብር፣ ከወርቅ፣ ከአልማዝ እርሷ ትበልጣለች ትመረጣለችም። እንዲሁም ልዩ ልዩ ጣዕምና መዓዛ ካላቸው ከአታክልት አበባዎች መዓዛ የርሷ መዓዛነት ይበልጣል። [...] አንደበትህን በጥበብ፣ በዕውቀት፣ በቅንነት፣ በትዕግስት፣ በማስተዋል ጨው ታጣፍጠዋለች። ጠባይህን ያማረ የተወደደ፣ አነጋገርህን በሚሰሙት ሰዎች ዘንድ ተደማጭ ታደርገዋለች። ሥራህን ሁሉ ታከናውንልሃለች።  
(፲፱፻፶፫፣ ገጽ ፮)

እነዚህ ቃላት የፍልስፍናን ሚና አጉልተው ያሳያሉ። ለሰላም፣ ለአብሮነትና አስተሳሰብ ልህቀት ፍልስፍና ጉልህ ሚና አለው። የጸባይ ቀናነትን፣ የአስተሳሰብ ቀናነትንና የስብዕና ጽርየትን " ታጎናጽፋለች። አሁን ያለው የብሔር ተኮር ፖለቲካ ዲስኩር የተለያዩ አመለካከቶችን ሲያስተናግድ ይታያል። በኢትዮጵያውያንና በኢትዮጵያዊነት ዙርያ የሚነሱት አለመግባባቶች ከሐሳብ ግጭትም አልፈው ለመሰደድ፣ መፈናቀል፣ ለበርካቶች ሞት መንስኤ ሲሆኑ ይስተዋላል። በዚህም የተግባቦት፣ የአብሮነት እና የእኩልነት ችግር በዘላቂነት ለመፍታት የተግባቦት ወዘናው ለዛ ያለው ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ ለመገንባት ፍልስፍና የአንበሳውን ድርሻ ይይዛል።

## ፫. ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ

ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ ሲባል በአስተሳሰብ ልንቀት የጠነከረና በስሜት የማይነዳ ማኅበረሰብ ነው። የመመራመር ባህሉ ጠንካራ የሆነ በሥማ በለውና ዘፈቀዳዊ እምነት የማይመራ ማኅበረሰብ ነው። የሰው ልጅን መለኮታዊ ባህርይ ግምት ውስጥ በማስገባት ቀደምት የኢትዮጵያ ፈላስፎች ሳይመረምሩ ማመንን እንደ ኃጢአት ወስደውታል። በኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና ውስጥ የመመራመርንና የምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብን ግንባታ ከሚመኙና ለዚያም ከሚሞግቱት ፈላስፎች ጥቂት እሳቤዎችን እንውሰድ።

ዘርዳ ያዕቆብም “ሰዎች ሁሉ ለባውያን ናቸውና” (2007፣ ገጽ 15) ሲለን ለባዊነት ምክንያታዊነትና ተመራማሪነት የሰው ልጆች መለኮታዊ ጸጋ የሆነ ጥንተ ተፈጥሮ እንደሆነ ሲጠይቅ ነው። ለዘርዳ ያዕቆብ የአንድ ነገር እውነተኛነት የሚረጋገጠው በአማኞቹ ብዛት ሳይሆን ከልቡና ጋር ባለው ስምምነት ይወሰናል። እንዲያውም ልክ እንደ ጀርመናዊው ፈላስፋ ኢማኑኤል ካንት እንደሚለው የአንድ ነገር እውነተኛነት ለማረጋገጥ የሰዎች ምስክርነት ላይ ብቻ መንጠልጠል እንደሌለብን ይነግረናል። “ሕያው ፈጣሪያችን በእውቀትና በተግባር ኑሯችንን እናሳምረው ዘንድ ይፈቅዳል። ስለዚህ ልብና ችሎታን ሰጥቶናልና።” (ዝኒከማሁ ገጽ 19-20) የራሱን ልምድ ሲነግረን “ከዳዊት መዝሙር ውስጥ ከኅሊናዬ ጋር የማይስማማ ባገኝ እኔ እተረጉመዋለሁ” (22) ይለናል።

ወልደ ሕይወትም ሳይመረምሩ ማመንን በእጅጉ የሚያወግዝ ፈላስፋ ነው። ከመምህሩ የተቀበለውን አደራ በማስቀጠል ስለ መመራመር አስፈላጊነትና የሥልጡን ማኅበረሰብ ግንባታውን ተግባራዊ ለማድረግ መመራመርን እና ምክንያታዊነትን በህዝቡ ዘንድ እንዲሰርጽ በአጽንኦት አስተምሯል።

ወንድሜ ሆይ አዋቂ አድርጎ ወደ ፈጠረህ ፍጹም ወደ ሆነው ወደዚህ ኅላዌ ኅሊናህን ከፍ ከፍ አድርግ። በዓይነ ልቡናህም ወደ እርሱ ተመልከት። ፈጣሪህ የሚያሳይህን የአእምሮ ብርሃንም አስተውል።... አንተስ ሰዎች ያስተማሩህን እውነትን ከሃሰት ትለይ ዘንድ ሳትመረምር ፈጽመህ አትመን፤ ሰዎች ሊዋሹህ ይችላሉና። እውነትን ወይም ሐሰትን ቢያስተምሩህ አንተ አታውቅምና። እንዲሁም በመጻሕፍት የተጻፈውን ፈጽመህ አትመን። መርምረህ እውነተኞች ሆነው ካላገኘሃቸው በቀር። መጻሕፍትንም ሐሰትን ይጽፉ ዘንድ የሚችሉ ሰዎች ጽፈዋቸዋልና (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 42)።

በሚያስደንቅ ሁኔታ ምርምርን ወደ ጥበብ የምንገባበት በር ሲያደርጋት ልቡናችን [ኅሊናችን] ደግሞ ይህንን በር የምንከፍትባት ቁልፍ ናት። እንዲያውም ቀድሞ በችኮላ ከማመን ይልቅ አለማመን እንደሚሻል፣ ካለማመን ወደ ማመን፣ ከመጠራጠር ወደ መመራመርና ወደ እርግጠኝነት እንደምንደርስ ይከራከራል። “ለማመን እንጅ ላለማመን ምክንያት አያስፈልግምና።” ካለ በኋላ የሰው ልጅ “መልካሙን ከከፉ፣ እውነቱን ከሐሰት እንድ[ን]ለይ የልቡናን ብርሃን ሰጥቶናል።” ይላል (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 48)። ከዚህ የመመራመር ተፈጥሯዊ ጸጋ የሚመጣ ተጠያቂነትም አለ። ለባዊት ነፍስና ተመራማሪ አእምሮ ተሰጥቶን ባንመረምር ኃጢአት እንደሰራን ይፈረድብናል። “ሁሉን መመርመር መልካም ጥበብ ነውና። ነባቢት ነፍስንና ይህን የሚመረምር ልቡናን ለሰጠን ለፈጣሪያችን

እናመሰግናለን። ሳይመረምሩ ማመን ግን የእግዚአብሔር ፈቃድ አይደለም። ከለባዊት ፍጥረት<sup>12</sup> ባህርይ ጋርም አይስማማም” (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 49-50)።

ከሌሎች ጥንት የኢትዮጵያ ፈላስፎች ውስጥ በ5ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን ወደ ግዕዝ እንደተተረጎመ የሚነገርለት የእስክንድስ ሕይወትና መርሆዎቹ በመባል የሚታወቅ መጽሐፍ አለ። ታሪኩንና ሐሳቦቹ ባንድ ላይ የያዘ መጽሐፍ ሲሆን ለእስክንድስ አንድ ነገር እውነት ነው ለመባል መጀመሪያ በመረጃ የተደገፈ ማረጋገጫ ሊኖረው እንደሚገባ ነው። (እስክንድስ፣ በሳምነር 1985፣ ገጽ 169)

በአንጋረ ፈላስፋ መጽሐፍ ውስጥም የአያሌ ፈላስፎች ሐሳብ በሥነ ምግባር፣ በማኅበራዊ ሕይወት፣ በሰው ልጆች ባሕርይ፣ በነፍስ ተፈጥሮ፣ በሥጋ ባህርያት ወዘተ በርካታ ሐሳቦችን ያሰባሰበ ሲሆን ስለ ሰው ልጆች መመራመር አስፈላጊነት በሰፊው ይገልጻል። ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ ዋና መገለጫው የቀረበለትን እውነትና መረጃ መመርመርና ከምርምር በኋላ ማመን ነው። ከዚህ ባሻገር በማኅበራዊ መስተጋብር ውስጥ ያሉ የአስተሳሰብ ዝንፈሶችንና ተቃርኖዎችን እንዲያርቅ፣ ልዩነቶችን እንዲያስተናግድ፣ በውይይትና በክርክር እንዲያምን ይፈለጋል። “ተፈራራጅዎችና ተከራካሪዎች ያሏትን አገር ስሕተት አያገኛትም።” (አንጋረ ፈላስፋ፣ 109፡1-2፣ ገጽ 109-110)

ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ በውስጡ ያሉ የባህል፣ የሃይማኖት፣ የኢኮኖሚ፣ ፖለቲካዊና ማኅበራዊ ተቃርኖዎችን በመፍታት ከአስተሳሰብ ዝንፈትና ከተግባራት ኩልሽት ራሱን የሚታደግ ነው። በሰብዓዊነት እሳቤ የነበረበት ነገሮችን በሰለጠነ መንገድ የመረዳትና የመተርጎም ባህሉ የጠነከረ ማኅበረሰብ ነው። በልዩነቶች መካከል ያሉን የጋራ እሴቶች ፈልፍሎ በማውጣት የርስ በርስ ሰንሰለትን መፍጠር የሚችል በልሂቃኑ ይሁንታ፣ በፈላስፎቹ መግት፣ በሳይንስ ውጤት፣ በታላላቆች ምክር፣ በሃይማኖት ህጎች እየተመራ ከነባራዊው መስተጋብር ጋር እየተስማማ መሄድ የሚችል ማኅበረሰብ ነው።

ይህ ሲሆን አንድ የሰለጠነ ማህበረሰብ ሁለት አበይት ጸጋዎችን ይጎናጸፋል። ባንድ በኩል ከዘመን አይሸፊ የአባትናቶቹ መንፈስ ጋር በመተሳሰር ጤናማ የትውልዶች ተግባራት ይኖረዋል። በሌላ በኩል ደግሞ ልዩነቶችን በሆደ ሰፊነት አቅፎ በመያዝ ብዝሃነትን በማስተናገድ በባህሎችና በተፈጥሮአዊ ልዩነቶች መካከል ጤናማ መናበብ በመፍጠር የተሻለ ነገን ያረጋግጣል። ሰው የማኅበራዊ መስተጋብሩና የባህላዊ ክዋኔዎቹ ውጤት ነውና ከትናንት የተነጠለ ወይም ከሌሎች የተገለለ ማኅበራዊ ሕይወት የተሟላ አይሆንም (ፈቃደ አዘዘ፣ 2004)። እንደዚህ ዓይነቱ ማኅበረሰብ የመጨረሻ ግቡ የሰው ልጆች ደህንነት የተረጋገጠበትና የግብረገብ ፍጽምና ላይ የተቆናጠጠ (ካንት) የግለሰቦች መብት ዋስትና

12 ለባዊት ፍጥረት Rational Creature የሚለውን ይመለከታል። የሰው ልጅ ምክንያታዊ እንስሳ መሆኑ ከጥንት ፈላስፎች ጀምሮ ሲነገር የቆየ ጉዳይ ነው። የሰው ምግባር ሁሉ ከዚህ የተፈጥሮ ማንነቱ ጋር ስምሙ መሆን እንዳለበት ከጥንት የግሪክ ፈላስፎች ጀምሮ የዲበ አካልና የግብረገብ ፍልስፍናዎች ማዕከላዊ ርዕስ ነው። ለምሳሌ ሶቅራጥስ (ፕሌቶ)፣ አሪስቶታል፣ ሲሴር፣ ኢማኑኤል ካንት ወዘተ ሲያስተጋቡት የኖሩት ጉዳይ ነው። የወልደ ሕይወት ፍልስፍናም “Man is Rational Animal” “ሰው ለባዊ (ምክንያታዊ) እንስሳ ነው” ከሚሉት ጋር ይስማማል።

ያገኘበት ማኅበረሰብ ነው። የዚህ ህብረት ወይም ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ ፍጽምና የሚረጋገጠው ደግሞ ፍትሐዊ መንግስትን በመመስረት ይሆናል።

በሰው ልጆች ህብረት መካከል ጎልተው ከሚታዩ ልዩነቶች መካከል የባህል ብዝሃነትና የጾታ ልዩነት ይገኙበታል። በሰው ልጆች ታሪክ ሰው ሰራሽ ማኅበራዊ ጭቆና ከሚደርስባቸው የህብረተሰብ ክፍሎች መካከል ሴቶች ሲሆኑ በአሁኑ ዓለም ህዝብ ዘንድ ወደ ግጭት የሚያመሩ ልዩነቶች የሚከሰቱት በባህል ልዩነቶችና ቅራኔዎች በሚፈጠሩ ስለ ብልቶች ነው (ሃንቲንግተን፣ 1993)።

ከዚህ በመቀጠል የሴቶች እኩልነትና ብዝሃነት በኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና እንዴት ይታያሉ የሚለውን በተናጠል እናያለን።

## ፱. የሴቶች እኩልነት

የሴቶች ጭቆና ተፈጥሯዊ የሚመስሉ መለያዎችን በመጠቀም ወንዶች የፈጠሩት የማኅበረ ኢኮኖሚያዊና ፖለቲካዊ እሳቤዎች የወለዱት ዓለማቀፍ ችግር ነው። በመላው ዓለም የሚከሰት የጋራ ችግር ሲሆን ሴቶችን ያገለለ ፖለቲካ ኢኮኖሚ በመፍጠር የራሱ የሆነ አሉታዊ ጫና ፈጥሯል። የችግሩ መንገድና መሠረቱ ሥር የሰደደ ቢሆንም በዓለም ህዝቦች መካከል ችግሩ መፈታት እንዳለበት ግን የማይስማማ የለም። በዘርዓ ያዕቆብና በወልደ ሕይወት ፍልስፍና ውስጥ በሰፊው የምናገኘው የሴቶችን እኩልነት ነው። በ17ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን ይታሰባል ተብሎ ለመገመት ከባድ የሆኑ ጾታዊ እሳቤዎች በነዚህ ፈለስፎች ዘመን ተሻጋሪ ስራዎች ውስጥ በሚያስደንቅ ሁኔታ ይገኛሉ። በምሳሌ በማስደገፍ እንመልከት።

ዘርዓ ያዕቆብ ስለ ራሱ ሕይወት ከሚነግረን ታሪኩ ውስጥ እንዴት ጋብቻ እንደመሠረተ የሚያትትበት ይገኛል።

ስሟ ጎሩት የምትባል የጌታዬ ቤተሰብ የሆነች ሴት ልጅ ነበረች። እርሷ መልካም ምግባር ያላት አስተዋይና ትዕግስተኛ እንጅ ውብ አልነበረችም። ለጌታ ሃብቱም “ይህች ልጅ ሚስት ትሆነኝ ዘንድ ስጠኝ” አልሁት። ጌታ ሃብቱም እሺ በጄ ብሎ “ከዛሬ ገጥሞሮ የአንተ አገልጋይ እንጂ የኔ አገልጋይ አትሆንም” አለኝ። እኔም “ሚስቴ ትሆናለች እንጅ አገልጋይ አትሆንም። ባልና ሚስት በጋብቻ እኩል ናቸውና። ጌታና አገልጋይ ልንላቸው አይገባም። አንድ ሥጋና አንድ የኑሮ ስልት ያላቸው ናቸውና፤” አልሁት። ጌታ ሀብቱም “አንተስ የእግዚአብሔር ሰው ነህ፤ እንደወደድህ አድርግ” አለኝ። ያችንም ልጅ ጠራናት። እኔም “ሚስቴ ትሆኒ ዘንድ ትወጃለሽ?” አልኳት። እሷም “እንደጌታዬ ፈቃድ ነው” አለችኝ። ጌታ ሀብቱም “እኔስ እፈቅዳለሁ” አላት። እርሷም “ለእኔ መልካም ነው፤ ከአንተ የሚሻል ለእኔ የት አገኛለሁ” አለችኝ። ለጌታ ሃብቱም “አባታችን ሆይ መርቀን” አልነው። እርሱም “እግዚአብሔር ይባርካችሁ፤ ይጠብቃችሁ፤ ለረዥም ዘመን ጤናና ፍቅር ይስጣችሁ። ከዚህ ዓለም ገንዘብ ጋር ልጆችን ይስጣችሁ። ክፉ ነገርንም ከእናንተ ያርቅ” አለ። እኛም “አሜን አሜን” አልን። (ገጽ 27-28)

ዘርዳ ያዕቆብ በማስከተል ሁለቱ በፍቅርና በመተሳሰብ በሰላም ልጅ ወልደው፣ ሃብት ንብረት አፍርተው ለረጅም ዘመናት እንደኖሩ ያትታል።

ከዚህ ታሪክ ውስጥ ለዘመናችን የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ የጋብቻ ሥርዓት፣ የባልና የሚስት ውሳኔ እንዲሁም የትዳር ኑሮን ፍልስፍና በሰፊው እንማራለን። ሲጀምር መልክና ውበት የትዳር መስፈርት እንዳልሆኑና ሁሉም ሴቶች ለጋብቻ በሚፈለጉበት ጊዜ ጠባያቸውና አስተዳደራቸው ቅድሚያ እንደሚሰጠው ይነግረናል። ከዚህ በመቀጠል ጌታው ልጅቷን “ከፈለግሃት ውስድና አገልጋይ አድርጋት” ሲለው ዘርዳ ያዕቆብ አገልጋይ ገረድ ሳይሆን የተቀደሰች ባለቤቱ እንድትሆን በዚህም ሁለቱ እኩል እንደሆኑ ሞገተ። ጌታ ሃብቱም ባህሉንና ማኅበራዊውን መስተጋብር የሚቃወም ያልተለመደ ነገር በሰማ ጊዜ በአድሃሪነት መንፈስ አልተከራከረም። ይልቁን ለዘርዳ ያዕቆብ “አንተስ የእግዚአብሔር ሰው ነህ” ሲል አሞገሰው እንጅ። ከዚህም በመቀጠል ልጅቷ ተፈቅዳልችለች ብሎ ወደ ቤቱ አልወሰደም። የልጅቷም መልካም ፈቃድ ያስፈልግ ነበርና ተጠየቀች፣ ውሳኔዋን በግልጽና በደስታ አስታወቀች። የልጅቷ ግልጽነት ከዘመኑ ልጃገረዶች ባህል የተለየ ይመስላል። የልጅቷም ፈቃድ በተረጋገጠ ጊዜ ብዙ ወጭ የሚያስወጣ የይስሙላ ሰርግ ከማረግ ይልቅ ባህሉ በሚፈቅደው ምርቃትን ተቀበሉ። በመፈቃቀርና በመተጋገዝ የራሳቸውን ኃላፊነት እየተወጡ መኖር ጀመሩ። “እሷም በመግለጽና በሌሊት ትፈትላለች። እኔም እጽፍ ነበር። ” ይኸም ብቻ አይደለም ለአራት ዓመታት ልጅ ባይወልዱም ይህ ጋብቻቸውን አላናጋውም። በፍቅር ኖሩ እንጅ (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 28) ።

ዘርዳ ያዕቆብ የሞገተው ስለ ሴቶች እኩልነት ብቻ አይደለም። በዘመኑ ስለነበሩት ትዳር ነክ ጉዳዮችም እንጅ። ከነበረው ተጽዕኖ አንጻር ካየነውም ጌታው ሀብቱንና ጎሩትንም የሱን አስተሳሰብ እንዲቀበሉ አድርጓል። ከዚህ በተጨማሪ በርካታ ተማሪዎች ነበሩት። በርግጥ ሌሎቹ በወቅቱ ሐሳባቸውን ወደ ሕዝብ ይዘው ለመውጣት ፈርተው ቀርተዋል። ከተማሪዎቹ ውስጥ እርሱን የተከተለና የዘርዳ ያዕቆብን ሐሳብ በደንብ በመደገፍ ተግባራዊ ፍልስፍናን<sup>13</sup> እንዳስፋፋ ተጽፎ ያገኘነው ግን ወልደ ሕይወት የተሰኘ

13 “ተግባራዊ ፍልስፍና (practical philosophy or Applied Ethics) የሚባለው በፍልስፍናዊ እሳቤ፣ በምክንያታዊ መግት የተለያዩ ማህበረሰባዊ ክዋኔዎችን፣ ግላዊ ጠባቦችን፣ ሐተታ ተፈጥሮን፣ ተግዳሮቶችን እና ተግባቦቶችን መቃኘት ነው። “Practical Philosophy is a discipline that uses philosophical methods and insights to explore how people can lead wiser, more reflective lives. It is also the name for the activity that helps people lead such lives. Its topics include the nature and pursuit of wisdom relating to:- the good life, reason and the emotions, decision-making and the meaning of life.” (Tim LeBon, 2007) ፍልስፍና ስለማይጨበጡና ስለማይዳሰሱ ሐሳባዊ ስለሆኑ ነገሮች ብቻ የሚደረግ ዲስኩር አይደለም። ይልቁን ተግባሪ አካልን አገናዝቢና አሳቢ ህሊናን፣ አፍቃሪ ልብን፣ ባጠቃላይ ስብዕናን የማነጽ ሚናን ይጫወታል። ብዙ ፈላስፎች እንደሚስማሙበት የፍልስፍና ሚና ማሳ ወርዶ በቆሎ ማብቀል፣ ጓዳ ገብቶ እንጀራ ማብሰል፣ ሆስፒታል ገብቶ ህመም መፈወስ፣ በሽንጎ ፍርድ መስጠት አይደለም። ይልቁን ይህንን ማድረግ የሚችለውን ህሊና ማረቅ፣ ተግባሩን በአግባቡ እንዲወጣ ማስተካከል ነው። ከዚህ አንጻር ለተለያዩ አካላት ስለ ቀን ተቀን እንቅስቃሴዎች በነነት ምክረ ሃሳብ፣ ስለ ችግሮች መፍትሄ



ደቀ መዝሙሩን ብቻ ነው። በሴቶች እኩልነት ዙሪያ የጻፋቸውም ሙግቶች የዘርግ ያዕቆብን ሐሳብ የሚያጠናክሩ ናቸው።

በመዋቲው ሥጋችን ውስጥ ይህንን የመፈለግ ስሜት የፈጠረልንን አምላካችንን እናመሰግናለን። ... ከዝሙት፣ ተፈጥሮህ ባልሆነ መንገድ ዘርህን ከማፍሰስ፣ ምውት ከሆነውም ምንኩስና ራቅ። ፈጣሪህን በማመስገንና በማድነቅ ወደ ሚስትህ ቅረብ። ወደ እርሷ በተጠጋህ ጊዜም የሩካቤውን ጣእም ለብቻህ አትሻ። ለሚስትህም የጣዕሙን ስሜት እንዲኖራት አድርግ እንጂ። እግዚአብሔር የሰጣትን ድርሻዋን አታሳጣት። በችኮላ አታድርግ። እርሷ እስክትሰማማበት ድረስ ወደ ኋላ ቀርታ ጣዕሙ እንዳይጎድልባት ስለ እርሷ ጥቂት ቆይ። ይህንን ፍቅር ካላደረግህላት አዝና ትለይሃለች። ያንተም ጋብቻ ለእግዚአብሔር በረከት የተገባ አይሆንም።... ነገር ግን እንዳትደክም ሩካቤን ያለ መጠን አታብዛ (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 85)።

የጋብቻን ክብር በአጽንኦት ከሞገተ በኋላ ፍችን ለማስቀረት ለሁለቱም ምክር ይለግሳል። ይህ የተጠቀሰው ሐሳብ እንዲያውም ሴት እንዲያውም የቁሳዊና ሌሎች ነገሮችና የሩካቤን ጣእምና እርካታም እኩል ትካፈል ዘንድ መብት እንዳላት ይከራከራል። ፍችንና ዝሙትን የሚያወግዙ ምሳሌዎችን እየጠቀሰ ካብራራ በኋላ “ሽካራ በሆነው ጠባያችሁና ስውር በሆነው ነውራችሁ እርስ በርሳችሁ የምትቻቻሉ ሁኑ። በዓለም ሁሉ ነውር የሌለው ወንድና ነውር የሌላት ሴት አይገኝምና” (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 88) በማለት ያሳስባል።

ከአንጋረ ፈላስፋም የሴቶችን እኩልነት የሚያትቱ ሐሳቦችን ማግኘት እንችላለን። “ፈላስፋ እንዲህ አለ፡ ሚስትህን እንደ አንዱ አካልህ አድርገህ እያት፡ ባልና ሚስት አንድ አካል፡ አንድ አምሳል ናቸውና። [...] ሚስቱን የሚያከብር ሰው እንደ መላእክት ነው” (፲፱፻፶፫፣ ገጽ ፳፮)። ስለ ሚስት ጥንቃቄም “በማይገባና በሚያስቀና ነገር ሚስትህን አታስቀናት (አትቅናባትም)” በማለት ለትዳርና ለሚስትና ባል ሥነ ልቦና ጥንቃቄ እንዲደረግ ይመከራል (ገጽ ፸፬)። ሚስት እናት ስለሆነችና እንደ እናት መከበር እንዳለባት ሲያትትም “ልጄ! ሚስትህን እንደ ራስህ አድርገህ ውደዳት። እርሷ የልጆችህ መገኛ ናትና አንተም እንደ እርሷ ካላች እናት መገኘትህን አስታውስ።” (ገጽ ፺፰)

ከነዚህና መሰል የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና የሴቶችን እኩልነት የሚያበረታቱ ሃሳቦችን ማግኘት ቀላል ነው። ከላይ እንዳየነው በሴትና በወንድ መካከል መበላለጥ እንደሌለ እንዲያውም በሃይማኖት እንደሚሰበከው ሁለቱ እኩልና አንድ አካል አንድ አምሳል እንደሆኑ ፈላስፎቹ ይሞግታሉ። ከዚህም ባሻገር የሴቶችና የወንዶች ግንኙነት ጎልቶ የሚታይበት ትዳር የተከበረ እንዲሆን ወደ ፍች የሚወስዱ ነገሮችን ቀድመው መከላከል እንዳለባቸው ያሳያል።

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መላምት፡ ስለ ግንኙነቶች ቀናነት ወዘተ የሚያትት የፍልስፍና ክፍል ተግባራዊ ፍልስፍና ይባላል። የወልደ ሕይወት ፍልስፍና አብዝሃኛው ክፍሉ ወደ ተግባራዊ ፍልስፍና የሚመደብ ነው።” (ኢያሱ በሬንቶ፣ 2009፣ ገጽ 14 የግርጌ ማስታወሻ)

## ፩. ብዝሃነት

“ብዝሃነት” የሃይማኖት፣ የባህል፣ የአስተሳሰብ ልዩነቶችን ያቀፈ የጋራ ዓላማና እሴት ያላቸው ሰዎች ስብስብ ነው። እንደ ኢትዮጵያ ያሉ አገሮች ባለ ብዝሃ ብሄር አገሮች ናቸው። ብዝሃነትን የማያስተናግድ ማኅበረሰብ የውስጥ ሰላምም ሆነ እድገት አይኖረውም። ብዝሃነትን ለማስተናገድ የአስተሳሰብና የምክንያታዊነት ባህል እንደሚያስፈልግ ከላይ ተጠቅሷል። በዋናነት የዘርዓ ያዕቆብና የወልደ ሕይወት ፍልስፍናዎች ብዝሃነትን የሚያስተናግድ ተመራማሪና ስልጡን ማኅበረሰብ ለመገንባት ሙከራ አድርገዋል።

በዚህ በኩል ወልደ ሕይወት በአጽንኦት የሚሞግተው ሁሉም የመሰለውን እምነትና ባህል ቢይዝም ይህንን ሙብቱን ግን ልናከብርለት እንደሚገባ ነው። ምክንያቱም ከሰዎች ሁሉ ጋር በሰላም ለመኖር ብዝሃነትን ማስተናገድ ግድ ስለሚል ነው። ከዚህም ባሻገር ሁሉም በታሪክና በቦታ አውድ አጋጣሚ የተለያዩ እምነትና ባህል ይኑራቸው እንጅ ሁሉም እኩል የሆኑ የሰው ልጆች ናቸውና። “ደጎችም ቢሆኑ ከፋዎች፣ ክርስቲያንም ቢሆኑ እስላም፣ አይሁድም ቢሆኑ አረማውያን ሁሉም ከእኛ ጋር እኩል ናቸው (ገጽ 64)። [...] ሰዎች ሁሉ በተፈጥሯቸው እኩል፣ ሁላቸውም የእግዚአብሔር ልጆች እንደሆኑ ልናውቅና ልናስተውል ይገባናል። እኛ ግን ሰዎችን ስለ ሃይማኖት ብንጠላቸው እንበድላለን። ለሁሉም ለእያንዳንዱም እውነት የመሰለውን ያምን ዘንድ ሥልጣን ያለው ነውና” (ገጽ 66)።

ለሰላማዊ አብሮነት ሲባል የሰዎችን ባህል ማክበርና እንደነሱ መኖር እንደሚገባ ይሞግታል። “ወንድሜ ሆይ አንተ ግን መልካም የሆኑ ዘመናትን ታይ ዘንድ ብትወድ በፍቅርና በሰላም ከሰው ሁሉ ጋር ተስማማ። በሃገር ሳለህ እንደ ሃገር ባህል ኑር። ወደ ሌላው ሃገር ብትሄድ ግን እንደነርሱ ሆነህ ኑር። ... ከዚያች ሃገር ሰዎች ጋር አብረህ ኑር። ለሁላቸውም እንደ ጠባያቸውና ባህላቸው፣ እንደ ልማዳቸውም መልካም ይሆንላቸው ዘንድ ወደ እግዚአብሔር ጸልይ” (2007፣ ገጽ 67-68)። ይህ ንግግር እንኳን የሰዎችን ባህል ልናናገቅ፣ ልንጨቁን ይቅርና በማክበር እንደ ባህላቸው መልካም ይሆንላቸው ዘንድ እንድንጸልይ ይመክረናል። እንደዚህ ዓይነት ምክሮች በፍልስፍናው ብቻ ሳይሆን በኢትዮጵያ ህዝቦች ለዘመናት በተግባር ይታዩ የነበሩ ናቸው። ለምሳሌ በዘመነ መሣፍንት ወደ ኢትዮጵያ የመጣው ተጓዥ ዳባዴ በዓይኑ ያየውንና በማስታወሻው ያሰፈረውን ከላይ አይተናል። ወልደ ሕይወትም እንደዚህ ዓይነቱን መከባበር ነበር ሲመክር የነበረው።

አንዱ ባንዱ ላይ መቀናናትና መታባይ ለመለያየትና ለመገዳደል እንዲሁም ለመበታተን የሚያደርሰው መከባበርና ብዝሃነትን ማስተናገድ ሳይቻል ሲቀር ነው። ይህም የሰዎች ስንፍና ነው። ይህን መሰሉን እኩይ ምግባር የአንጋረ ፈላስፋ ጸሐፊ (ተርጓሚ) እንዲህ ያስቀምጠዋል፤

ሰዎች ሰነፎች ቢሆኑ ነው እንጂ አይዋረዱም ነበር ቢበታተኑ ነው እንጂ አይሰንፉም ነበር።  
ቢለያዩ ነው እንጂ አይበታተኑም ነበር። ቢጣሉ ነው እንጂ አይለያዩም ነበር። እርስ

በርሳቸው ቢቃኑ [ቢቀናኑ] ነው እንጂ አይጣሉም ነበር። እርስ በርሳቸው ቢተባበቱና አንዱ ባንዱ ላይ ቢኮራበት ነው እንጂ አቃኑም ነበር። እርስ በርሳቸው እየተዘባበቱ ነው እንጂ አይተባበቱም ነበር።

ይህ ቃል የሰው የውርደቱ መጀመሪያ አንዱ ባንዱ ላይ መዘበት ሲሆን መጨረሻው ተበታትኖ መቅረት መሆኑን ይገልጻል” (፲፱፻፶፫፣ ገጽ ፻፴)።

የሰው ልጆች ሁሉ እኩል ናቸውና ልዩነታቸው ወደ መገዳደል ሳይሆን ወደ ጋራ ደህንነት እንዲያደርሳቸው መከባበርና አንዱ ያንዱን ባህልና ሃይማኖት፣ ባህልና እውቀት ይቀበል ዘንድ ግድ ይለዋል። ወልደ ሕይወትም “ነገር ግን ከእኔ ጋር ለማይተባበሩ ለእያንዳንዳቸው ሁሉ ሃይማኖታቸውን ይጠብቁ ዘንድ በፈቀዱትም ያምኑ ዘንድ መብት አላቸው” (2007፣ ገጽ 49) ማለቱ ለዚህ ነው። ምክንያቱም “ሰው ያለ ሌሎች ሰዎች እርዳታ ብቻውን ተወልዶና አድጎ ያገለግል ዘንድ አይችልምና” (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 52)።

እንደ ወልደ ሕይወት የሰዎች አንድነት እና መተባበር የሚመነጨው ሁሉም በእግዚአብሔር አምሳል የተፈጠሩ የአንድ አባት ልጆች ናቸው ከሚለው ዲበአካላዊ ጥንተ ተፈጥሮና ለራስህ እንዲደረግብህ የማትፈቅደውን ለሌሎች አታድርግ በሚለው ግብረጋባዊ ኃላፊነት ነው። “ባልንጀራህን እንደራስህ ውደድ” የሚለውን መለኮታዊ ህግ ሲተነትነው “ባልንጀራ” ለዘመድ፣ ለወገን ወይም ለጓደኛ የሚሰጥ ሳይሆን ለሁሉም የሰው ልጆች የሚሰጥ እንደሆነ ይምግታል (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 64)።

ባጠቃላይ በኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍናና የኢትዮጵያውያን ኑሮ ውስጥ ለብዝሃነት፣ ለሴቶች እኩልነትና ለአስተሳሰብ ልንቀት ግብአት የሚሆኑ ሐሳቦችን ማግኘት እንደምንችል ከላይ ያለው ውይይት ያስረዳል። ይህ ብዝሃነት የሚያስተናግድና ሁሉን አሳታፊ ስልጡን ማኅበረሰብ በየእለት መስተጋብሩ ውስጥ በሚያደርጋቸው እንቅስቃሴዎች ዘመን ተሻጋሪ ቁሳዊና መንፈሳዊ ልንቀቶችን ያስመዘግባል። ይህም ዘላቂ ዕድገትን በትውልዶች መካከል ያለን በጎ ግንኙነት የሚያስቀጥል የትስስር ሰንሰለት ነው።

## ፮. ቀጣይነት ያለው ልዕልና

ቀጠይነት ያለው ዕድገት ማለት በተለምዶ ዘላቂ ልማት ወይም በእንግሊዝኛ “ሰስተይኔብል ዲቨሎፕመንት”<sup>14</sup> በመባል የሚታወቀው ነው። ሐረጉን በዚህ ጽሑፍ ውስጥ መንፈሳዊና ቁሳዊን ልዕልና፣ የሰው ልጆችን ከፍታ ለመግለጽ ተጠቅሜበታለሁ። ይህም በጾታ ወይም በባህል፣ በቋንቋ፣ በእድሜና በማንነት ልዩነት ሳያደርግ ትናንትን ከዛሬ የሚያስታርቅና ዛሬን ከነገ የሚያስተሳስር የልማት ቅብብሎሽ ጤናማነት የተረጋገጠበት ልማት ነው። ይህም በትውልዶች መካከል ያለን በጎ ተግባቦት የመንፈስ ትስስርና በባህሎች መካከል ያለን ጤናማ የዓላማ አንድነት የሚያረጋግጥ የአንድን ፖለቲካ ማኅበረሰብ እኩል የጾጋና የፍዳ፣ የመብትና የግዴታ ተካፋይነት የሚያረጋግጥ ነው። እንኳንም በሰዎች መካከል

<sup>14</sup> Sustainable Development

ይቅርና በሰውና በተፈጥሮ መካከል ያለን ግብዓ ግንኙነት የሚያቅፍ ሰፊ ትርጉም ያለው ነው። የተባበሩት መንግስታት የልማት ፕሮግራም ሪፖርት ቀጣይነት ያለውን ዕድገት እንዲህ ይተረጉመዋል።

ቀጣይነት ያለው የሰው ዕድገት ማለት የኢኮኖሚ እድገት ብቻ የሚያስገኝ ሳይሆን የእድገትን ጸጋም በፍትሐዊነት የሚያከፋፍል፤ ተፈጥሮአዊ አካባቢን የሚንከባከብ እንጂ የማይበድል፤ ሰዎችን የሚያበረታታ እንጂ የማያገልል። ለጭቁኖችና ለድሃዎች ቅድሚያ የሚሰጥና ሰፊ ምርጫዎችንና መልካም አጋጣሚዎች ላይ ተሳታፊነታቸውን የሚያሰፋ ሕይወታቸውን በሚመለከቱ ውሳኔዎች ላይ ድምጻቸውን እንዲሰጡ የሚፈቅድ ዕድገት ነው። ለህዝቦች፣ ለአካባቢ፣ ለሴቶች የቆመ ዕድገት ነው።<sup>15</sup>

የሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ብዝሃነት እና ምክንያታዊ ማኅበረሰብ የሚያስፈልገውም ይህንን የማኅበረሰቡን ታሪካዊ ዳራና በጎ እሴቶችን የሚንከባከብና የነገን የጋራ አጣ ፈንታ የመወሰን አቅም ያለው ጠንካራ የመንፈስ ትስስር ያለው ዕድገት ባለቤት የሆነ ማኅበረሰብ ለመገንባት ነው። መሳይ ከበደ የኢትዮጵያን ዘመናዊነት ከጊዜ ጋር በማያያዝ ባተተበት መጣጥፍ የታሪክንና ያለፈን ትውፊት የዘነጋ እድገት ወይም ዘመናዊነት ውጤታማ ሊሆን እንደማይችል ነው (መሳይ ከበደ፣ 2009) ። እንደ መሳይ ከሆነ ለኢትዮጵያውያን ጊዜ አላፊ ሳይሆን ተተኪና ራሱን የሚደግም የመፈራረቅ የድግግሞሽ ሂደት ነው። ይህ የተፈራራቂነት የጊዜ እሳቤም ስለ ዕድገት እና ዘመናዊነት አንድ ቋሚ ነገርን ብቻ እንዳንከተል (የአውሮፓን አርአያነት) በራሱ በኢትዮጵያውያን የጊዜ እሳቤ ራሱን የቻለ የስልጣኔ መንገድ እንድንከተል ጥቆማ ያደርጋል የሚል ነው። ይህም ህሉፍን እንደ ኋላ ቀር አድርጎ ከመፈረጅ የሚታደግ ይሆናል ማለት ነው (መሳይ፣ 2009)።

ፈቃድ አዘዘም ሰውና ሰውነት ያለፈ፣ ያሁንና የሚቀጥለውም ትውልድ መጠሪያ የወል ስም እንደሆነ ይሞግታል። “ሰው ከመጸነሱ በፊት፣ [በልደት ቀኑ፣] በሕይወት ዘመኑ፣ በሞቱ ጊዜና ከሞቱም በኋላ የተከናወኑ ቁሳዊና መንፈሳዊ ባህላዊ ሥርዓቶችና ድርጊቶች የሚጠሩበት የጥቅል ስም ነው ማለት የሚቻል ከመሰለኝ ቆይቷል” (2004፣ 99)።

በዚህ ጉዳይ ሰፊ ምርምር የሚያስፈልገው ቢሆንም ይህንን የትውልዶችን መወራረስ እና ቀጣይነት ያለው ስልጣኔ ቅብብል ዘርዓ ያዕቆብ በሐተታው አልዘነጋውም። የታሪክ

15 “Sustainable human development is development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that generates [sic] the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalising them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing for their participation in decisions that affect their lives. It is development that is pro-people, pro-nature, projobs and pro-women” (Quoted in Workineh, 2011, p. 6).

እና የስልጣኔ ቅብብል እንደሚያስፈልግ ከአደራም ጭምር ለደቀ መዝሙሩ እንዲህ ይለዋል፤

ከእኔ በኋላ የሚመጡት እንዲያውቁኝ ግን ይህንን እስከ ሞቱ ድረስ በእኔ ዘንድ ተደብቆ የኖረውን እጽፍ ዘንድ ወደድሁ። ከሞትሁ በኋላ አስተዋይና ተመራማሪ ሰው ቢገኝ ከእኔ ሐሳብ ላይ ሐሳቡን ይጨምርበት ዘንድ እለምነዋለሁ።... የሀገራችን ሰዎች በእግዚአብሔር ረድኤት ጥበበኞች እንዲሆኑና እውነትንም ወደማወቅ እንዲደርሱ እኔ የጀመርሁትን አንተ ፈጽመው። ሐሰትን እንዳያምኑ፤ ዐመጸንም ተስፋ እንዳያደርጉ ከከንቱ ወደ ከንቱ ፈጽመው እንዳይሄዱ እውነትን ይወቁ እንጂ ወንድሞቻቸውንም ይውደዱ። እስከ ዛሬ ድረስ እንዳደረጉት፤ ከንቱ በሆነው ሃይማኖታቸው ከእንግዲህ ወዲህ አይጠሉ (2007፣ 35)።

ለስልጣኔ ቅብብል የአስተሳሰብና የምርምርን ትልቅ ፋይዳ ሲያጎላ የጠቀሰው አንቀጽ በልዩነት መካከል የሚነሳን ጥላቻ እንዲያስወግዱም ይመክራል። የፈላስፋው ሃሳብ ካልተለመደው የኢትዮጵያውያን ሃይማኖታዊ ድርሳናት አጻጻፍ ወጣ ብሎ ከኔ የነጸለውን አንተ ጨምርበት አለን እንጂ “ዘሰረቆ ወዘፈሐቆ ለይኩን ውጉዘ” አላለም። ባለ አደራው ወልደ ሕይወትም ይህንን የሥልጣኔ ቅብብሎች አጽንኦት ሰጥቶ እንዲህ ይላል። “እኔም ምትኩ የምባለው ወልደ ሕይወት ከዚህ በኋላ እርሱ የሰራውን መልካም ነገር ተኋላው ታውቁ ዘንድ በመምህራ መጽሐፍ ላይ ይህችን ትንሽ ነገር ጨመርሁ። እግዚአብሔር በገለጸልኝና ዘርዳ ያዕቆብ ሃምሳ ዘጠኝ ዓመት ባስተማረኝ መሠረት ለኢትዮጵያ ልጆች እውቀትና ተግሣጽ እንዲሆን እኔም እነሆ ሌላ መጽሐፍ ጻፍሁ” (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 37)። ከመምህሩ ከተማረውና በሕይወት ዘመኑ ከተመራመረው የእውቀት ጸጋ በመጽሐፉ ካስቀመጠ በኋላ በመዝጊያው ምዕራፍ፣ በመምህሩ አርአያነት፣ ለመጭው ትውልድ የሥልጣኔን ቅብብሎች የቤት ሥራ በውብ ቃላቱ እንዲህ ያሳስባል፤

በእግዚአብሔር ረድኤት ይህንን በጥቂቱ እነሆ ጻፍሁ። ይህችን መጽሐፍ የምታነብ ወንድሜ ሆይ አንተም ጥበብ ካለህ እግዚአብሔር የገለጸልህን ጻፍ። ከእንቅብ በታች እንዳስቀመጧት መብራት አትሁን። በምድራችን ላይ ጥበብ እንዲበዛ ኃጢአተኛና እውነት ማድረግን የማያውቅ ፈጽሞ እንዲጠፋ፤ ለሃገራችን ልጆች እውቀትና ተግሣጽ እንዲሆን፤ የጥበብህን ብርሃን አውጣው እንጂ። ልዑል የሆነው የፈጣሪያችንን ሥልጣን አላወቁምና። አውቀውስ ቢሆን ኖሮ ከንቱ በመከተላቸው ባፈሩ ነበር። በዘመናችን ሰነፎች የሆኑ ወገኖቻችንን ቅንዓት ይዟቸዋልና። ስለ ሃይማኖታቸው ሥርዓት ተገዳደሉ። የፈጣሪያቸውንም ሥርዓት አላወቁም (ዝኒከማሁ፣ ገጽ 105)።

እነዚህ ቃላት ለውይይታችን ማሠሪያ ናቸው። ባንድ በኩል በትውልዶች መካከል ሊደረግ የሚገባው ጤናማ የታሪክና ሥልጣኔ ቅብብሎች ይጠቁማሉ። በሌላ በኩል ጥበብ በምድራችን ታብብ ዘንድ የዘመኑ ትውልዶች የሚጠበቅባቸው ሚና ምን እንደሆነ ያሳያል። ይህም ብቻ ሳይሆን ሰዎች ሰው ሰራሽ በሆኑ ልዩነቶቻቸው (በተለይ ከእግዚር የመጣች

ናት በሚሏት ሃይማኖት) መገዳደላቸው ምን ያክል ጥበብ የጎደላቸው መሆናቸውን በግሳጹ መልኩ ያስቀምጣል። ከ300 ዓመታት በፊት ብዝሃነትን፣ ሥልጣኔንና አብሮነትን በጠቢቡ አንደበት ተቀምጦ በተጻፉ ቃላቶች አማካኝነት ያገኘናቸው ዘመን አይሸፈንም የፍልስፍና ጸጋዎች መገለጫዎች ናቸው።

## ፯. ማጠቃለያ

ያነሳነው ርእሰ ሰፊ ጉዳይ ነው። ከላይ በሰፊው እንዳየነው ሥልጣኔ ሁሉን አሳታፊ መሆን አለበት። ይህ የሚሆነው ደግሞ ልዩነት በሰላጠነ መንገድ ሲያዝ ነው። ስልጣኔና ምርምር የሰው ልጆች ጸጋዎች ናቸው። ከዚህ በተቃራኒ መሆን ደግሞ ከለባዊት ነፍስ ጋር የማይስማማ ኃጢአትም ነው። በዘመን ተሻጋሪ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍናዎች ውስጥ ለሴቶች እኩልነት፣ ለብዝሃነት፣ አስተሳሰብ ስልጣኔና ቀጣይነት ላለው ዕድገት ግብአት የሚሆኑ ሃሳቦችን በሥፋት እንደምናገኝ ከላይ አይተናል።

የዘመናችን የእድገት፣ የፌዴራሊዝምና የትምህርት ስርዓቶችና ፖሊሲዎች ልብ ሊሉት የሚገባው ትልቁ ነገር ቢሆን በዘመን ሂደት ውስጥ ኢትዮጵያውያን ያቆዩልንን ሃገር በቀል እውቀት በደንብ መንከባከብና ወደ ተግባራዊ ፋይዳዎች መለወጥ ይገባል። ይህ ያልሆነ እንደሆነ ግን ከወላጆቹ የተነጠለ፣ ከዘመኑ የተገለለ፣ ከማንነቱ የተፋታ ትውልድ እንፈጥራለን። ባህሉን የዘነጋ ትውልድ ደግሞ እንኳንም ዘላቂ ልማት ይቅርና ለዛሬውም ኑሮ የሚሆነውን የሕይወት ትርጉም ማጣጣም አይቻለውም። ባህል ደግሞ ማንነትን ሰብስቦ የያዘ የትናንትና የዛሬ እሴቶች ውህድ ነው።

ትክክለኛ ልማት በትውልዶች መካከል የመንፈስ ትስስርና በባህሎች መካከል የዓላማ ቁርኝት ማምጣት የሚችል መሆን አለበት። ለዚህ የአስተሳሰቦችና የባህሎች ተግባቦት ደግሞ ፍልስፍና ትልቅ ሚና አለው። በዚህ ረገድ የኢትዮጵያውያን ዘመን ተሻጋሪ ፍልስፍና ከዘመናዊ ሳይንስና የአውሮፓ ፍልስፍና ጋር በማዋሃድ ዘመን ተሻጋሪ የሰው ልጆች ዕድገት ማረጋገጥ ያስፈልጋል።

በተለይ የዘመናችን መካነ አእምሮዎች ይህንን ሥራ ከመወጣት አንጻር ትልቁን ድርሻ ይወስዳሉ። በተቋቋሙበት አካባቢ የሚገኘውን ማኅበረሰብ ሀገር በቀል እውቀት ፈልፍለው በማውጣት መልካም ቁሳዊና መንፈሳዊ ውርሶችን ላሁኑ ትውልድ በሚመጥን መልኩ ሊተገብሩት ይገባል (እጋለ ገብረዮሐንስ፣ 2003)። ይህ ካልሆነ ለይስሙላ የሚመስል አብለጭላጭ ቁሳዊ ሥልጣኔና በወፍ ዘራሽ ባህል የተቀየጠ የኑሮ ዘይቤ አካላዊና ስነ ልቦናዊ ልምሾነትን ያስከትላል።

ፖሊሲ አውጭዎች፣ የፖለቲካ መሪዎች፣ የህዝብ ሙብት ተቆርቋሪዎች ሁሉም ማኅበረሰብ የወላጆችን፣ ትውፊታዊ ጠቢባንን<sup>16</sup>፣ የሃይማኖት መሪዎችንና የልሂቃኖችን ይሁንታ የሚያካትት የልማት እቅድ ሊያወጡና ሊተገብሩ ይገባል።

<sup>16</sup> Sages

## ዋቢ መጻሕፍት

### ሀ. አማርኛና የግዕዝ ምንጮች

መሳይ ከበደ። “የኢትዮጵያ ግዜ ግንዛቤና ዘመናዊነት።” (ተርጓሚ ቤተልሄም ሃይሉ ደጀኔ) ጋይተን ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ (2009)።

ሞገስ ዕቁበ ጊዮርጊስ (ሊቀ መዘምራን)። (ተርጓሚ) “አንጋረ ፈላስፋ (የፈላስፎች አነጋገር)።” (፲፱፻፶፫)።

ተክለ ጻዊቅ መኰሪያ። “የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ኑቢያ-አክሱም ዛግዬ እስከ አጼ ይኩኖ አምላክ ዘመነ መንግሥት” ፩ኛ መጽሐፍ። ትንሣኤ ዘጉባኤ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ (፲፱፻፶፩)።

አሊቃ ያፌድ ፈንታ ወልደ ዮሐንስ። (ተርጓሚ) “ሐተታ ዘርዓ ያዕቆብ ወሐተታ ወልደ ሕይወት፡ የኢትዮጵያ ፍልስፍና”፣ ፋር ኢስት ትሬዲንግ ኃላየተ. የግ.ማ. አዲስ አበባ፣ (2007)።

ኢያሱ በሬንቶ። “ተግባራዊ ፍልስፍና (Practical Philosophy) በ17ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን (ክ.ዘ) ኢትዮጵያ፡ ሐተታ ወልደ ሕይወት እንፍራንዛዊ” በአባይ የባህል ማዕከል 3ኛው አገር አቀፍ ኮንፈረንስ 2009 ዓ.ም የቀረበ፣ ዐውደ ጥናት መድብል ላይ የታተመ፣ ገጽ 93-136፣ (2010)።

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ኢያሱ ቤሬንቶ  
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ISSN 0894-9824