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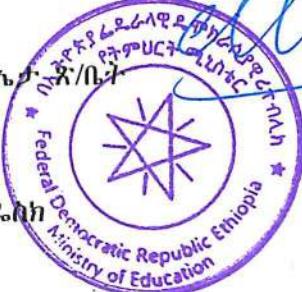
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MODULE

HISTORY OF ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN (Hist. 1012) FOR STUDENTS OF HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

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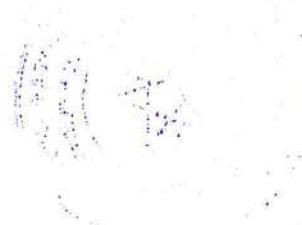


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Introduction to the Module

This teaching material is prepared for a common course given to Ethiopian Higher Learning Institutions Students/HLIS. The module is expected to help students understand the role of history in human life and the goals of studying history as well as the importance of history in nation/state building and the making of identity. It is useful to know how personalities helped change the course of history, how societies, peoples, and the world that we live in have changed over time. It explains how socio-cultural, religious, economic, and political experiences of the past are interwoven and instrumental in the creation of the current Ethiopia and the Horn Region. It focuses on the causes, courses, and consequences of major historical events in the region, demonstrating changes and continuities that unfolded from ancient times to 1995, forming the basis for the future. It tries to emphasize the history of peoples rather than the history of the ruling elites. The contents consider the chronological and thematic relations of events in time and space. To make this course as inclusive and as representative as possible, the module also includes local histories across periods.

The module is divided into seven units. The first unit defines history, describes why history is significant, how history is studied, and introduces the region. The second unit discusses peoples and cultures in the region, treating human evolution, the Neolithic Revolution, peopling and settlement patterns, and religion and religious processes. The third unit describes states, external contacts, economic formations, and cultural achievements in the fields of architecture, writing, calendars, and numerals to the end of the thirteenth century. Unit Four delves into the intricate internal transformations and external relations from the late thirteenth century to the early sixteenth century analyzing administrative, military and economic structures of the Christian Kingdom as well as its evolving relationships with the Muslim Sultanates.

Unit Five discusses a history of the region from the early sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries. It deals with conflicts, foreign interventions, religious controversies, and population movements, and how these epochal events contributed to the integration of peoples across ethnic and religious diversities, thereby significantly influencing the historical trajectory of the region. In addition, the unit describes peoples and states in different parts of the region. The unit concludes with major developments of the Gondarine period, and the *Zemene- Mesafint* (Era of Princes), in which the Yejju played a dominant political role in the Christian Kingdom.



The social, cultural, economic and political developments in the region in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (from 1800 to 1941) that played vital role in shaping the modern history of the region are discussed in greater detail in unit six. Historical processes including power struggle, centralization, expansion and modernization attempts, socio-economic conditions, external relations, foreign threats and major battles, and the Italian occupation take central stage in the unit. The last unit discusses historical developments in the region since the period of liberation from the Italian occupation (1941) to the period of the ratification of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in 1995. Important issues discussed include external relations, consolidation of imperial power and socio-economic conditions, oppositions by various groups, the question of nations and nationalities, and reforms.

Objectives

The general objective of this module is to acquaint students with the extent to which interactions between diverse peoples in the region and with the outside world have shaped its history.

The specific objectives of the module are to:

- understand the meaning, nature, uses and abuses of history;
- identify pertinent sources for studying the history of the region;
- demonstrate the region's importance in human evolution and the Neolithic Revolution;
- trace the origin, development, and cultural achievements of the ancient states;
- explain the region's ancient external contacts and their effects;
- analyze the role of the legend of the Queen of Sheba in the region from 1270 to 1974;
- show dynamics of relations between the Christian kingdom and the Muslim Sultanates;
- explicate the role of population movements in shaping the history of the region;
- assess states and societies in the eastern, central, southern and western parts of the region;
- illuminate socio-economic, religious and political achievements of the Gondarine period;
- discuss the salient features and effects of the *Zemene- Mesafint*;
- expound the political process for the formation of Modern Ethiopia;
- explain the efforts and challenges of modernization in the region;
- point out the legacies of major battles and the patriotic struggle against colonialism;
- examine the major socio-economic and political developments from 1941 to 1974;
- discuss the political momentum, reforms, and oppositions during the *Derg* period;
- analize the socio-economic and political developments from 1991 to 1995.



UNIT ONE

INTRODUCTION (3 HOURS)

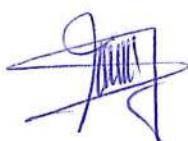
1.1. Nature and Uses of History

1.1.1. Nature of History

The term history is derived from the Greek word *istoria*, which means “learning through enquiry” or “an account of one’s inquiries.” The first writer to systematically investigate and document historical events was the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484-425 BC). For this reason, he is regarded as the “father of history.” In ordinary usage, history means all the things that have happened in the human past. The past signifies all the events that have taken place and the facts of the past. The distinction is between what actually happened in the past and which exists independently of the historian and still awaits to be recorded, and the accounts of the past reconstructed by historians. Historians apply their expertise to use surviving records and write history in the form of accounts of the past. History can thus be defined as a systematic study and organized knowledge of the past. The study involves the discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events. The purpose is not simply to produce a mere chronology of events and deeds of human beings in the past, but to find patterns and establish meaning through a rigorous study and interpretation of sources.

Evidently, what actually happened in the past is infinite. Historians, just like natural scientists, select the topics and problems they wish to study. The major concern of history is the interaction between human society and the environment, which is also a subject of study in other social science disciplines. What differentiates history from other disciplines is that while the latter study the interaction between humans and their environment in the present state, history studies their interaction in the past within the framework of the continuous process of change taking place in time. Due to the longevity of that time, historians organize and divide the past into distinct periods after identifying significant developments through a careful study of documents and artifacts left by those who lived in the past. They then assign a label to each period to convey the key characteristics and developments of that era. This is called periodization. In this regard, history is conventionally divided into ancient, medieval, and modern.

When historians talk about continuities or persisting patterns, they do not imply that a particular pattern applies to everyone in the world or even to a particular country or region. Nor are they



claiming that absolutely nothing changes in the pattern they describe. All aspects of human life—social, cultural, economic, and political—in the past have been changing from time to time; and none of them were practiced in exactly the same way in the lifetime of our ancestors. Nevertheless, some things remain more or less the same for long periods since few things ever change completely. In the same vein, the basic fabric of society in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa remains similar and continues to have distinctive characteristics.

1.1.2. Uses of History

Peoples live in the present and plan for and worry about the future. History, however, is the study of the past. So, why do we bother about the past?

History Helps Us Understand the Present

History is the only storehouse of information available for the examination and analysis of how people behaved and acted in the past. People need to produce an account of their past because it is difficult to understand the problems that face humanity and society today without tracing their origins in the past.

History Provides a Sense of Identity

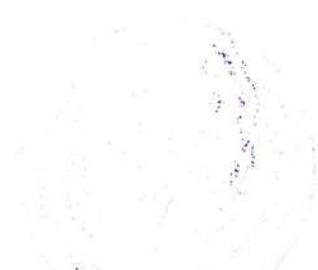
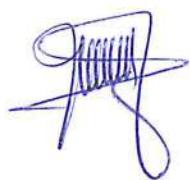
Knowledge of history is indispensable for understanding who we are and where we fit in the world. As memory is to the individual, so is history to society. An individual without memory finds great difficulty in relating to others and making intelligent decisions. A society without history would be in a similar condition. It is only through a sense of history that communities define their identity, orient themselves, and understand their relationships with other societies.

History Helps Develop Tolerance and Open-Mindedness

Most of us tend to regard our own cultural practices, styles, and values as the only ones that are right and proper. Studying different societies in the past is like going to a foreign country, which contributes to freeing ourselves from some of our inherent cultural provincialism. By studying the past, students of history acquire broader perspectives that give them the broad-mindedness and flexibility required in many life situations.

History Teaches Critical Skills

Studying history helps students develop key research skills. These include how to find and evaluate sources; how to make coherent arguments based on various shreds of evidence and



present them clearly in writing. These analytical and communication skills are highly useful in other academic pursuits as well. Gaining skills in sorting through diverse interpretations is also essential for making informed decisions in our day-to-day life.

History Provides a Basic Background for Other Disciplines

Historical knowledge is valuable in the pursuit of other disciplines such as literature, art, philosophy, religion, sociology, political science, anthropology, economics, etc. With regard to the last four, it can be argued that history is a mother discipline because they arose out of historical investigation or formed part of historical writing.

History Provides Endless Source of Fascination

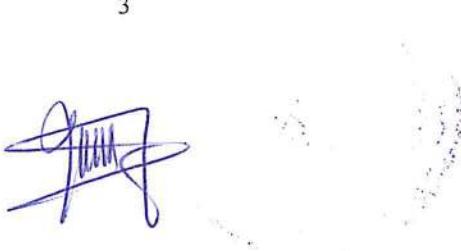
Exploring the ways in which people in distant ages managed their lives offers a sense of wonder and excitement, and ultimately another perspective on human life and society.

To conclude, history should be studied because it is essential to the individual and society. Only through studying history can we grasp how and why things change and only through history can we understand what elements of a society persist despite change. Aesthetic and humanistic goals also inspire people to study the past, which broaden the understanding of the present reality.

Nevertheless, just as history can be useful, it can also be abused. Such abuses come mainly from deliberate manipulation of the past to fit current political agenda. In such cases, history is written backwards; the past is described and interpreted to justify the present. While personal biases are not always avoidable, historians are different from propagandists in that the former take care to document their ideas about the past so that they can be subjected to independent and external verification. Yet how do historians study and interpret the past and the changes that occurred in periods during which they have not lived? This takes us to the discussion of sources and historical methodology.

1.2. Sources and Methods of Historical Study

Historians are not creative writers like novelists. Unlike the latter, the work of historians must be supported by evidence arising from sources. Sources bring to life what appears to have been dead. Therefore, sources are vital to the study and writing of history.

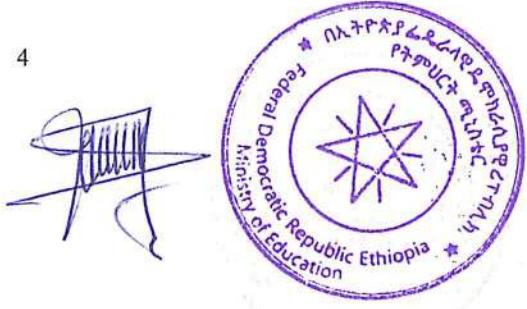


Historical sources are broadly classified into two types: primary and secondary. Primary sources are surviving traces of the past that are available to us in the present. They are original or first hand in their proximity to the event both in time and space. Examples of primary sources include manuscripts (handwritten materials), diaries, letters, minutes, inscriptions, chronicles, hagiographies, court records and administrative files, travel documents, photos, maps, audiovisual materials, coins, fossils, weapons, utensils, and buildings. Secondary sources, on the other hand, are second-hand published and unpublished accounts of past events. They are written after the event has occurred, providing an interpretation of what happened, why it happened, and how it happened, often based on primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include articles, books, textbooks, biographies, theses, dissertations, reports and stories or movies about historical events. Secondary materials give us what appear to be finished accounts of certain historical periods and phenomena. Nevertheless, no history work can be taken as final, as new sources keep coming to light. New sources make possible new historical interpretations or entirely new historical reconstructions.

Oral data constitute the other category of historical sources. Oral sources are especially valuable for studying and documenting the history of non-literate societies. In many societies, people transmit information from one generation to another through folk songs, folk sayings, etc. This type of oral data is called oral tradition. People can also provide oral testimonies of their lived experiences. Such source material is known as oral history and serves as primary source.

For the history of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, historians use a combination of the sources described above. However, regardless of the source of information —primary or secondary, written or oral—the data should be subjected to critical evaluation before it is used as evidence. Primary sources must be verified for their originality and authenticity because sometimes primary sources like letters may be forged. Secondary sources must be examined for the reliability of their reconstructions. Oral data may lose originality and authenticity because of distortion over time and should be cross-checked with other sources to determine credibility.

To conclude, historians must find evidence about the past, ask questions about that evidence, and come up with explanations that make sense of what the evidence says about the people, events, places, and the periods they study. Such a scientific examination of evidence is a crucial aspect of the historical research method.



1.3. Historiography of Ethiopia and the Horn

Historiography refers to the history of historical writing. It studies how knowledge of the past is obtained and transmitted and how it has changed over time. The organized study and narration of the past was introduced by ancient Greek historians, notably Herodotus and Thucydides (c.455–400 BC). The other major tradition of historical thinking and writing about the past is that of the Chinese, of which the most important early figure was Sima Qian (145–86 BC). History emerged as an academic discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century, first in Europe and subsequently in other parts of the world. The German historian, Leopold Von Ranke (1795–1886), and his colleagues established history as an independent discipline in Berlin with its own set of research methods. Ranke's greatest contribution to the scientific study of the past is such that he is considered as the “father of modern historiography.”

The historiography of Ethiopia and the Horn has changed enormously during the past century in ways that merit fuller treatment than can be afforded here. This section explores significant transformations in the historiography of the region in the twentieth century. This is preceded by a brief account of earlier forms of historical writing to situate the discussion in context. The earliest known written source for the history of the region is the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, written in the first century by an anonymous author. The *Periplus* was followed by the *Christian Topography* written by Cosmas Indicopleustes, a Greek sailor, in the sixth century.

The earliest written Ethiopian material, excluding inscriptions, dates from the seventh century. The document, which is in the form of an illustrated manuscript, was found at *Abba Gerima* monastery near the town of Adwa. Next in line is a manuscript discovered in Haiq Estifanos monastery of present-day Wollo in the thirteenth century. The value of manuscripts is essentially religious, but they also provide insights into the country's past. The largest groups of sources available for medieval Ethiopian history are hagiographies originating from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. An important function of hagiographies is to enhance the prestige of saints. Yet, other related anecdotes of historical importance are also included, often in the form of what are known as marginalia. A parallel hagiographical tradition exists among Muslim communities. One such account offers tremendous insight into the life of a Muslim saint, *Shaykh Ja'far Bukko* of Gattira, in Wollo in the late nineteenth century. In addition to the saint's life, the document



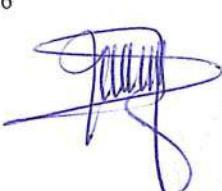
discusses the development of indigenous Islam and contacts between the region's Muslim community and the outside world.

Furthermore, Ethiopia had an indigenous tradition of history writing called chronicles, composed by court scribes or clergymen with recognized clerical training and calligraphic skills. The earliest of these chronicles is *The Glorious Victories of Amde-Tsion*, and the last is *Chronicle of Abeto Iyasu and Empress Zewditu*. Chronicles incorporate both legends and facts about the monarch. Notwithstanding their limitations, chronicles, in conjunction with other sources, can give us a glimpse into the character and lives of kings, their preoccupations and relations with subordinate officials, and, to some extent, the evolution of the Ethiopian state and society.

Accounts of Arabic-speaking visitors to the coast also provide useful information on various aspects of the region's history. For example, al-Masudi and Ibn Battuta described the culture, language and import-export trade of the East African coast in the tenth and fourteenth centuries, respectively. For the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we have two eyewitness accounts of Yemeni writers. Shihab al-Din's *Futuh al-Habasha (The Conquest of Abyssinia)* recounts the wars between the Christian kingdom and Adal Sultanate in sixteenth century while Al-Haymi documented the experience of Yemeni delegation to the court of Fasiledas (r. 1632-67) in 1647. Another vital contemporary material is *Abba Bahrey's Ge'ez account of the socio-political organization and movement of the Oromo people* written in 1593.

European missionaries and travelers also contributed to the development of Ethiopian historiography. Examples of such accounts are *The Prester John of the Indies*, written by the Portuguese chaplain Francisco Alvarez in the sixteenth century, and James Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (in five volumes), written in the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, a German orientalist, Hiob Ludolf (1624-1704), who is regarded as the founder of Ethiopian studies as an academic discipline in Europe, wrote *Historia Aethiopica* (translated into English as *A New History of Ethiopia*). The book was largely based on information he collected from an Ethiopian priest named *Abba Gorgorios (Abba Gregory)*, who was in Europe at that time.

Historical writing made some departures from the chronicle tradition in the early twentieth century. This period saw the emergence of Ethiopian writers who made conscious efforts to distance themselves from chroniclers whom they criticized for their adulatory tone when writing



about monarchs. The earliest group includes *Alega* Taye Gebre-Mariam, *Alega* Atsme Giorgis Gebre Mesih and, *Debtera* Fisseha-Giorgis Abyezgi. Later, *Negadrases* Afework Gebre-Iyesus, Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn, and *Blatten geta* Hiruy Wolde-Selassie joined them. Unlike chroniclers, these writers dealt with a range of topics from social justice, administrative reform, and economic analysis to history. Unfortunately, the Italian occupation of Ethiopia interrupted this early experiment in modern history writing.

After liberation, Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria served as a bridge between the writers of the pre-1935 period and the subsequent generation of Ethiopian professional historians. He has published about eight historical works. Another work of importance in the post-Liberation period is Yilma Deressa's *YeItyopiya Tarik Be 'asra Sidistegnaw Kifle Zemen (A History of Ethiopia in the Sixteenth Century)*. *Blatten geta* Mahteme-Selassie Wolde-Meskel, among others, wrote *Zikre Neger*, which is a comprehensive account of Ethiopia's pre-war administration, including the land tenure system and taxation. Another writer in the same category is *Dejjazmach* Kebede Tesema, whose memoir of the imperial period was published as *Yetarik Mastawesha* in 1962 E.C.

The 1960s was a crucial decade in the development of Ethiopian historiography because it was in this period that history emerged as an academic discipline. The pursuit of historical studies as a full-time occupation began with the opening of the Department of History in 1963 at the then Haile Selassie I University (HSIU). Since then, researches by faculty members and students have been produced on various topics. The Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), the other institutional home of professional historiography of Ethiopia, was founded in the same year. The Institute housed a number of historians, of whom the late Richard Pankhurst, the first Director of the Institute, is worthy of note. Pankhurst's prolific publication record remains unmatched. The IES disseminates the results of research findings from diverse disciplines through its journal called the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, which became the main platform of Ethiopian studies in the following decades.

The professionalization of history in other parts of the Horn is a post-colonial phenomenon. With the establishment of independent nations, a deeper interest in exploring their own past quickly emerged among Africans. With this came an urgent need to recast the historical record and recover evidence of many lost pre-colonial civilizations. At the same time, European

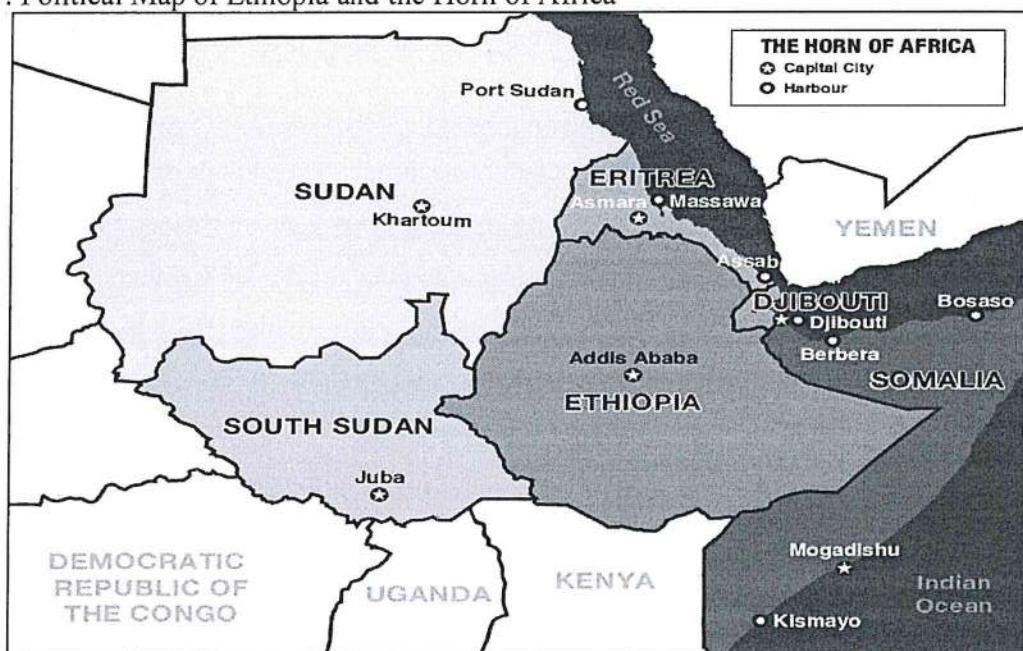


intellectuals' own discomfort with the Euro-centrism of previous scholarship provided for the intensive academic study of African history, an innovation that developed in both Europe and North America in the 1960s. Foundational research was conducted at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Francophone scholars were as influential as Anglophone ones. Yet African historiography was not the creation solely of interested Europeans. African universities trained their own scholars and sent many others overseas for training, eventually publishing numerous works on different aspects of the continent's history.

1.4. Geographical Context

The term "Ethiopia and the Horn" refers to that part of Northeast Africa, which now constitutes the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. The region's history has been shaped by contacts with others through commerce, migrations, wars, slavery, colonialism, and the waxing and waning of state systems.

Map 1: Political Map of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa



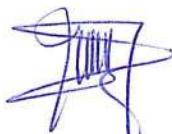
Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Political-map-of-the-Horn-of-Africa_fig1_353430291

Yet, to a considerable extent, the evolution of human history also owed to geographical factors, notably drainage systems, topography, and climate. This section briefly describes the impact of these factors on the way people live and organize themselves.



The region has five principal drainage systems. Flowing from Uganda in the south to the Sudan in the north, the White Nile meets the Blue Nile (or Abay, as it is known in Ethiopia, that starts from the environs of Lake Tana) in Khartoum and drains through Egypt into the Mediterranean Sea. The Awash River System is an entirely Ethiopian system that links the cool rich highlands of Central Ethiopia with the hot, dry lowlands of the Danakil Depression. The Ethiopian Rift Valley Lakes System is a self-contained basin that includes a string of lakes stretching from Lake Ziway in the north to Lake Turkana (formerly known as Rudolf) on the Ethio-Kenyan border. The Gibe–Gojeb-Omo River System links southwestern Ethiopia to the semi-desert lowlands of northern Kenya. The Shebele and Genale rivers originate in the Eastern highlands and flow southeast toward Somalia and the Indian Ocean. Only the Genale (known as the Jubba in Somalia) flows into the Indian Ocean; the Shebele disappears in the sand just inside the coastline. These watersheds are crucial in the life and history of the peoples inhabiting the region. Besides providing people with a source of livelihood, the drainage systems also facilitated the movement of peoples and goods across diverse environments, resulting in the exchange of ideas, technology, knowledge, cultural expressions, and beliefs.

Another element of geography that has a profound impact on human history is topography. The major physiographic features of the region are the massive highland complex of mountains and plateaus created through the formation of the Great Rift Valley and surrounded by lowlands, semi-desert, desert, and tropical forests along the periphery. The diversity of the terrain led to regional variations in climate, natural vegetation, soil composition, and settlement patterns. Accordingly, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa can be divided into three major environmental zones. The vast Eastern lowland covers the narrow coastal strip of northeastern Eritrea, widens gradually and descends southwards to include much of lowland Eritrea, the Sahel, the Danakil Depression, the lower Awash valley, and the arid terrain in northeast Djibouti. It then extends to the Ogaden, the lower parts of Hararghe, Bale, Borana, Sidama, and the whole territory of the Republic of Somalia. There is little seasonal variation in climatic conditions in this zone. Hot and dry conditions prevail year-round along with periodic monsoon winds and irregular (little) rainfall, except in limited areas along the rivers Awash, Wabe-Shebele and Genale (Jubba) that traverse the region and a few offshore islands in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean that are inhabited by people closely related to those of immediate mainland districts. Shrubs and bush cover much of the lowland territories.

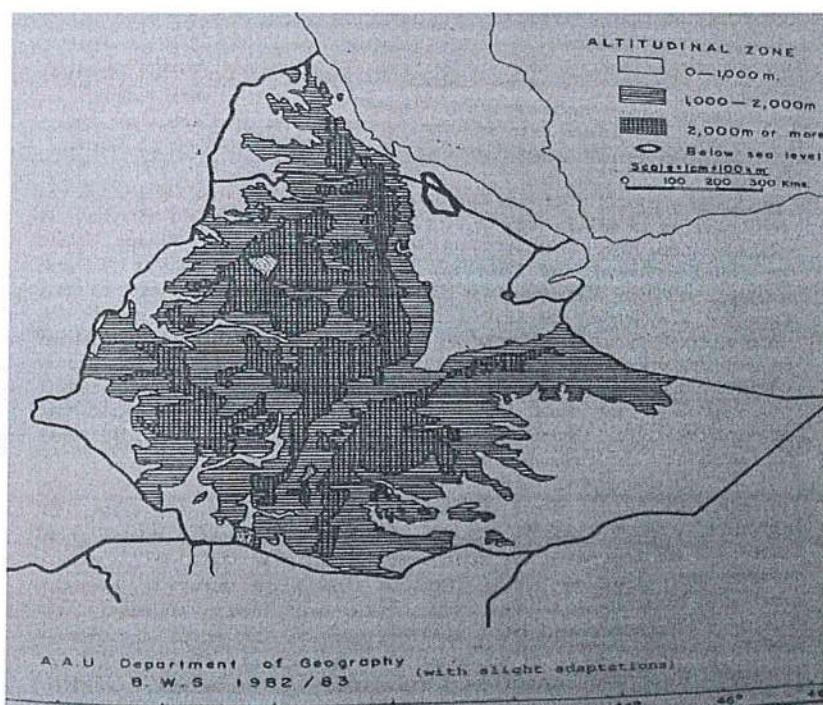


Immediately to the west of and opposite to the eastern lowland region forms the highland massif that starts from northern Eritrea and continues all the way to southern Ethiopia. The major divide between the western and eastern parts of this zone is the Rift Valley.

Further to the west, along the western foothills or on the periphery of the plateau and on borderlands of the Sudan stretching from north to south are hot lowlands that were characterized in earlier times by thick forests chiefly on the banks of the Nile and its tributaries.

Yet, peoples of the region were never isolated; they interacted from various locations as far back as recorded history goes. Thus, as much as there are many factors that make people of a certain region distinct from the others, there are also commonalities which people shared in the past.

Map 2: Physical Map of Ethiopia



Source: Bahru Zewde (Compiled), *A Short History of Ethiopia and the Horn* (Addis Ababa University, 1998), p. 9.

Learning Activities

- Discuss the similarities and differences between the two perceptions of history?
- Why is history a subject worth studying?
- What are the different sources of history? How do you evaluate them?
- What is the difference between history and historiography?
- Illustrate how geographical factors shaped human history with examples from the Horn.



UNIT TWO

PEOPLES AND CULTURES IN ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN (4 HOURS)

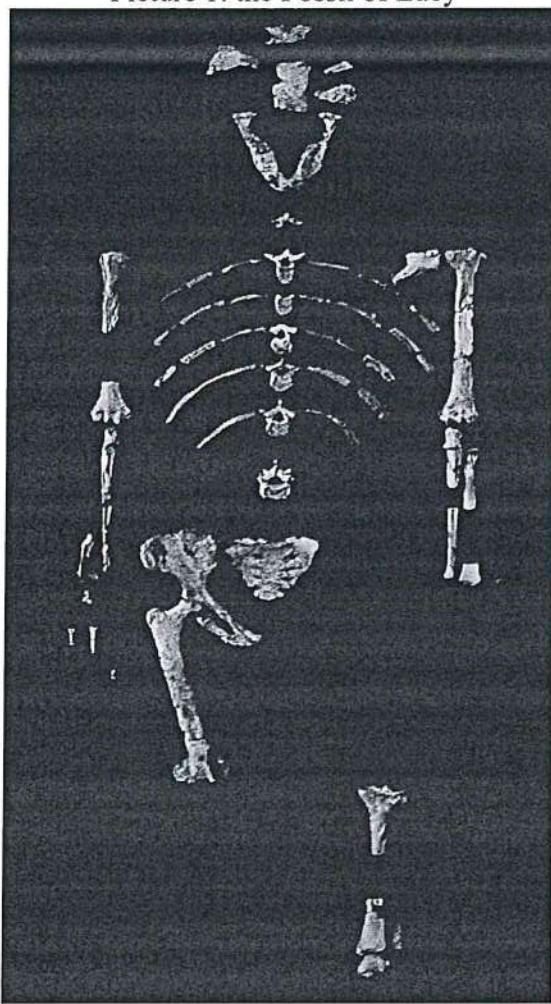
2.1. Human Evolution

Human evolution accounts for only a fraction of the history of the globe that had evolved since circa/c.4.5 billion years before present (BP). The earliest life came into being between 3 and 1 billion years BP. Blue green algae, small plants, fishes, birds and other small beings emerged at c. 800 million years BP. Primates branched into placental mammal as of 200-170 million years BP, and then some primates developed into *Pongidae* (chimpanzee, gorilla, gibbon, orangutan, baboon...) while others evolved into *Hominidae* (human ancestors).

Archeological evidence shows that the East African Rift Valley is the cradle of humanity. Pieces of evidence related to both biological and cultural evolution have been discovered in the Lower Omo and Middle Awash River valleys by both Ethiopian and foreign scholars. A fossil named *Chororapithecus* dated 10 million BP was unearthed in Anchar (in West Hararghe) in 2007. *Ardipithecus kadabba* (dated 5.8-5.2 million years BP) was discovered in the Middle Awash. *Ardipithecus ramidus* (dated 4.2 million B.P.) was discovered at Aramis in Afar in 1994. Earlier forms of *Australopithecines* were uncovered at Belohdelie (dated 3.6 million years BP) in Middle Awash. A 3-years old child's fossil termed *Australopithecus afarensis*, Selam, dated to 3.3 million years BP, was discovered at Dikika, Mille in 2000. *Australopithecus afarensis* (Lucy/Dinkinesh, dated c. 3.18 million years BP) with 40% complete body parts, weighing 30 kg and with a height of 1.07 meters and a pelvis resembling that of a bipedal female was discovered at Hadar in 1974 AD.



Picture 1: the Fossil of Lucy



Source: Bahru Zewde (compiled), *A Short History...* p. 12.

A fossil named *Australopithecus anamensis* was discovered around Lake Turkana in 1995. An eco-fact named as *Australopithecus garhi* (literally ‘surprise’ in Afar language) dated to 2.5 million years BP was discovered at Bouri in Middle Awash between 1996 and 1999.

The development of the human brain was the main feature of the next stage, which produced the genus *Homo*, believed to have emerged 2-2.5 million years BP. A partial skull of a fossil dated 1.9 million years BP and termed *Homo habilis*, which is derived from the Latin terms “*Homo*” (human being) and “*Habilis*” (skillful use of hands), was found in the Lower Omo. A fossil named *Homo erectus* (walking upright) and with 900-1100 cc brain size, dated 1.6 million years BP, was discovered at Melka Kunture, Konso Gardula and Gadeb. *Homo erectus* is said to have originated in Africa and then spread to the rest of the world. The skeleton of Archaic *Homo*

sapiens (“wise” human being, dated 400,000 years BP) named Bodo and with a brain size of 1300-1400cc was discovered in Middle Awash. Fossils of *Homo sapiens sapiens* (100,000 years BP), a sub-species of *Homo sapiens* were discovered at Porc Epic near Dire Dawa and Kibish around Lower Omo in 1967. Kibish fossils were re-dated in 2004 to 195,000 BP, the oldest date in the world for modern *Homo sapiens*. *Homo sapiens idaltu*, another sub-species of *Homo sapiens* that was found in the Middle Awash in 1997, lived about 160, 000 years BP.

Cultural evolution is related to socio-economic transformations, conventionally grouped into the Stone, Bronze and the Iron Ages. Stone tools were grouped into Mode I (Oldowan, named based on the first report at Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania); Mode II (Acheulean, named after the first report at St. Acheul, France) and Mode III (Sangoon). Mode I tools are characterized by crude and mono-facial styles, and were produced by direct percussion, i.e. striking the stone directly. Mode II tools were produced by indirect percussion, i.e. striking the stone via an intermediate tool, using hand-axe or hammer and were mainly characterized by bifacial, pointed, and convex features. Mode III tools are characterized by a flexible and refined production form using obsidian, a black glass-like volcanic rock.

Examples of these tools have been found in the Horn. Fossilized animal bones dating back to 3.4 million years BP were found with stone-tool-inflicted marks (the oldest evidence of stone tool in the world) at Dikika (in the Afar Region) in 2010. Artifact findings suggest that Oldowan tools made by *Homo habilis* were discovered near Gona (2.52 million years BP) in 1992 and at Shungura, both in the Afar Region. *Homo erectus* produced Acheulean tools dated 1.7 million years BP, invented fire and started burial practice. Acheulian tools (aged over 1 million years) were found at Kella, Middle Awash, in 1963, as well as in Konso. *Homo sapiens* produced Sangoon tools that date back up to 300,000 years BP. The Gademotta site in the central Ethiopian Rift Valley has been dated back to 200,000 BP. Other important sites such as Gorgora, Ki’one, and Yabello in Ethiopia and Midhidhishi and Gudgud in Somalia have offered noteworthy information about Stone Age communities.

Stone Age is divided into three sub-periods. The first, the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age, from 3.4 million to 11,000 years BP), was the period when humans developed language, sheltered in caves, and used stone, bone, wood, fur and skin materials to prepare food and clothing. There



was a division of labor based on sex and age, whereby the able-bodied males hunted fauna (animals), and children and females gathered flora (plants). The Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age/11,000-10,000 BP) was a transition from Paleolithic to Neolithic (New Stone Age/10, 000-6, 000 BP) periods.

2.2. Neolithic Revolution

During the Neolithic period, human beings transformed from a mobile to sedentary way of life with a radical shift from hunting and gathering to the domestication of plants and animals. Climatic change and an increased population of hunters and gatherers resulted in a decline in the number of animals and the availability of plants. As food gatherers were already aware of the growing cycle of most grass types, they began to grow those plants that were most common and yielded more edible seeds. The big animals, which depended on dense bushes for sustenance, were reduced by hunting and the animals that people could domesticate easily were smaller.

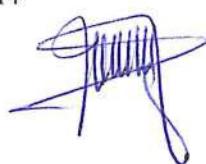
The process of domestication took place independently in various parts of the world. In more elevated and wetter parts of the Horn, plants like *eragrotis teff*, *dagussa* (*eleusine coracana*), *nug* (*guzotia*), *ensete ventricosum* etc. were cultivated. The discovery of polished axes, beads, ceramics, grinding stones, stone figures and animal remains in Emba-Fakeda around Adigrat in Tigray as well as Aqordat and Barentu in Eritrea is evidence of Neolithic material culture. Gobodara rock shelter near Aksum has provided agricultural stone tools. Remains of domesticated cattle, chickpeas, and vegetables have been excavated from Lalibela Cave on the southeastern shore of Lake Tana. Stone tools used for cutting grass and rock paintings of tamed animals have been found at the Laga Oda rock shelter in Chercher. Evidence for domesticated cattle also comes from around Lake Basaqa near Matahara town. Playa Napata and Kado in the Sudan, Cyrenaica in Libya and Futajalon in West Africa were among the known places of domestication of animals like Nidamawa and Zebu (*Bos indicus*) cattle, which in due course expanded to Ethiopia and the Horn.

2.3. Peopling of the Region

2.3.1. Languages and Linguistic Processes

There are approximately 90 languages with 200 dialects in Ethiopia and the Horn. Linguists classify the languages of Ethiopia and the Horn into two major language super families:

Afro-Asiatic: this super family is further sub-divided into the following families:



➤ **Cushitic:**

- Northern: represented by Beja, spoken in northwestern Eritrea bordering the Sudan.
- Central: Agaw, including Awign, Kunfel, Qimant, Hamtanga and Bilen.
- Eastern: Afar, Ale, Arbore, Baiso, Burji, Darashe, Dasanech, Gedeo, Hadiya, Halaba, Kambata, Konso, Libido, Mosiye, Oromo, Saho, Sidama, Somali, Tambaro, Tsemai...
- Southern: represented by Dhalo in Kenya and Nbugua in Tanzania.

➤ **Semitic:** is divided into:

- North: Ge'ez, Rashaida (spoken around the Eritrea-Sudanese border); Tigre (spoken in the Eritrean lowlands); Tigrigna (spoken in highland Eritrea and Tigray).
- South:
 - ✓ Transverse: Amharic, Argobba, Harari, Silte, Wolane and Zay.
 - ✓ Outer: Gafat (extinct) and Gurage.

➤ **Omotic:** Anfillo, Ari, Bambasi, Banna, Basketo, Bench, Boro-Shinasha, Chara, Dawuro, Dime, Dizi, Dorze, Gamo, Ganza, Gayil, Gofa, Hamer, Hozo, Kachama-Ganjule, Karo, Keficho, Konta, Korete, Male, Melo, Nayi, Oyda, Sezo, Shekkacho, Shekko, Wolayta, Yem, Zayse, etc.

Nilo-Saharan: Anywa, Berta, Gumuz, Kacipo-Balesi, Komo, Kunama, Kwama, Kwegu, Majang, Mi'en, Murle, Mursi, Nara, Nu'er, Nyangatom, Opo, Shabo, Suri and Uduk.

Language classification does not remain static. Factors like population movements, warfare, trade, religious and territorial expansion, urbanization, etc. have resulted in intense linguistic processes that forced languages to be affected. In this process, some languages died out or have been in danger of extinction while others thrived over time.

2.3.2. Settlement Patterns

The spatial distribution of people in northeast Africa is the culmination of long historical processes. Since early times, Cushitic and Semitic peoples have inhabited the area between the Red Sea in the east and the Blue Nile in the west, from where they have dispersed in different directions. In due course, the Cushites have evolved to be the largest linguistic group in the Horn of Africa and have also spread over wide areas from the Sudan to Tanzania. Similarly, the Semites spread over a large area and eventually settled in the northern, north central,



northeastern, south central and eastern parts of the Horn. The Semites are the second largest population, next to the Cushites. Except for the Bambasi and Boro, who live in Benishangul-Gumuz and Anfillo in Wallaga, most Omotic peoples have inhabited southwestern Ethiopia along the Omo River basin. Yet, in earlier times, they extended much further to the north. The Nilotes are largely settled along the Ethio-Sudanese border, although some of the Chari-Nile family, identified as the Karamojo cluster, inhabited as far as Turkana Lake.

2.3.3. Economic Formations

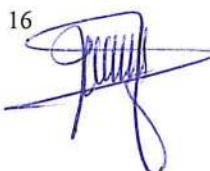
The domestication of plants and animals gave humanity two interdependent modes of life: arable and pastoral farming. While there may be pure pastoralists, it is very rare to think of a farmer without a head of cattle or two. Likewise, in the Horn, these two forms of livelihood have coexisted and are quite often interrelated. However, topographic features and climatic conditions largely influenced economic activities in the region.

A predominantly pastoral economy (rearing camel, goat, cattle, etc.) has characterized the eastern lowlands of Afar, Saho, and Somali as well as Karayu and Borana Oromo. While the Afar and Karayu depend on the Awash River, the Somali have owed a great deal to the Wabi Shebelle and Genale (Jubba) rivers. Most of the highland population (the Cushites, Semites, and Northern Omotic groups) has been engaged in mixed farming since 10,000 years BP, whereas southern Omo predominantly practiced pastoralism and fishing. Many Omotic groups were also engaged in metallurgy, weaving, and other crafts as well as trade. The Nilotes along the Blue Nile and Baro-Akobo rivers have been shifting cultivators, with sorghum as the staple food. Millet, cotton, and other crops were also produced in these sparsely populated western lowlands. Among the majority of Nilotc communities, cattle have high economic and social values, supplemented with apiculture, fishing and hunting.

2.4. Religion and Religious Processes

2.4.1. Indigenous Religion

This includes various beliefs and practices that have been followed by the people of the region since ancient times. Its distinctive mark is belief in a Supreme Being, with special powers attributed to natural phenomena, which are considered sacred. Spiritual functionaries have officiated rituals and propitiated divinities as intermediaries between society and the spirits.



Waqqeffanna of the Oromo is based on the existence of one Supreme Being called *Waqa*. *Waqa's* power is manifested through *Ayyana* (spirits), including *Abdari* (plant fertility spirit), *Atete* (animal fecundity spirit), *Awayi* (sanctity), *Balas* (victory spirit), *Chato* (beasts' defender), *Gijare* (father's and mother's spirit), *Jaricha* (peace spirit), *Qasa* (health deity) and *Ekera* (dead ghost residing at *Hujuba*/grave). At the edge of the ever-flowing river and on the mountain top, in autumn and spring respectively, the *Irrecha* (thanksgiving festival) is held. Revered experts (*Qallu* (male) and *Qallitti* (female)) have maintained a link between the *Ayyana* and believers through *Dalaga* (ecstasy) at *Galma* (ritual house). The *Jila/Makkala* (delegates) made a pilgrimage to get the consecration of *Abba Muda* (anointment father) dwelling at Goro-Fugug, roving within the southeastern highlands of Ethiopia and the Horn, until c. 1900.

In Hadiya's *Fandanano* (original creed), the Supreme Being is known as *Wa'a*, who is believed to have created the world (*Qoccancho*), and whose eyes are denoted by *Elincho* (sun) and *Agana* (moon). Spirits like *Jara* (male's protector), *Idota* (female's guard), *Hawsula* and *Woriqa* attracted prayers and sacrifices. Some connoisseurs are believed to have the power to bring rain during drought. The Kambata have had *Negita/Aricho Magano* (Sky God) and *Magnancho* (religious officials). The Gedeo have had *Mageno* (Supreme Being) and *Deraro* (thanksgiving rite). The Konso religion has been centered on worship of *Waaq* (*Wakh*). The Gojjam Agaw called the Supreme Being *Diban*.

Among the Gurage, there have been *Waq/Goita* (Supreme Being), *Bozha* (thunder deity) and *Damwamwit* (health goddess). The Yem worshipped *Ha'o* (Sky God); the So'ala clan was in charge of *Shashokam* (the most vital deity), and religious functions were performed through couriers in each village called Magos. The Konta spirit-cult was called *Docho*. The Wolayta called God *Tosa* and spirits *Ayyana*, including *Tawa-Awa/Moytiliya* (father's spirit dwelling *Dufuwa*/grave), *Sawuna* (justice spirit), *Wombo* (rain spirit), *Micho* (goat spirit), *Nago* (sheep spirit), *Kuchuruwa* (emergency spirit), *Gomashera* (war spirit), *Talahiya* (Omo spirit), etc. The *Sharechuwa* (religious practitioners) have had *Becha/Kera Eza Keta* (ritual house).

The Keficho called the Supreme Being *Yero*, the spirit *Ego*, and all spirits fathers host *Dochinayo* (*Ibedechino/Ibede-gudeno*). Harvest spirit/*Kollo*'s sacrifice is *Dejo*. Earth and area spirits are known as *Showe-kollo* and *Dude-baro*, respectively. There are also local spirits like Channa's



Damochechi, Sharada's *Yaferochi*, Adio's *Wogidochi*, and *Gepetato* (hill kings) identified by the Yetecho clan. Dugo clan members led spiritual services.

Among the Boro clans (Enoro, Endiwo and Dowa), supernatural power is called *Iqa*. Among the various prayer rituals, *Gure shuka* is designated for ecological preservation through slaughtering animals at mountain tops. *Shode de'na* is slaughtering when an unexpected disease occurs. *Marrowa shuka* is slaughtering to prevent children from diseases, for wealth rehabilitation, and to promote a harmonious life and productivity in the family. Rituals are led by recognized elders.

The Nuer believe in *Kuoth Nhial* (God in Heaven) coming through rain, lightning and thunder, and the rainbow is his necklace. Sun, Moon and other entities are also signs of God. There are also clan spirits such as *WiW* (spirit of war) associated with thunder.

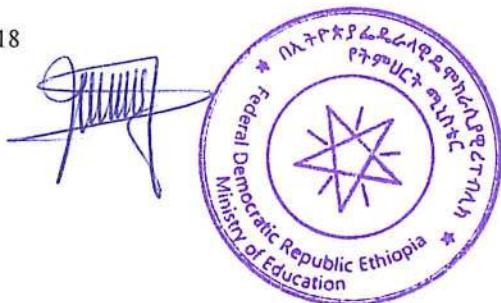
An interesting feature of indigenous religion is the way in which its beliefs and practices are fused with Christianity and Islam. This intermixing of religions is known as syncretism.

2.4.2. Judaism

In northern and northwestern Ethiopia, the Bete-Israel (literally, 'house of Israel'/ Ethiopian Jews), formerly known as "Falasha," practiced *Haymanot* (religious practices different from Rabbinic Judaism). Many of their accounts trace the origin of the same people from the Dan Tribe that migrated to Ethiopia led by the sons of Moses during the Exodus (1400-1200 BC). Others claim they arrived with Menilek I, believed to be the son of King Solomon (r. 974-932 BC) of Israel and Queen Saba (Sheba), also known as Azeb (Makeda). Another group is said to have arrived in Ethiopia led by persons known as Azonos and Phinhas in the sixth century AD. Still others are said to have been Jewish immigrants who intermarried with the Agaw groups. On the other hand, scholars like Taddese Tamrat and Kay Shelmay argue that they are remnants of Old Testament followers of Orthodox Christianity and local converts, not migrants.

2.4.3. Christianity

Christianity became a state religion in 334 AD during the reign of King Ezana (r. 320-360), who dropped pre-Christian gods like Ares (the war god), Arwe (serpent-python god), Bahir (sea god) and Midir (earth god), and embraced Christianity. Instrumental in the conversion were two Syrian brothers, Aedesius and Frementius (Fremnatos). When Fremnatos (also known as Kasate



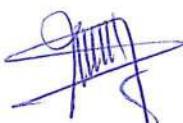
Birhane or *Abba* Salama) visited Alexandria, Patriarch Atnatewos (328-373) appointed him as the first Bishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). The consecration of bishops by the Coptic Church continued until 1959, when *Abune* Basilius became the first Ethiopian Patriarch.

Christianity was expanded among the mass of the people during the reign of Ella Amida II (478-86) by the Nine Saints, who came mostly from different regions of the Byzantine Empire. The saints built several churches, such as Debre Damo, and translated the Holy Bible and other spiritual texts into Ge'ez. The expansion of Christianity continued and gained fresh momentum during the Zagwe dynasty (1150-1270) and the early medieval period (1270-1527), when many churches and monasteries were constructed. These churches and monasteries are not mere religious centers, but have served as repositories of ancient manuscripts and precious objects of art throughout the ages.

The Jesuits attempted to convert EOC to Catholicism from the mid-sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries, which Tadesse calls “evangelizing the evangelized.” However, this led to bloody anti-Catholic rebellions and civil war that directly led to the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1632. Missionaries’ religious expansion was one of the dominant themes of the treaties concluded between European diplomats and Ethiopian authorities in the nineteenth century. The Catholic Giuseppe Sapeto (founder of the Lazarist mission), Giustino De Jacobis (founder of the Capuchin order) and Cardinal Massaja were the more prominent ones. The Anglican Church Missionary Society (ACMS), Church Missionary Society of London (CMSL), and Wesleyan Methodist Society led by Gobat, Isenberg and Krapf introduced and expanded Protestantism.

2.4.4. Islam

When the Prophet Muhammad started preaching Islam in Makkah in 610 AD, he faced opposition from the Quraysh rulers. To avoid persecution, he sent some of his early followers to Aksum. The first group of refugees was led by Jafar Abu Talib. In his advice to his followers, the Prophet described the Ethiopian ruler as “...a king under whom none are persecuted. It is a land of righteousness, where God will give you relief from what you are suffering.” The then Aksumite king, Armah Ella Seham/Ashama b. Abjar (Ahmed al-Nejash in Arabic sources), duly gave them asylum. When the Quraysh leaders asked him to repatriate the refugees, Armah is said

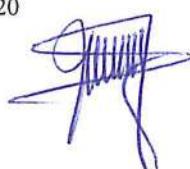


to have replied, "If you were to offer me a mountain of gold I would not give up these people who have taken refuge with me."

Subsequently, Islam spread to the Horn by peaceful means, including trade. Islam was well established in the Alalay (Dahlak) Islands on the Red Sea by the beginning of the eighth century. The Muslim community on the islands developed a sultanate that predominantly influenced pastoral communities of the coastal areas in the early tenth century. However, the Dahlak route played a minor role in the spread of Islam into the interior as Christianity was strongly entrenched in Aksum and the successor states of northern Ethiopia. Thus, the port of Zeila on the western coast of the Gulf of Aden served as an important gateway for Islam, which was firmly established in the coastal areas by the eighth and ninth centuries. From there, it radiated to the eastern, northeastern, central and southern parts of the Horn through the agency of Muslim clerics who followed in the footsteps of traders. A religious leader by the name of Sheikh Hussein played a vital role in Islam's expansion into Bale, Arsi and other southeastern parts of the Horn. Another Islamic center in Bale is the Sof Umar cave. Harar also played a pivotal role in the expansion of Islamic learning. Islam was introduced into Somali territories through the Indian Ocean coasts of Benadir (Moqadishu, Brava and Merca) in the eighth century. Mosques and other centers became the depositories of cultures, traditions and literature of the local Muslims.

Learning Activities

- Why has Lucy attracted more attention from the world than other human remains?
- Discuss the salient features of the three species of the Homo family.
- List major developments in the three Stone Ages.
- Clarify the link between hunting and taming animals, and gathering and plant domestication.
- Explain the relation between domestication of plants and animals, and early civilizations.
- What are the major categories of language families in the Horn?
- Describe the geographical distribution of languages in the region.
- Explain how the study of language can be useful in understanding cultures and societies.
- Identify the commonalities among the indigenous religions of Ethiopia and the Horn.
- Discuss the role of trade and religion in relations between the peoples of the Horn.



UNIT THREE

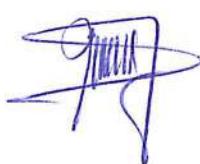
POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN TO THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY (6 HOURS)

3.1. Emergence of States

State refers to an autonomous political unit with population, defined territory, sovereignty and government with power to decree and enforce laws. States arose independently in different regions and at various times. The first states were theocratic states, with priests (shaman) overseeing the social and religious affairs of their people. As production became market-oriented, the priests were gradually replaced by chiefs, who began collecting regular and compulsory tributes known as protection payments with which they maintained themselves and their supporters, chiefly the army, the bureaucracy, and other followers.

One important factor in the emergence of states was the beginning of sedentary agriculture. People had to descend from mountainsides to build houses near cultivated plots, fencing both farming fields and residences, and harvested crops had to be stored and protected from humidity and rodents. Families preferred to live together, forming larger communities for better security and to help each other in the hard work involved. Using sticks or hoes for planting was steadily replaced by ox-drawn plough which resulted in surplus production. Farming communities exchanged their products with better woven clothes and tools from artisans who specialized in the production of these items. Gradually, intermediaries (traders) began to buy the products of both parties and take them to predetermined places or markets for exchange. Thus, states were formed mainly through the expansion of agriculture, which greatly contributed to the specialization of labor. Furthermore, the growth of trade facilitated the development of states.

Ethiopia and the Horn is one of the regions in Africa where early state formation took place. From small beginnings, such states gradually developed into powerful kingdoms and even empires with a well-demarcated social structure. Geographical proximity to and control of international water bodies like the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean along with their ports as well as rich interior favored some of them to become stronger than their neighbors and to eventually dominate them.



3.2. Ancient States

3.2.1. North and Northeast

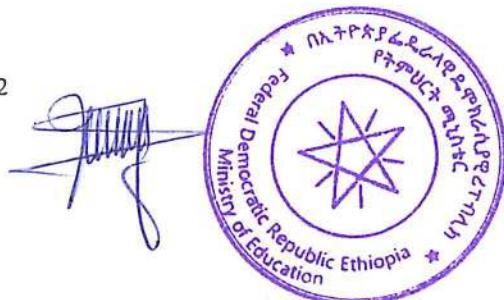
Punt

Punt is the earliest recorded state in Ethiopia and the Horn. The evidence for Punt comes from Egyptian hieroglyphic writings, accompanied by vivid paintings that describe a series of naval expeditions that the Egyptian Pharaohs dispatched to the area. Pharaoh Sahure (r. 2743-2731 BC) sent an expedition to collect myrrh, ebony and electrum (gold and silver alloy). During the reign of Pharaoh Asosi, the treasurer of God Bawardede took the dancing dwarf ("dink") from Punt to Egypt. The best described and illustrated expedition was undertaken during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut/Hashepsowe (1490-1468 BC). She sent five ships under the leadership of the black Nubian Captain Nehasi via Wadi-Tumilat. The expedition was warmly welcomed by the King of Punt, Perehu, and his wife, Ati. The expedition returned to Egypt, collecting frankincense, sweet-smelling woods, leopard and leopard skins, ostrich feathers and eggs, live monkeys and giraffes etc. Hatshepsut presented some of the items to her god, Amun. Because of the spiritual importance of its exports, Punt was also known as the Khebis of the Ta Netjeru ("divine or ghosts' land"). In return, axes, daggers, swords, knives, sickles, clothes, bracelets, necklaces, and other trinkets were imported from Egypt to Punt.

Scholars have not reached agreement on the exact location of Punt. Looking at the varieties of incense and myrrh, some scholars suggested northern or northeastern Somalia while others pointed to Northern Ethiopia because of references to gold, ebony and monkeys. The latter reinforce their assertion by saying that, at that early period, Egyptian sailboats were not strong enough to pass through the Strait of Bab-el Mandeb (Gate of Tears) into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Considering these two suggestions, some others argue that it probably stretched from Swakim or Massawa to Babel Mandeb and Cape Guardafui.

Da'amat

Da'amat had its center a little to the south of Aksum. The kings of Da'amat used the politico-religious title *Mukarib*. Various gods and goddesses like *Almouqah* (principal god), *Astater* (Venus god), *Na'uran* (light god), *Shamsi* (sun god) and *Sin* (moon god) were worshipped in Da'amat and other pre-Aksumite cultural centers, similar to South Arabia at the time.



Among the major cultural centers in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea were:

- **Yeha:** is located 30 km northeast of Aksum and was the oldest of these centers. It probably emerged c.1000 BC as an emporium where South Arabian merchants stored commodities coming from the interior. Its zenith was from 750 to 500 BC. Remains of walls, stone masonry, a temple that is still standing and inscriptions indicate its glory.
- **Hawulti Melazo:** is located to the southeast of Aksum, where stone tablets inscribed in a rectangular temple surrounded by a wall with paintings denoting herds of cattle have been excavated.
- **Addi-Seglemen:** is 10 kms southwest of Aksum, from where a stone slab is fetched and the oldest Ethiopian monumental inscription is discovered.

There were also other centers like Addi Gelemo, Addi Grameten, Addi Kewih, Atsbi Dera, Feqiya, Hinzat, Sefra, Senafe, and Tekonda, etc.

The Aksumite State

The nucleus of the Aksumite state was formed in a small area comprising Aksum town and its environs c. 200-100 BC. In its heyday, it extended from the Red Sea coast in the east to the western edge of the plateau overlooking the Nile Valley in the west and from the northern corner of Eritrea in the north to northern Shewa in the south. According to the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, Adulis on the western coast of the Red Sea was the major port of Aksum. The long distance trade routes from Adulis and other posts on the Red Sea coast passed inland through such centers as Kaskasse, Coloe, Matara, and even further west across the Takaze River. The document also mentioned ports of the Aden (Eudaemon) Gulf like Avalites (Zeila) and Malao (Berbera), and the Indian Ocean coasts of Benadir like Serapion (Moqadishu), Nicon (Brava) and Merca. The Aksumite export items included ivory, emerald, spices (like ginger, cassia and cinnamon), rhinoceros horns, hippopotamus hides, tortoise shells and curiosity animals like apes. In return, Aksum imported a variety of manufactured products like garments and textiles from Egypt, Italy, India, and Persia; glassware and jewelry from Egypt and other places; metallic sheets, tools or utensils of various kinds, oil and wine from Italy and Syria. The document also mentioned Zoscales', king of Aksum (c. 76-89), and his acquaintance with the Greek language, the lingua franca of the Greco-Roman world.



The Adulis Inscription written in Greek about an unknown king was published in *Christian Topography*, which in turn describes commercial activities of the Red Sea areas, and internal long distance trade between Aksum and Sasu, located most probably in Beni Shangul and the adjoining lands beyond the Blue Nile. A caravan of close to 500 merchants, some of them special agents of Aksumite kings, would take cattle, salt blocks and iron to Sasu in exchange for gold. Yet, as they did not speak each other's language, and did not even trust to be near and see each other to bargain through gestures, the whole exchange was done silently from a distance.

The Aksumite ships were the main means of transportation from the first to the seventh centuries AD. Aksum was the only town with sufficient sources of timber for shipbuilding with its technology in Adulis. Aksum had a large fleet of ships, which was used not only for trade but also for its military campaigns across the Red Sea. Aksumite kings like Aphiles, Endybis, Ousanas II etc. minted coins from gold, silver and bronze for both local and overseas transactions from the third to the seventh centuries.

The Aksumite kings had extensive contacts, notably with South Arabia, leading to the exchange of ideas, material and spiritual culture. Sometimes such contacts involved conflicts. One of these took place c. 200 AD, when peoples in the Southern Arabian Peninsula in present-day Yemen had difficulties in defending themselves from the army of the Aksumite king, Gadarat. Caleb (r. 500-35) expanded Aksum's overseas territories beyond Himyar and Saba, but a local prince Dhu-Nuwas, who was converted to Judaism, killed many Christians in Zafar and Nagran. The Byzantine Emperor/Vasaliev Justinian (r. 527-65), with the blessing of Patriarch Timit III (518-38), provided Caleb with ships to transport armies led by Julianos and Nonossus against Dhu Nuwas, who was defeated. Caleb then appointed Abraha as his viceroy in Arabia and he continued to rule until his death in 570 AD. It was during the reign of Caleb's son and successor Gabra Masqal (r. 535-48) that the famous composer Yared developed the Ethiopian Orthodox Church liturgical songs and hymns.

The decline of the Aksumite state was commenced in the late seventh century. It is primarily attributed to the disruption of its international and domestic trade network, the devastation of the port of Adulis in 702 AD by the Muslim Arabs, ecological degradation, decreased agricultural productivity, and possibly plague outbreaks. Its economic decline led to the decline



of its political and military prowess not only on the Red Sea coast but also in its interior, where its administrative control was challenged by rebellions of the Beja and the Queen of Bani al Hamwiyah, more popularly known as Gudit (Yodit).

Zagwe Dynasty (c. 1150 to 1270)

After its decline, the center of Aksumite state shifted southwards to the Kubar rural highland in the territory of the Agaw. Agaw elites had been actively integrated in the Aksumite state structure, serving as soldiers and functionaries for at least four centuries. Accordingly, the Agaw prince Merra Teklehaimanot married Masobe Worq, the daughter of the last Aksumite king, Dil Na'od. Later, he overthrew his father-in-law and took power, which marked the beginning of Zagwe rule. The Zagwe Dynasty ruled from its center in Bugna District in Wag and Lasta, more exactly at Adafa near Roha (Lalibela). It administered a realm corresponding to much of today's Eritrea and northern and central Ethiopia, extending southwards to Lasta and Wag as well as to Damot, and thence westwards to Begemider. Merra-Teklehaimanot's successors include Yimirahana Kirstos, Harbe, Lalibela, Ne'akuto La'ab, and Yetbarek.

The Agaw rulers renewed trade contact with the eastern Mediterranean region. The most important export items included slaves, ivory and rare spices, while cotton, linen, silver and copper vessels, various types of drugs, and newly minted coins were imported. The Zagwe period was marked by the production of paintings and the translation of some religious works from Arabic into Ge'ez. However, Zagwe rulers are best known for the construction of the famous monolithic churches of Lalibela. The idea behind the collection of 11 churhces was to replicate the Holy Land in Ethiopia. By constructing these churches, Zagwe rulers wanted to establish the second Jerusalem, and mitigate or even avoid the difficulties that Ethiopian pilgrims encountered in their journey to the Holy Land.

The Zagwe Dynasty came to an end due to internal problems of royal succession and opposition from a group claiming descent from the ancient rulers of Aksum. The latter considered the Zagwe kings "illegitimate rulers" or usurpers. The allegation was based on the legend of the Queen of Sheba, whose journey to Jerusalem to visit King Solomon had resulted in the birth of a son, Menilek I, the founder of the so-called "Solomonid" dynasty. The story was documented in a book known as *Kebre-Negest* ('Glory of Kings'). The book was translated from Coptic to



Arabic and then into Ge'ez. According to the legend, the “Solomonid” Dynasty ruled the Aksumite state until power was “usurped” by the Zagwes. Yekunno-Amlak (r. 1270-1285), who claimed descent from the last Aksumite King, Dil Na'od, assisted by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, organized his forces and defeated and killed the last king of Zagwe, Yetbarek, in Gayint. He took power and proclaimed the “restoration” of the “Solomonid” Dynasty.

3.2.2. East, Central, Southern, and Western States

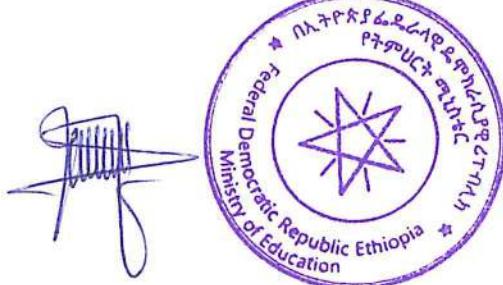
3.2.2.1. Bizamo, Damot, Enarya, and Gafat

Bizamo: was a kingdom on the southern bend of the Abay River just opposite to the present region of Gojjam and around Wembera. It was founded in the eighth century and had early connections with Damot.

Damot: was a strong kingdom that expanded its territories into most of the lands to the south of Abay and north of Lake Turkana as well as to the west of the Awash River and east of the Didessa River. Motalami was a prominent king of Damot in the thirteenth century.

Enarya: was a kingdom in the Gibe region in southwestern Ethiopia. The royal clan was Hinnare Bushasho (Hinnario Busaso). Enarya's kingship was deemed divine: the king (Hinnare-Tato) was secluded and considered sacred. He communicated with visitors through an intermediary, *Afe-Busho*. Real power rested with the *Mikretcho* (council), including *Awa-rasha* (king's spokesperson) and *Atche-rasha* (royal treasurer). The kings had residences in Yadare and Gowi. The Aksumite King, Digna-Jan, is said to have led a campaign into Enarya, accompanied by Orthodox Christian priests carrying *tabotat* (singular *tabot*, also called *tsellat*, replica of the Ark of the Covenant) in the ninth century.

Gafat: historically, Gafat's territory lies south of the Blue Nile River on the southwestern periphery of the Christian Kingdom, adjoining Damot. It is not clear from the available records whether Gafat formed a “state” or not, but the Gafat mountains provided a rich source of gold. Despite efforts by Christian evangelists, the people of Gafat largely remained practitioners of their own indigenous religion. As of the early medieval period, Gafat was paying tribute to the Christian Kingdom mainly in cattle, which came from six districts, among which Gambo and Shat are Gafat clan names. Gafat's rulers bore the title of *awalamo*.



3.2.2.2. Muslim Sultanates

With the spread of Islam since the beginning of the eighth century, viable Muslim communities and states had been established in several locations, especially along the main trade routes from Zeila and its many branches penetrating the interior. These states include:

Shewa: Makhzumi Khalid ibn al-Walid, who claimed descent from Meca, founded the Makhzumite Sultanate on the northeastern foothills of Shewa in 896 AD (283 AH).

Fatagar: was founded around Minjar, Shenkora and Ada'a in the eleventh century. It was a hilly lowland area with thoroughly cultivated fields of wheat and barley, fruits, and extensive grazing grounds full of numerous herds of cattle, sheep and goats.

Dawaro: was located south of Fatagar between the upper waters of Awash and Wabi-Shebelle, extending to Chercher in the northeast and Gindhir in the southeast. Dawaro had a currency called *hakuna* for conducting commercial transactions.

Bali: was an extensive land occupying high plateau, separating the basins of Shebelle River and the Rift valley lakes. It was separated from Dawaro by the Wabi-Shebelle River and extended southwards to the Gannale Dirre River. It had a strong army composed of cavalry and infantry. Trade was mainly based on barter, exchanging cattle, sheep, cloth, etc.

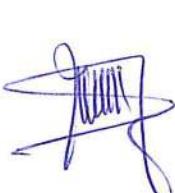
Ifat: its territory ran from Afar plain to the Awash River. It was established by Umar Walasma, who claimed descent from the Hashemite clan of the Prophet, and came from Arabia between 1271 and 1285. He intervened between the quarrelsome Makhzumite princes, Dil-Marrah and Dil-Gamis, weakened and annexed the Shewan sultanate. The sultanate was fertile and well watered. Its inhabitants earned their living from the cultivation of wheat, sorghum, millet and *teff*, and animal husbandry. Sugarcane, bananas, a variety of fruits, beans, squash, cucumbers and cabbage consisted of their diet. *Khat* was used for the first time as a stimulant in Ifat.

Moqadishu: Abu Bakr Ibn Fukura al Din Sahil established the Moqadishu Sultanate c.1269.

Others: mutually independent states like Arababani (between Hadiya and Dawaro), Biqulzar, Dera (between Dawaro and Bale), Fadise, Gidaya, Hargaya, Harla, Kwilgora, Qadise, Sharkah (West of Dawaro and North of Bale in Arsi) and Sim also flourished.

3.3. External Contacts

Ethiopia had contacts with Egypt since at least 3,000 BC. It also had very close relations with all commercially active South Arabian kingdoms starting before 1,000 BC. However, the rapid expansion and eventual control of the Muslim Arabs over the Near and Middle East, North



Africa and the Nile valley led to the decline of Aksumite trade routes and shipping lines. Successive Egyptian sultans used the consecration and sending of a bishop as an instrument to further their own foreign policy objectives and squeeze concessions from Ethiopian Christian rulers, who reacted by threatening to divert the Abbay River. The coming to power of the Mamluks was followed by the reciprocal persecution of religious minorities. Moreover, the Mamluk presented a barrier to contacts between Christian Ethiopia and European states.

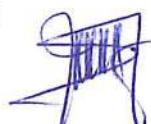
However, the tradition of visiting holy places in the Middle East began at the end of the first millennium AD. Ethiopian Christian pilgrims used the land route to Egypt and from Cairo to the Holy land. As a result, there were considerable numbers of Ethiopian Christian communities in Egyptian monasteries, holy places in Palestine and Armenia, and Italian city-states in subsequent centuries. These communities served as an important link between the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom and Europe. When pilgrims met their fellow Christians in these holy places, they transmitted information about the EOC's unique liturgical practices and the territorial extent of the Christian Kingdom.

From this information, a myth about a very rich and powerful Christian ruler known as "Prester John" began to circulate in Europe around the middle of the twelfth century, when the balance of the Wars of the Crusade (1095-1291) fought over Jerusalem between the Christians of Europe and the Muslims of the Middle East was tilted in the latter's favor. A letter addressed to European kings, thought to have been sent by the "Prester John," appeared in Europe in 1165. The geographical location of the country of the "Prester John" was not accurately known in Europe for over a century. Ultimately, Europeans began to regard the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom as the true land of "Prester John" because it was seen as the most powerful Christian kingdom between the Red Sea and the Indian sub-continent. Then, they began to search for its exact location to form a Christian alliance against the Muslim powers.

3.4. Economic Formations

Agriculture and Land Tenure System

The mainstay of these early states' economy was agriculture. Mastery of irrigation technology contributed to the growth of agricultural production. Small valley wetlands were drained for dry season cultivation that provided essential grains before the main upslope harvest became



available. The people used diverse soil fertility enhancement strategies like manuring, composting and spreading residues as well as fallowing, crop rotation, intercropping and contour plowing. In times of labor shortage, farmers also developed teamwork.

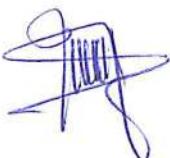
The rules according to which members of the society hold, share, and use the land constitute what is known as the land tenure system. The most ancient system, which survived in many parts of the Horn, is the communal land tenure, which is a group right to the land of the community to which the individual belonged. In the northern part of the Horn, *rist* was the birth right to land by members of the kin or lineage, whose ancestors had settled in the area over a long period. It was inherited from generation to generation. The *bale-rist* (*rist* owners) paid tribute through a complex hierarchy of state functionaries, who were given *gult* right over the areas and populations they administered on behalf of the central government. *Gult* is the right to levy tribute on the produce of *rist* owners. The tribute collected by *bale-gults* was partly allotted for their own upkeep and the rest was sent to the imperial court. *Gult* right that became hereditary is known as *riste-gult*, whereby officials transfer their position to their offspring.

Handicraft

The conditions of ancient states allowed the emergence of artisans in various fields. Metal workers produced javelins, bows, traps, slings, shields, slashes, machetes, hatchets etc. Carpenters were engaged in carving wood implements like stools, mortars, beams, yoke, stilt, coffins, etc. Potters produced ceramic utensils like saucepan, jars, kettles, granaries etc. Tanners produced leather tools used for bed covers, saddles, harnesses, sacks... and clothes until they were replaced by weavers' cotton dresses. However, except for the carpenters and in some cases masons, artisans were mostly despised and marginalized. The public attitude towards artisans was not at all encouraging. The ruling elites mostly spent their wealth on imported luxurious items rather than domestic technology although they were not actively engaged in importing foreign technological knowledge. Consequently, locally produced agricultural implements and house furniture did not show any significant improvement or sophistication.

Trade

The political centers of early states seem to have also been major trade centers with wide-ranging contacts in various directions within the region and with merchants coming to the area across the international water bodies. A network of roads connected the centers with the coast and various dependencies in the interior. Local and international merchants frequented these roads. The



regular flow of trade was vital to the states as they obtained considerable income from it. Hence, one of their major concerns was to protect the trade routes and make them safe from robbers.

3.5. Socio-cultural Achievements

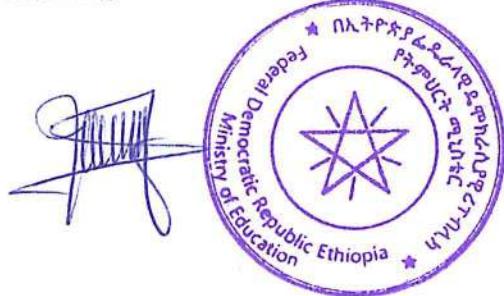
Architecture

As the states expanded, architecture also began to flourish, and one of the unique architectural technologies was the carving of stelae (singular stela/stele). There were a total of 58 stelae in and around Aksum that can be grouped into well-made, half-completed and megaliths (not hewn). According to traditions, the stelae were engraved at Gobodara, from where they were transported and planted in Aksum and its environs in the third century AD. The longest of the stelae, which now lies broken on the ground, measures 33m tall (the first in the world). It is highly decorated on all of its four sides and represents a 14 storied building with many windows and a false door at the bottom, and bears pre-Christian symbols (disc and crescent/half-moon) at the top. Scholars suggest that it was broken while people were trying to erect it. The second stele measures 24m tall, and represents a ten-storied building with many windows and a false door at the bottom. It was taken to Rome in 1937 by the invading Italians and was restored only in 2005. The third measures 21 meters, and represents a nine-storied building with many windows and a false door at the bottom that is smooth at its backside and with no decoration.

Picture 2: The third tallest Aksumite Stele



Source: <http://whc.unesco.org>.

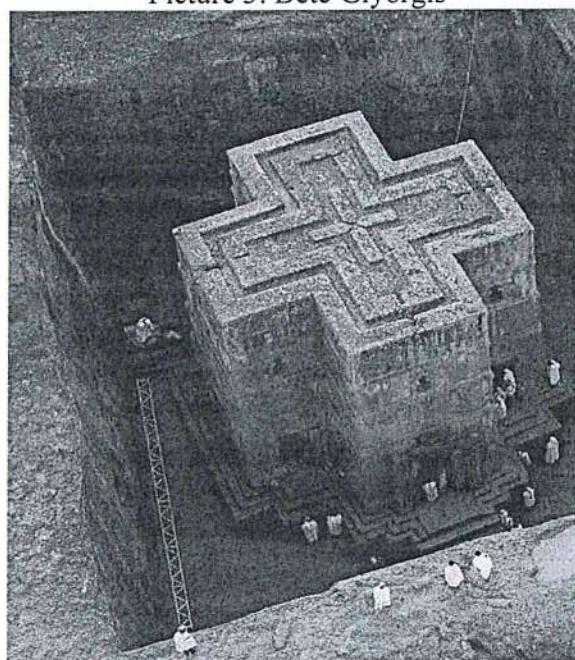


Zagwe architecture used softer material like sandstone, which was cut and shaped all round, except the floor, in various delicately decorated churches. These were of three types:

1. **Cave:** with some decoration inside, almost similar to a natural cave, e.g. Bete Meskel.
2. **Semi-hewn:** with detailed interior decoration and partial exterior decoration. Their roofs or walls are still attached to the surrounding rock, eg. Bete Denagil, Bete Debresina (Mikael), Bete Golgota, Bete Merqoriwos, Bete Gabri'el-Rufa'el, and Bete Abba Libanos.
3. **Monolithic:** detailed interior and exterior decoration being completely carved out from surrounding rock, e.g. Bete Amanuel, Bete Giyorgis, Bete Mariyam and Bete Medhanealem.

The Zagwe churches were registered by UNESCO as part of world cultural heritage in 1978, two years before that of the Aksumite monuments. Among these churches, Bete Medhanealem is the largest and Bete Giyorgis the most finely built in the shape of the cross.

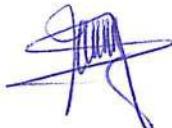
Picture 3: Bete Giyorgis



Source: <https://hasanjasim.online>.

Writing System

The Sabean language had an alphabet written from left to right and right to left alternatively. The earliest Sabean inscriptions in Eritrea and Ethiopia date to the ninth century BC. The early Sabean inscriptions had no vowels as most of the words were written in consonants. For instance, Da'amat was described as D'mt, while its successive kings were written as RDM, RBH and LMN with their title as mlkn. However, variants of the script arose, evolving into Ge'ez

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "S. M. J. S." followed by a stylized surname.

script (an alpha syllabary) direction after the seventh and sixth centuries BC. “Ge’ez alphabet”, an *abjad* (26 consonant letters only) written left-to-right with letters identical to the first-order forms of vocalized alphabet arose by the first century AD. Vocalized letters in Wazeba’s coin had existed 30 or so years before the first completely vocalized Ezana’s trilingual (Greek, Sabean and Ge’ez) inscriptions of c. 330 AD. The process was developed under the influence of Christian scripture by adding vocalic diacritics for vowels (u, i, a, e, ə, o) to consonants in a decipherable but slightly irregular way so that it is laid out as a syllabary. This indigenous writing system has made an immense contribution to the development of literature and art.

Calendar

People needed to know and remember the times when the rains would begin and end as well as the rise and fall of the water level. The responsibility of understanding these vital climatic cycles required expertise. In due course, calendars were invented, developed and adopted among various peoples of the Horn; in most cases, the length of the month was based on the movement of the moon or the apparent movement of the sun.

Oromo calendar has been based on astronomical observations of the moon in conjunction with seven specific stars called *Urjii Dhahaa* (guiding stars consisting of Lemi, Busan, Algajima, Bakkalcha, Arba Gaddu, Walla and Besa). There are 29.5 dates in a month and 354 days in 12 months of a year. It has been suggested that pillars (dated 300BC) that were discovered in northwestern Kenya from 1978-86 by Archaeologists Lynch, Robbins and Doyl represent sites used to develop the Oromo calendar. In connection with this, an Oromo named Waqlim is said to have taken the art of shaping phallic bowls to Zimbabwe c. 900AD.

The Sidama calendar rotates following the movements of stars with 13 months a year, 12 of which are divided equally into 28 days while the thirteenth month has 29 days. The Sidama week has 4 days (*Dikko, Dela, Qawado* and *Qawalanka*) and each month has 7 weeks. The nominated *Mote* (King) is presented to the public at *Fiche Chambalala*, the New Year ritual, and the ceremony is known as *qetela* or popular demonstration.

The Ethiopian solar calendar has 12 months of 30 days plus 5 or 6 (the latter occurring every 4 years) epagomenal days. This thirteenth month is known as Pagume. A gap of 7–8 years between the Ethiopic and Gregorian calendars results from alternative calculation in determining the date



of Annunciation. Accordingly, the first day of the year, 1 *Meskerem* (*Enkutatash*) is usually on September 11 (Gregorian), or on September 12 in years before the Gregorian leap year.

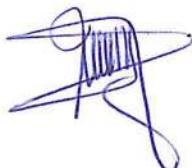
The Muslim (Islamic) calendar is a lunar calendar consisting of 12 months in a year of 354 or 355 days. It starts counting from the *Hijra* year of 622 AD, when Prophet Muhammad and his followers fled from Makkah to Medina. Dates in this era are hence denoted AH (After *Hijra*, “in the year of the *Hijra*”). The years before the *Hijra* are reckoned as BH (“Before the *Hijra*”).

Numerals

Ge'ez numerals comparable to those of the Hebrew, Arabic and Greek appeared at the beginning of fourth century AD. However, they lack characters for 100 multiples. Numbers are over- and underlined in typesetting to create single bar that some less sophisticated fonts cannot render.

Learning Activities

- Undertake research on ancient states addressing the questions: what, where, when, why, how and by whom.
- Explain role of agriculture and trade in the formation and consolidation of ancient states.
- Assess importance of Christianity and Islam in the cultural life of ancient states.
- Discuss the various hypotheses on the location of Punt.
- What did the states of Punt and Aksum have in common?
- Explicate the origin, growth, and outstanding cultural achievements of Aksumite state.
- Elucidate internal and external factors for the decline and fall of the Aksumite kingdom.
- What were the major reasons that led King Lalibela to construct rock-hewn churches?
- What is the significance of the legend of Queen of Sheba in Ethiopian politics?
- What factors brought the Zagwe dynasty to an end?
- Explain the role of trade and trade routes in the interactions between peoples and states.
- Sketch the major trade routes that linked northern and southern Ethiopia and the Horn with the outside world.
- Clarify how Ethiopian societies were influenced by contact with the outside world while concurrently influencing external societies with whom they had contacts.



UNIT FOUR

POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY FROM THE LATE THIRTEENTH TO THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURIES (4 HOURS)

4.1. The “Restoration” of the “Solomonid”¹ Dynasty

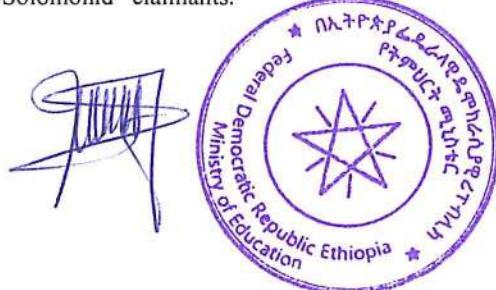
The Zagwe dynasty was overthrown in 1270 by a powerful force that combined military, economic, and ideological resources. Yekunno-Amlak, a contender from Amhara, about whose origin and early career very little is known, launched a series of military campaigns from Lasta to Gayint, ultimately defeating Yetbarek, the last Zagwe king. Relatively quiet politically and militarily, the Zagwe rulers were unable to resist, much less control, Yekunno-Amlak’s military power base in Shewa, which had grown rich by diverting trade away from traditional routes through Lasta.

In the dominant ideological narrative of the “Solomonids”, the Zagwe dynasty was cast as the “usurper” of the royal throne of the ancient kingdom of Aksum, despite its promotion of Christianity and adherence to Aksumite secular culture. The *Kibre Negest* (“The Glory of the Kings”), the foundational myth of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, claims that Ethiopian rulers have descended from the ancient rulers of Aksum and beyond that from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. This has been constantly evoked to delegitimize the Zagwe and legitimize the “Solomonid” dynasty. Taking the reign of Yekunno-Amlak (r. 1270-85) as the starting point of the “restoration” of the ancient “Solomonid” dynasty of Aksum, the legend essentially binds Ethiopia with the Judeo-Christian tradition.

4.2. Internal Political Conflict

The formative years of the “Solomonids” were characterized by two vexing challenges: establishing a consistent modality of succession to the throne and formulating an effective policy for regulating Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia. As the emperors practiced polygamy and arranged political marriages between their offspring(s) and those of the tributary kings and provincial nobilities, intrigues were rife even before the demise of a reigning

¹The term “Solomonid” is enclosed in quotation marks to signify that the rulers who purportedly trace their lineage back to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba lack historical evidence to support their claims. The same also applies to "restoration" of the dynasty, and the accusation levelled against the Zagwe dynasty as "usurper". These terms are loaded with the ideological narrative of the “Solomonid” claimants.



monarch. For instance, such crises of succession erupted following the death of Yekunno-Amlak (1285) and his son and successor, Yegba-Tsion (r. 1285-94).

To prevent a similar future power struggle between potential heirs, a "royal prison" was established at Amba Gishen, in Wollo, commissioned by Widim-Ra'ad (r. 1299-1314). The fortress served the intended purpose from the thirteenth century until it fell to *Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi*'s army in 1540. This flat-topped mountain fortress, with its steep sides, accessible only through a heavily guarded entrance, became the residence of the sons of monarchs, their immediate predecessors, and other princes, providing them with all kinds of amenities befitting their royal status. According to a fifteenth century manuscript, by the middle of the same century, 590 descendants of sovereigns were sequestered at Amba Gishen.

4.3. Power Consolidation and Spatial Extension

When Yekunno-Amlak ascended the throne in 1270, the Christian kingdom had already expanded its territory to a large portion of present-day Eritrea, northern, northwestern and central Ethiopia. However, it had no control east of the Shewan plateau, a territory increasingly occupied by such Muslim states as Ifat and Hadiya. Moreover, there were other political entities of various sizes, including the kingdom of the Ethiopian Jews, the kingdom of Gojjam, the kingdom of Damot, and Muslim principalities along the coast from the Dahlak archipelago in the Red Sea to the Somali settlement of Brava on the coast of the Indian Ocean.

Upon becoming king, Amde-Tsion (r. 1314-44) embarked on two major projects: solidifying the power of the "Solomonid" dynasty in the Christian provinces, and enlarging the kingdom by conquering other political units. His efforts to consolidate power were resisted by governors seeking to strengthen their own positions at the expense of the central authority. Amde-Tsion dealt with the pressing internal problem by successfully suppressing politically motivated revolts, particularly in the northern region of Enderta. In the immediate aftermath of the suppression of the revolts, he reorganized the rebellious provinces into smaller, more easily governable units led by trusted governors, backed and controlled by strategically placed imperial garrisons.

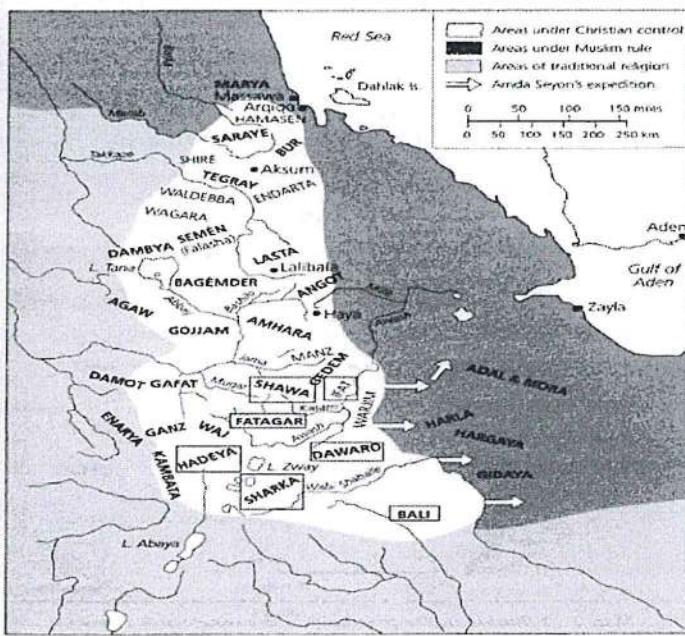
Under Amde-Tsion, the Christian kingdom saw rapid expansion, with no parallel in medieval Ethiopian history. The emperor marched south and successfully conquered the vast kingdoms of



Damot and Hadiya, the strongest polities west and south of the Awash River, respectively, in 1316-17. His kingdom's sphere of influence stretched to the region encompassing the basins of the Gibe, Gojeb and Omo rivers. Subsequently, Gojjam and the northern area of Lake Tana were also annexed around this time. Thus strengthened, Amde-Tsion was able to assert his authority over a chain of Muslim communities stretching from the Gulf of Aden to the Awash valley - Ifat, Dawaro, Sharkha, and Bali. In reducing the powerful Muslim principalities into tribute-paying vassalage and strengthening the Christian military positions on all fronts, Amde-Tsion's achievement was immense. The Arab historian Ibn Fadil al Umari described him as having "ninety-nine kings under him, and that he makes up the hundredth." Amde-Tsion is rightly credited for shaping and solidifying the medieval Christian kingdom of Ethiopia.

That said, it is important to bear in mind that the emperor's expansionist campaigns were primarily motivated by the ambition to seize new lands and gain control over the lucrative trade routes dominated by Ethiopian Muslims. In short, the "Solomonids" had set their eyes on "terrain and trade." Yet, the kingdom's rapid expansion to the trade hubs of the southern and western regions entailed the subjugation of the indigenous peoples on the one hand and the admixture of linguistic, religious and cultural features on the other.

Map 3: The Ethiopian Christian Kingdom during the Reign of Emperor Amde-Tsion



Source: Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 133.

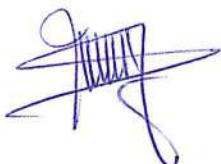
4.4. Administration and Military Organization of the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom

4.4.1. Administration

Amde-Tsion's vast kingdom, with few additions by his descendants, was not a unified state. It was a loose confederation of numerous principalities with diverse religious, ethnic, and linguistic traits. Despite the constant use of military campaigns, the monarchs attempted to form a functional government and administrative machinery to render the kingdom more cohesive.

The hybrid administrative system served as the basic organization of the kingdom. It consisted of three concentric circles around a core. The innermost circle constituted the core provinces directly controlled by the emperor and administered by his representatives. It was in these provinces that centralized administration appeared stronger. The second circle, the largest part, included territories whose rulers, upon submission to the king, payment of tribute and fulfilment of obligations, could retain their autonomy and hereditary positions. The core army which the Christian emperors maintained as a symbol and mainstay of their authority ensured the continued loyalty of these territories. As such, they were heavily garrisoned by the *chewa*, as this military regiment was known. The third circle consisted of territories that lay beyond the direct control of the king although considered an integral part of the kingdom's political realm. In these outlying areas, the authority of the monarchs was more symbolic than real, with local rulers recognized as autonomous actors, and it hinged on the monarch's ability to compel their designated governors into submission. Yet, the local rulers were expected to acknowledge the suzerainty of and pay tribute to the king. Failure to do so often resulted in raids and devastation.

Despite the appointment of numerous titled officials at both the royal court and local levels, a centralized system of administration was never fully achieved. As the kingdom expanded, governing the realm through the traditional military administration became increasingly difficult. The daily lives of people in different regions were highly localized. Emperor Zara-Yaqob (r. 1434-1468) was particularly determined to establish a centralized administrative system by strengthening the central authority, creating a body of state officials, reorganizing court officials, bolstering the army, and increasing control over revenue sources. He also sought the active involvement of the church hierarchy and monastic orders in implementing his reforms. However, unlike his predecessors' cautious approach, Zara-Yaqob's radical approach ultimately backfired, as it united rival factions and power holders against his reforms.

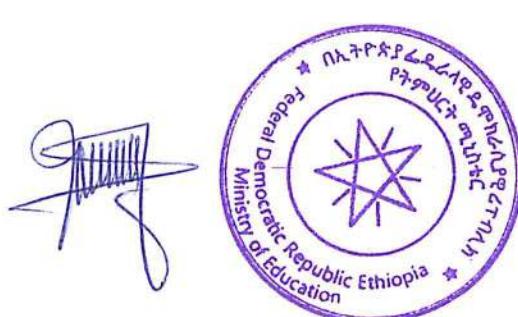


4.4.2. Military Organization

For much of the medieval period, the kingdom's army consisted of four types of regiments: 1) regular troops of the Emperor; 2) regular troops of individual military leaders; 3) specially mobilized territorial troops, and 4) irregular troops. The spearhead of the traditional military units were regiments called *chewa*. The word *chewa* has had a complex history, for its earliest meaning was a military regiment. Other terms used to describe units or armies included *serawit*, *hara* ('army'), and *chefra* ('body of troops'). These regiments were organized on the basis of region of origin and identity, and relied on provisions supplied by the peasantry.

A network of *chewa* regiments formed the core of the state's army from the late fourteenth century to the early sixteenth century. The rapid expansion of territories allowed Amde-Tsion and his successors to create new *chewa* regiments from the conquered peoples, who were known for their martial abilities. These military units had diverse religious and ethnic composition. Emperor Yekunno-Amlak frequently participated in fierce battles, with his front line commanders often chosen from trusted friends and relatives. These officers held titles such as *azmach*, *dejjazmach*, *ras*, *fitawrari*, *balambaras*, *azazh* and *basha*. The number of soldiers under the command of each type of officer varied, with a *ras* typically commanding larger armies (up to 40,000), *dejjazmach* or *fitawrari* commanding mid-sized corps (up to 10,000 men), and other officers commanding smaller groups of men (2,000 to 5,000).

During Amde-Tsion's reign, a significant reorganization and enhancement of the royal army occurred with the introduction of new units. The chronicle of Amde-Tsion documents three distinct types of units. The first unit consisted of territorial forces named after the provinces from which they were recruited, such as Amhara, Shewa, Gojjam, Damot, Hadiya, Seqelt, Gondar, Harb Gwanda (likely Gafat), and Nara. The second unit consisted of elite contingents with prestigious names signifying their military prowess, such as *Tekula* ('Jackal'), *Qeste neheb* ('arrow of a bee'), and *Korem* ('cavalry'). The third group was identified by the weapons or equipment that the soldiers wielded. *Tsewareyane warmat* ('carriers of spear(s)'), the *Tsewareyane warmat abbiyan* ('carriers of large spears'), and the *Tsewareyane asayeft* ('carriers of swords'), among others, were some of the units in this category.



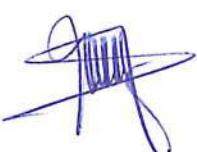
Regiments and units in the armies of later emperors followed similar patterns. Zara-Yaqob, in particular, reorganized the *chewa* regiment by keeping them in the royal camp as a mobile striking force and strengthening his bodyguards. He also attempted to introduce new technologies and methods of warfare into his army from Mamluk Egypt and Christian Europe. Shihab al-Din describes the army of Emperor Lebne-Dengel (r. 1508-1540) “as numerous as locusts”, with approximately 16,000 cavalry and 200, 000 infantry at one point around 1529.

4.4.3. Temporal Administrative and Military Decline

The traditional dominance of the Christian kingdom in Ethiopia's balance of power began to wane in the last three decades of the fifteenth century. One significant factor for this decline was internal political rift, which began at the end of Zara-Yaqob's reign. Law and order reached a low point, the power of the monarchy weakened, and the economy suffered. Lords who resented centralized power often defected to the Muslim forces. By the early sixteenth century, the kingdom was once again divided amid internal rivalry, followed by large scale violent conflict. The second factor was the failure of national integration. The extensive conquests of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought into the orbit of the Christian kingdom diverse communities. However, cultural assimilation and political integration could not be fully realized. Emperor Zara-Yaqob made serious attempts to forge a unified nation from various communities. However, in his efforts to achieve unity, he attempted to superimpose religious nationalism on his subjects, ultimately resulting in substantial failure. Worse yet, his successors proved to be powerless to remedy the situation. Thus, dynastic instability followed, worsened by the short reigns of youthful and inexperienced monarchs, and ambitious royal councillors. As can be anticipated, the weakening of the central power reduced the revenue flow as more of it was retained by local authorities due to the withdrawal or weakening of imperial garrisons.

4.5. Economic Bases of the Kingdom

The economic power of the kingdom was primarily derived from control over land, labour, and trade routes. Possessing land and the revenue it generated enhanced the ability to maintain larger military forces. The conquests not only expanded the court and the army, but also enriched the monarchs themselves. Land was the cornerstone of the country's economy, supporting farming, animal husbandry, and mining of minerals such as copper, iron, gold, and silver. The numerous land grants associated with the “Solomonids” suggest that a significant



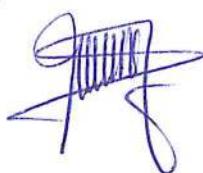
source of their power stemmed from the allocation of fiefs to their extensive followers in exchange for primarily military services. Moreover, a significant portion of the wealth came from tributes imposed on dependent peripheries. Failure to pay tribute was viewed as a serious act of treason and subjected to punishment: disgrace, arrest, or execution of the responsible vassals.

After conquering the Muslim territories along the eastern frontiers, the monarchs could tap into a profitable source of wealth through their control over trading activities. They capitalized on these activities to generate revenue by levying import and export taxes on all traded goods and organizing well-equipped caravans led by their own appointed commercial representatives.

4.6. Cooperation, Competition and Conflict between Christian and Muslim Rival Powers

By the end of the thirteenth century, the flourishing trade had given rise to powerful Muslim communities that formed well-organized principalities and states. Among the most significant were Shewa, Ifat, Fatagar, Dawaro, Hadiya, Bale, and Adal. In this regard, it is important to note the distinction between the sultanates of Adal and Ifat, which are often mistakenly conflated. Adal was a small state believed to have been situated south of Ifat, possibly in the direction of the Harar Plateau. It was conquered by the Walasma ruler of Ifat in 1288, following his triumph over the Makhzumite dynasty of Shewa, and other Muslim principalities. In the years following 1288, Adal apparently regained its sovereignty. This is because during Amde-Tsion's conflicts with the Muslims, Adal operated independently from Ifat. It eventually formed an alliance with the Walasma ruler Jamaladdin, rather than being a vassal. However, this coalition was defeated by Amde-Tsion.

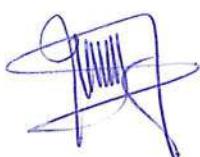
Soon afterwards, however, Adal became subordinate to Ifat. This arrangement apparently persisted until 1415. In this year, Zeila was captured by King Yishaq, and the Walasma *sultan* Sadaddin Abu l-Barakat Muhammad b. Ahmad was killed. The members of the Walasma family were forced to flee to Yemen but later returned. From then on, they no longer held the title "sultan of Ifat" but "sultan of Adal." It appears that their homeland Ifat was vulnerable to Christian attacks, forcing them to relocate the centre of their state farther south. Their capital shifted to Dakar, east of Harar. Adal was no longer part of Ifat; rather, Ifat was part of Adal. Adal inherited the political mantel and aspirations of Ifat, and solidified its authority using its new centre as a base to launch military campaigns against the Christian Kingdom.



One of the most challenging tasks for the Christian Kingdom was to establish amicable relations with the influential Muslim Sultanates. In the absence of effective policy, the interactions between the Christian Kingdom and the Muslim principalities swung between peace and hostility. To the extent possible, peaceful cooperation was achieved through the implementation of a tributary system. Many Muslim principalities continued to be governed by their hereditary rulers as long as they acknowledged the suzerainty of the Christian monarch, paid tribute, and guaranteed the safe passage of traders to the coast. This peaceful approach benefited both parties, as each desired security on the trade routes that crisscrossed their respective territories.

The desire for economic and political hegemony lay behind the causes of the hostility that for the most part characterized the relationship between the two rival Christian and Muslim power centres. Refusal to pay tribute and the prevention of free passage of messengers and agents were factors precipitating several armed confrontations, all stemming ultimately from the desire for economic and political hegemony. For instance, determined to expand the power of the “Solomonid” dynasty, Yekunno-Amlak reduced Ifat to a tributary status. Amde-Tsion's punitive campaigns against Ifat, and later against Hadiya, Fatagar, and Dawaro, were provoked by the attack of Ifat's ruler Haqaddin I on the Christian Kingdom in 1328, as well as the arrest of a Christian servant of the emperor en route to the coast. He also ahead crushed the planned attacks of Ifat's Sultan Sabreddin, Dawaro's ruler Haydara and Hadya's king Amano in 1332.

Neway Maryam (r. 1371-80) launched a campaign against Adal after Haqaddin II (1363-86) refused to pay tribute. The confrontations of Dawit II (r. 1379-1412), Tewodros I (r. 1412-1413) and Yeshaq (r. 1413-1430) with successive leaders of Adal were driven by both parties' desire to assert dominance. The well-documented battle of Yeguba in 1445 was triggered by the refusal of the Adal king Ahmed Badlay to send tribute to Emperor Zara-Yaqob. Peaceful relations resumed when Mohammed Ahmed (r. 1445-71), the son and successor of Ahmed Badlay, sent the required tribute to Emperor Ba'ede Mariam (r.1468-78). Emir Mahfuz's advance against Emperor Lebne-Dengel ended in failure and resulted in his death in July 1517. These military campaigns were aimed at ending the economic hegemony of the Christian kingdom and establishing his own hegemony over the Christian Kingdom.



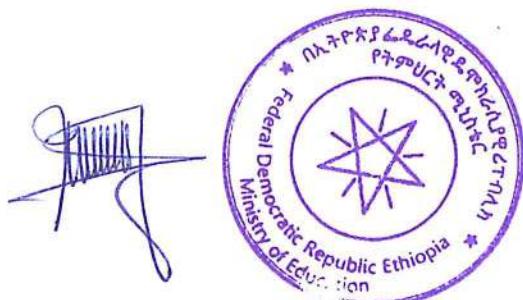
The religious difference between Christian emperors and Muslim rulers was not the primary cause of the conflicts. However, both rulers fortified their campaigns with religious motivations, as this allowed them to effectively mobilize their troops with crusading or jihadist fervour. Thus, the conflicts should not be viewed solely through ethno-religious lenses, but rather as a complex interplay of varying economic and political aspirations.

4.7. Interaction and Integration of Peoples and Cultures

In the evolution of a multi-ethnic society, three key patterns underpin the Ethiopian collective experience. These are the continuous interaction between diverse peoples, the formation of shared cultural characteristics across Ethiopia, and a distinct mode of absorbing periodic influx of new peoples and cultures. The successive conquests of the Christian Kingdom brought into the fold a diverse array of peoples with varying identities. Of necessity, these peoples continuously interacted with one another, resulting in the process a shared sense of belongingness. The intricate web of interactions among the diverse peoples of Ethiopia laid the condition for the possibility of conceiving a composite version of Ethiopian history, one that avoids the pitfall of mechanical aggregation. This, as the record shows, came in the backdrop of the following historical factors.

4.7.1. Expansion of the Christian Kingdom

The expansion of the Christian Kingdom in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries promoted the integration of Ethiopia in two respects. First, it broadened the support base for the kingdom by attracting more people in the highland plateau who needed little prompting to identify with the Christian Kingdom and its Christian religion. Second, the expansion enthralled the outlying kingdoms and peoples with the grandeur of the imperial center and the power of its religion. They even began to associate themselves with the legend of the Queen of Sheba. For example, the kings of Kafa and Kambata claimed descent from Solomon and Sheba. The Sidama have a legend that describes Emperor Zara-Yaqob's reign as their own golden age, while the Dizi and others in the Maji area remember the emperor as Seraqo. A more telling indication of the influence of the Christian Kingdom's ruling "Solomonid" dynasty is the use of Amharic terminologies in the political vocabulary of the Omotic kingdoms, such as *yegebir adarash* (royal hall), *amakari* (councilor), *awaj* (proclamation), *gebir* (tribute), *negarit* (royal drum), and *debab* (royal umbrella).



4.7.2. Population Movement, Interaction, and Integration

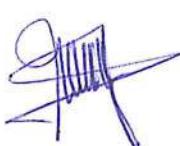
As the Christian Kingdom expanded, various populations also moved into the kingdom through both small and large-scale movements. A good number of Ethiopian people have travelled over time in search of new lands or on raiding expeditions, or to escape famine, or to conduct trade or in pursuit of religious studies and on pilgrimages. These frequent travels have helped to forge intimate relationship between otherwise distinct ethnic groups of Ethiopia.

The Amaro, Konta, and other ethnic groups have credible traditions regarding the immigration of the Amhara from the north several centuries ago. Conversely, the Wolayta trace one of their prominent dynasties, called Tigre, to Tigrean immigrants. Likewise the kingdom of Dawuro is believed to have been established by refugees from Dawaro in the sixteenth century. During this period, groups of Gurage were even found as far north as Gondar. The Kafa minstrels have rich stories that tell of their origin from northern Agew immigrants who intermarried with and passed down their art to some noble Kafa clans. The Muslims of Shewa and the Gurage claim to have hailed from a locality in Tigray. What can be said with certainty is that Christians migrated from Tigray in the north to the Amhara province and eventually farther south to Shewa.

4.7.3. Roving Court

Adafa, the seat of the Zagwe rulers, served as the last permanent capital of the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom until the establishment of Debre Birhan for a brief period in the 1450s. While Aksum retained its status as a spiritual capital, Yekunno-Amlak and his successors governed their vast territories from mobile royal camps in regions such as Ifat, Amhara, Shewa, Dawaro, and Fatagar. This mobility allowed them to assert their authority, dispense justice, quell uprisings, deter raids from lowland pastoralists, and avoid resource diversion.

Despite its mobility, the royal court played a crucial role as an integrative force. It remained the central hub of political and economic activity for all subjects, acting as a melting pot for the bearers of diverse customs and languages. The royal encampment also served as trading centre where Christian and Muslim artisans, vendors and merchants met to exchange goods and services. This regular traffic between the court and country no doubt fostered cultural exchange between large numbers of Ethiopians, contributing to the relative cohesion of the kingdom.



4.7.4. Establishment of Military Garrisons

The military regiments of the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom also played a crucial role in both political and cultural integration. Military garrisons of *chewa* regiments were established in newly conquered territories. The regiments became less mobile, forming strong connections with the inhabitants of the territories they were stationed in, which in due course evolved into a territorial army over time. The soldiers of the *chewa* regiments gradually melded with the local population through marriage and other social ties. Their ambitious commanders were also married to the local nobility and began to identify with elites of the host community. This integration allowed the soldiers to promote Christianity, languages, class manners, and the land tenure system to the regions they were stationed in. Even if lopsided, this cultural integration served the kingdom's expansion further and influenced new territories.

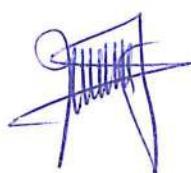
4.7.5. Warfare

Throughout history, various Ethiopian social groups have engaged in conflicts for a multitude of reasons, such as acquiring cattle, slaves, territory, control over trade routes, fulfilling ritual obligations or display of masculinity. These conflicts facilitated interactions among different groups. The resulting displacement and resettlement also fostered new forms of encounters.

4.7.6. Market Centres as Cultural Melting Pots

Due to the limited resources available in Ethiopia's diverse ecological regions, the necessity of meeting consumption needs prevented any of the distinct peoples from remaining isolated for extended periods. Markets have served as a platform for interethnic interactions. Local and regional markets facilitated direct contact between different groups, and indirectly through caravan trades. Local markets, which typically convened weekly, attracted numerous traders and buyers from distant locations and diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Most Ethiopians are not confined to a single market but are rather familiar with markets networks in their area that meet on different days of the week.

In addition to meeting local demands, goods from local markets are transported by traders to larger and distant regional centers. Regional markets draw people and products from more diverse locations and greater distances. Historical marketplaces such as Dabarwa in Eritrea, Manadalay in southern Tigray, Qorqora/Qoreta (around Waldiya) and Wasel near Ware-Illu had played an important integrative role. The ruins surrounding Jigjiga, Harar and Charchar attest to



market towns that had once thrived along the main trade routes. Weez-Gebeya in western Shewa, Suq-Wayzaro in Damot, and Suq-Ameja and Gandabalo in Ifat-Awsa in eastern Shewa were famed hubs for commercial and cultural exchange. Gandabalo, in particular, stands out as a site of convivial interaction between Muslim and Christian communities.

4.7.7. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Monastic Networks Fostered Integration

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has historically been a force of integration particularly on the religious and cultural planes. It played a crucial role in uniting diverse groups whose heterogeneity was quite marked, particularly in the wake of the territorial expansions of the kingdom. The church wove a fabric of unity and identity where the administrative and military organization of the kingdom had little success.

Two factors which prompted this role were the internal revival within the church and the emergence of monastic networks. The church's missionary work closely followed the kingdom's expansion in the fourteenth century, with support from the kingdom in the form of land grants to aid in the evangelization of non-Christian populations in newly conquered regions. The revival of the church also led to the rise of monastic activities, particularly in Amhara and Shewa, by monastic figures like Iyesus Mo'a of Debre Hayq and Tekle-Haymanot (1215-1313) of Debre Asbo (renamed in the fifteenth century as Debre Libanos). Monasteries became the epicenters of the dissemination of Christianity, with organized missionary activities dating back to the thirteenth century. Later, monastic fathers and their disciples went to the Ethiopian interior with little more than a cross.

Christianity was evangelized without completely eradicating traditional beliefs and practices. Nevertheless, Emperor Zara-Yaqob's church reforms, which aimed to maintain the "purity" of Christianity, were the last serious blow to this practice of syncretism. His reforms had grave consequences for people suspected of magical practices and monastic communities accused of alleged heresies. While the Ewostatean monastic movement, active since the fourteenth century and centered on the issue of the observance of the Sabbath, was peacefully resolved, others, like the Stephanites, who refused to bow before religious icons, faced gruesome persecution. Despite his zealous efforts to draw a clear line between Christian and indigenous practices, Zara-Yaqob had little success in eradicating non-Christian practices within the Christian faith.



As a result, Christianity continued to intertwine with traditional beliefs, giving rise to a syncretism that persists to this day. The cultural repertoire of monastic missionaries laid the groundwork for the Judeo-Christian tradition in Ethiopia. To the Christian faithful, Christianity offered a sense of belonging to a new worldview, and a way of life. The faith drew converts from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, manifested by the numerous monasteries and parishes that dotted the kingdom from north to south, and east to west.

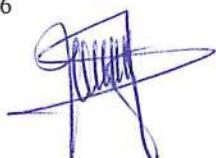
4.7.8. Islam Promoted Integration, Unity and Collective Identity

Islam has played a crucial role in Ethiopia in uniting diverse groups who had either abandoned their indigenous beliefs or converted from other faiths to embrace the tenets of the Islamic faith. In the views of most Muslims, Ethiopia enjoys a privileged status as a place of sanctuary for the persecuted companions of the prophet Mohamed. The story of Al-Najāshī in Islamic tradition holds a unique place in Ethiopia's socio-political narrative, serving as a source of collective memory of interfaith harmony.

Thanks to the preaching of itinerant Sufi Sheikhs and scholars, learned men, sometimes of foreign origin (especially Yemenites), and traders, Muslim communities thrived from eastern Ethiopia as far north as Tigray from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries. There was regular contact between the various Muslim communities through trade, education, pilgrimage and movement of peoples.

Basic Islamic cultural institutions in Ethiopia did not take root in the first half of the fourteenth century, but developed in time. Islamic literature in Arabic and local languages flourished in Harar and Wollo. This was greatly facilitated by the mystical orders that inspired the composition of the hagiographies of Sufi masters. *Manzuma* poems in praise of the Prophet and the saints were recited throughout the country. Like Christianity, Islam offered wide room for local customs insofar as they did not contradict the fundamental tenets of the religion.

In a nutshell, the missionary activities of Christians and Muslims intertwined Ethiopia with networks of supra-ethnic alliances. Despite occasional conflicts between the two religious groups, mutual accommodation was common throughout the period in question. Given the syncretic nature of Islam and Christianity in Ethiopia, followers of both faiths have found common ground in shared religious practices.



4.8. External Relations

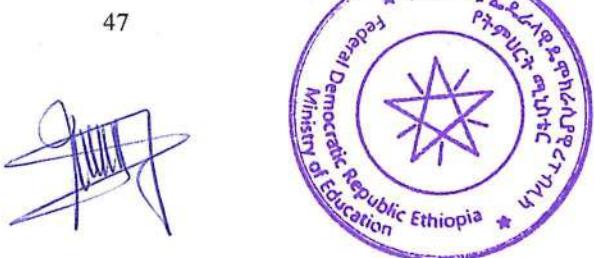
4.8.1. Relations with Egypt

Yekunno-Amlak sent an emissary to Egypt's sultan, Baybars, in 1272 requesting an *abun* from the Coptic Church. Furthermore, both Egypt and Ethiopia continued to act as protectors of religious minorities in their respective domain. Egypt also wanted to ensure the secure flow of the Blue Nile. The Egyptian ruler Mohammed ibn Qala'un persecuted the Copts and destroyed their churches in Cairo in the early fourteenth century. In response, Amde-Tsion demanded the restoration of the churches and warned that failure to do so would result in the diversion of the Nile waters. Patriarch Marqos (1348- 63) sent a message to Sayfa-Arad (r.1344-71), revealing his imprisonment by the then Egyptian Sultan. Sayfa-Arad is said to have mobilized a huge army against Egypt after which the Sultan released the patriarch and sent a delegation to the King. Besides, Patriarch Matewos (1328-1408), delegated by the sultan, established harmonious relations between Dawit II and Egypt. The sultan is said to have sent a piece of the "True Cross" and, in return, Dawit II is said to have given a number of religious paintings to the sultan.

Zara-Yaqob wrote a friendly letter to Sultan Barsbay requesting the protection of Christians in Egypt in 1437/8. Yet, three years later, Patriarch Yohannes XI wrote Zara-Yaqob a letter stating the demolition of the famous church of Debre-Mitmaq. Zara-Yaqob then sent an envoy to Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 1438-53) with a strongly worded letter. In reply to this, Jaqmaq sent an envoy to Ethiopia, with complimentary gifts to the emperor but rejected the reconstruction of the church.

4.8.2. Relations with Christian Europe

Amde-Tsion sent a message to King Phillip of France in 1332. The Ethiopian delegation that carried the letter was in attendance at Gian Galeazzo Visconti's coronation in Milan in 1395. The earliest known message to Ethiopia from a European monarch is the letter of King Henry IV of England dated 1400 AD and addressed to "Prester John." Emperor Dawit II received some craftsmen, mainly Florentines. The emperor sent his first delegation to Europe led by a Florentine man, Antonio Bartoli, in 1402. Three Ethiopians attended an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church held in the diocese of Constance, in present-day Germany from November, 1414 to April 1418, addressing issues such as the schism between the Western and Eastern churches, heresies, ecclesiastical conciliarism and papal supremacy.



Alphonso de Paiva V of Aragon (today's Spain) received a delegation sent to ask for more artisans from Yishaq in the city of Valentia in 1427. The embassy of Charles, the Duke of Berry, consisting of craftsmen (the Neapolitan Pietro, a Spaniard and a Frenchman) reached Yishaq's court. A Silican, Pietro Rombulo, who had been in Ethiopia since the last years of Dawit's reign and who had previously carried out a successful trade mission to India on behalf of the king, was sent to Europe as Zara-Yaqob's ambassador in 1450. Emperor Zara-Yaqob sent an Ethiopian priest, Fikre-Mariam, accompanied by two other individuals, to Alphonso of Aragon (also ruled as king of Naples and Sicily) to get political and technical assistance. Alphonso wrote a letter to Zara-Yaqob and informed him that he sent him artisans and masons he requested.

The most authentic pieces of evidence on Ethio-Europe links are the maps of Egyptus Novelo (c. 1454) and Fra Mauro's Mappomondo (1460) which clearly depicted many places and peoples in the Horn. Venetian Gregorio or Hieronion Bicini visited Ethiopia in 1482. Pedros da Covilhao (Peter de Covilham) arrived at the court of Eskindir (r. 1478-1494) in 1493. Queen Ellen (the daughter of the Hadiya *garad* married to Zara-Yaqob and regent of the under age Lebne-Dengel), anticipating the threat that would come from the Ottomans who showed a clear interest to support the Muslim sultanates, sent an Armenian called Mathew to Portugal around 1512. The Portuguese Embassy led by Rodrigo di Lima, Duwarto Galliba and Francisco Alvarez reached Ethiopia in 1520 and remained for six years. Its aim was to establish a naval port against the Turkish power in Red Sea area, but it was not successful.

Learning Activities

- What were the factors for the “restoration” of the “Solomonid” Dynasty?
- Describe the causes of the internal political conflict in the royal court.
- Discuss the dynamics of consolidation, territorial expansion, and unification.
- List main features of administrative and military organization of the Christian kingdom.
- Describe factors for the temporal decline of the kingdom as of late fifteenth century.
- What were the economic bases of the Christian kingdom?
- Elaborate the cooperation and conflict between Christian and Muslim rival power centers.
- List the major avenues for the interaction and integration of peoples and cultures.
- Discuss the nature of Ethiopia's relations with Egypt and Christian Europe.



UNIT FIVE

POLITICS, ECONOMY, AND SOCIAL PROCESSES FROM THE EARLY SIXTEENTH TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

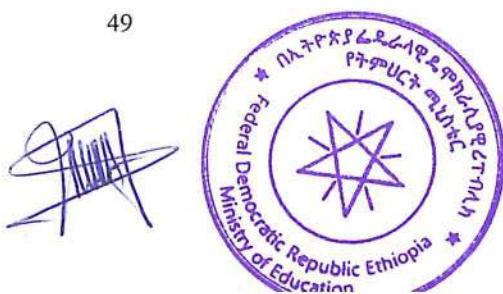
(10 HOURS)

5.1. Conflict between the Christian Kingdom and the Sultanate of Adal, and the Aftermath

The first half of the sixteenth century was arguably the most turbulent period in the history of Ethiopia and the Horn. The principal events which occurred at the time and left lasting imprints in the socio-political map of Ethiopia were the wars between the Christian Kingdom and the Sultanate of Adal, the Oromo population movement and the Jesuit interlude.

The chronic conflicts spanning over two centuries, primarily to control the long distance trade route passing through Zeila and levy tribute, became a war of conquest which attained its climax between 1529 and 1543. The war between the two rivalling powers assumed a new momentum with the emergence of new leadership in the Adal Sultanate under *Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi*, whose origins are obscure. In most Christian sources, he is called “Gragn” (the left-handed). He was probably born in Hubat (between Dire Dawa and Jigjiga) in 1506 and was raised by his devout Muslim kin in one of the oases on the route to Zeila. He began his military career as a soldier in the service of *Garad Abun ibn Adash*. *Garad Abun* competed with Sultan Abu Bakr ibn Mohammed for more power and influence in Adal politics. *Garad Abun* was killed in a fierce battle against Abu Bakr in 1525, after which *Imam Ahmed* assumed the leadership of the opposition against the sultan. Under his command, the opposition's influence expanded, and he formed a formidable army that ultimately overthrew and killed Abu Bakr in 1527.

After the *imam*'s rise to power, the battles were fought not just for control of the long-distance trade route, but also and mainly to solve environmental pressure on the Afar and Somali pastoralists, who were pushing towards Harar and into the riches of the highland Christian Kingdom. Lowland Muslim pastoralists wanted to expand to high plateaus for better and more pastureland because of increased population and overgrazing. This led to the intensification of the longstanding conflict between the Christian Kingdom and Muslim principalities while at the same time resulting in fighting among the pastoralist groups.



A hallmark of *Imam* Ahmed's leadership ability was such that he mobilized the Afar, the Somali, Argobba, Harla, Harari and many others for a common cause. The *imam* had the support of religious leaders in his effort to bring peace among the various fighting groups. He persuaded the groups not to fight amongst themselves but to unite and expand to the Christian Kingdom and resolve their pressing material needs and at the same time gain salvation by fighting non-Muslims. Thus, the war for territorial expansion came to assume a religious character.

After a long and thorough preparation of the army, the *imam* launched his offensive against the frontier defenses of the Christian Kingdom in 1527 and controlled Bali, Dawaro, Fatagar, Sidama, Hadiya, and Kambata. This was partly facilitated by the significant presence there of Muslim communities, who welcomed the Muslim governors appointed by *Imam* Ahmed. Realizing the rising threat, Emperor Lebne-Dengel mobilized a vast force from his domains in 1528 and encamped about fifty kilometers east of what is now Addis Ababa. However, his numerically superior force was dispersed by *Imam* Ahmed's small army at the Battle of Shimbra Kure in 1529, near present-day Mojo. In addition to logistical problems, the leadership of the army of the Christian Kingdom failed to adopt a common strategy to defeat Adal's force. On the other hand, *Imam* Ahmed's highly motivated but small-sized army faced no such logistical challenges. The *imam*'s army had also an excellent leadership characterized by better mobility and flexible tactics with a unified command.

After the victory, *Imam* Ahmed's army pressed on farther north to complete the takeover of the kingdom. Within a span of less than two years, his army successfully gained control over Lasta, Bagemedir, Dembiya, and Tigray. By 1535, Adal had dominion over a significant portion of the Christian territory, including strategic regions. As he penetrated deep into the Christian Kingdom, *Imam* Ahmed established a civil administrative bureaucracy composed of his own men and newly recruited personnel from the Christian territories. Mahfuz's daughter and *Imam* Ahmed's wife, Bati (also known as Batya) Del Wanbara, who had encouraged her husband to wage the war in order to avenge the death of her father, accompanied her husband throughout his expeditions as far north as Tigray.

The military setback forced Lebne-Dengel to retreat, finally dying in 1540 as a fugitive. His son and successor, Gelawdewos (r. 1540-59), continued to face a more intensified war as *Imam* Ahmed had received two hundred Muslim Turkish musketeers and ten cannons in 1541. In the

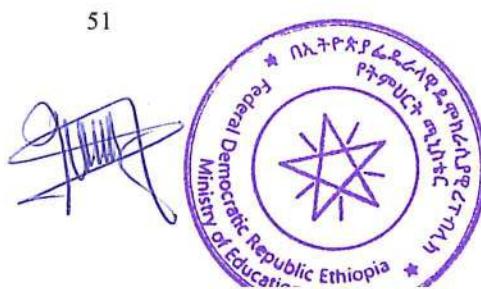


meantime, in response to an earlier request made by Lebne-Dengel to King João III of Portugal in 1535, about four hundred Portuguese soldiers led by Christopher da Gama, the son of Vasco da Gama, and armed with matchlocks arrived in the Christian court in 1541. The Portuguese governor of India who dispatched the army wanted to rescue what Portugal then considered a strategic ally in its war in the Red Sea against the Ottoman Empire. However, the Portuguese were defeated at the battle of Wafla in the present day southern Tigray in August 1542. Christopher was captured and killed—maybe even beheaded—by *Imam Ahmād*. The surviving soldiers finally joined Gelawdewos in Semen in October and continued to fight in his army.

After his victory at Wafla, *Imam Ahmed* was so confident about his army's ability to repulse any future attack by the Christian force that he sent his musketeer allies back home and let his army camp. In February 1543, a battle occurred between his army and that of Emperor Gelawdewos at Zantara (Woyna Dega), east of Lake ተana, in which *Imam Ahmed* was killed. His death marked the end of the Adal conquest and its territorial control of the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom.

Soon after the battle, Emperor Gelawdewos restored the former Christian kingdom's territories in the northern and central plateau in less than two years. Muslim communities in the highlands submitted to him as he was astoundingly tolerant towards them. He attempted to reorganize the *chewa* regiments which he stationed in the frontier regions. Nevertheless, his spirited endeavor to restore the administrative and military stamina of the weakened Christian kingdom met a final blow in 1559. He was killed in a battle and beheaded by *Emir Nur Ibn al-Waazir Mujahid* of Adal, who thus avenged the death of *Imam Ahmed*.

Although the Adal threat, which cannot survive the death of its able leader *Imam Ahmed*, was neutralized, the Christian kingdom was soon challenged by foreign powers in various forms. Emperor Minas (r.1559-63) conducted military campaigns against the Turkish-backed *Bahre Negash* Yishaq, the most powerful regional lord of the time, and reclaimed territories in the coast, including Dabarwa. As Minas died in 1563, the challenge from Yishaq and the Turks was carried over to his successor. Emperor Sartsa-Dengel (r.1563-98), who defeated Turkish forces in 1587/89, neutralized *Bahre negash* Yishaq and won back the territories from the Turks. Although the Turkish threat was overcome militarily, the Portuguese presence brought yet another crisis, what is known as the Jesuit interlude.



The consequences of the conflict for both sides were far-reaching. One of the most obvious was the huge human and material cost. It is also evident that both the Muslim Sultanate and Christian Kingdom were weakened, thereby paving the way for the success of the Oromo population movement. On the positive side, linguistic and religious interactions were accompanied by intermarriages among various cultural groups.

5.2. Foreign Intervention and Religious Controversies

The Portuguese and Ottoman interventions in the affairs of the country reflected their competing political ambitions around the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. However, an actual military alliance between Portugal and the Christian kingdom did not take place since Ethiopia was not a naval power to give meaningful maritime support to Portugal against the Ottoman Turks. After the conflict, the EOC as an ideological arm of the state was weakened and sought revival. At the same time, the monarchy could not count on the traditional political and military apparatus. As a result, the rulers of the Christian Kingdom may have regarded an alliance with Roman Catholicism as a tactic to secure sufficient modern weaponry to restore lost territories.

The attempts to establish diplomatic and military relations between Portugal and the “Kingdom of Prester John,” first under King Manuel I (1495–1521) and later under Joao III (1521–1557), saw several representatives of the Portuguese power visit the Ethiopian royal court. This was followed by the arrival of several Jesuit missionaries in Ethiopia in 1557 to expand Catholicism. The Jesuits taught the Catholic doctrine of two different and therefore separate natures of Christ—divine and human—which was contrary to the *tewahedo* theology of the EOC. The EOC taught that Christ, through union or *tewahedo*, had a perfect human nature inseparable from the divine. The leading members of the mission who played key roles in efforts to evangelize the country included Joao Bermudez, Andreas de Oviedo, Pedro Paez, and Alfonso Mendez.

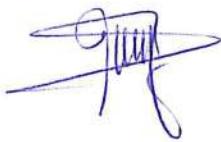
The Jesuits began their evangelical effort with Emperor Gelawdewos hoping that the rest of the society would follow suit. Gelawdewos listened and engaged in doctrinal debates with the missionaries. He defended the teachings of EOC in a document entitled the *Confession of Faith*. The Jesuits were not active in the courts of Minas and Sertse-Dengel, who were not only hostile against their evangelical efforts but also too busy dealing with other internal and external challenges. The Jesuits, under the mission of Pedro Paez, had relative success with Emperor Za-



Dengel (r. 1603–4), who was said to have been sympathetic to Catholicism. However, he was overthrown by Yaeqob (r. 1598–1603; 1604–7).

The role of the Jesuits at the Ethiopian court had a serious impact on the reorganization of the Ethiopian monarchy in the early seventeenth century. Susenyos (r. 1607–32), aiming to consolidate his power, strengthened the military regiments by introducing new Oromo recruits from those Oromo groups who had settled across the core and fertile regions of the kingdom. However, he was challenged by the provincial governors as well as rebellions by the active fighting Oromo, Bete-Israel, and other groups. Thus, to consolidate his power all over the kingdom, he sought for an external alliance, which he got through the diplomatic support of Paez. Susenyos converted to Catholicism in 1612 and announced it to be the state religion in 1622. In the meantime, several anti-Catholic voices emerged following the changes in liturgy and religious practices. Even worse, with the monarch's consent, another Spanish Jesuit, Mendez, ordered reconsécration of the EOC priests and deacons, and rebaptism of the masses. Besides, he called for the suspension of Old Testament customs such as male circumcision and the observance of the *Sabbath*. Additional injunctions included prohibition of preaching in Ge'ez, fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, reverence for Ethiopian saints and the Ark of Covenant. Meanwhile, he ordered eating pork and the adoption of the Latin Mass and the Gregorian calendar. The reforms led to revolts led by the clergy and the nobility. Even loyal followers of the emperor, including his own son Fasiledes (r. 1632–67), opposed the changes.

The Jesuits' success in their mission to convert Ethiopia to Catholicism was short-lived and met with staunch anti-Catholic resistance, leading the country into a state of civil war and the threat of political disintegration. In June 1632, a large number of peasants lost their lives in one day battle alone. Finally, Emperor Susenyos abdicated in favor of his son Fasiledes, who restored the EOC. Fasiledes took serious measures against the Jesuits, most of them being expelled from the country. He also punished local converts, including Susenyos' brother and the most fervent supporter of Catholicism, Se'ela Kristos, and *Azazh Tino*, the Oromo Catholic convert, who was a court intellectual, royal chronicler and councillor of Emperor Susenyos. Fasiledes introduced a "closed-door" policy, which isolated the country from all Europeans for about a century and a half until the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the exception of the visits by a French pharmacist, Charles Jacques Poncet, and a Scottish traveler, James Bruce, in 1700 and 1769,



respectively. Conversely, he concluded an accord in 1647 with the Ottoman pasha at Suakin and Massawa to block Europeans from entering the Horn.

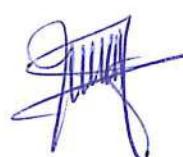
Yet, the Jesuit intervention had lasting ramification as it triggered further doctrinal divisions and controversies within the EOC, which came to be divided into disputant sects and reached its peak during the *Zemene- Mesafint*. The *tewahedo* doctrine teaches *hulet lidet* (two births) of Christ: first in eternity as a Divine Being, the eternal birth, and second born again from St. Mary into the world as a perfect man and perfect divinity united in one nature. It was dominant in Tigray and Lasta. *Qibat* (Unction) initially branched off from the *hulet lidet* doctrine and accepted the eternal birth as the first birth of Christ, but claimed that at his incarnation, when he was born into the world, Holy Spirit anointed him. This sect was dominant in Gojjam. *Sost Lidet* (Three Births) (*Ya Tsega Lij/Son through Grace*) taught that Christ was first born in eternity as divine being, was born again in the womb of St. Mary and anointed by Holy Spirit, when he was born into the world. This sect was dominant in Gonder and Shewa. The doctrinal divisions, which usually took on regional forms, persisted until the Council of Boru Meda (1878), when *tewahedo* was accepted as the official doctrine of the EOC. Over and above their doctrinal significance, these controversies had important political implications as regional rulers endorsed rival doctrines in their bid for dominance.

5.3. Population Movements

Population movements that occurred on varied scales have played important roles in shaping the history of the Horn. People moved from place to place due to pull and push factors, which can be summed up as natural and social causes that could be attributed to the region's enduring socio-political conditions. The medieval population movements had extensive effects including peoples intermingling resulted in change of the original culture and evolution of new identities.

5.3.1. Population Movements of the Argobba, Afar, and Somali

Although pressure on the environment was generally a major factor in population movements, the population movement of the Argobba, Afar and Somali was partly caused by the military conflict between the Christian Kingdom and the Sultanate of Adal in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Their territories lay in the region where the caravan trade routes traversed, and they were affected by and moved back and forth in response to the ongoing conflict.



Argobba: there are two versions on the origin of the Argobba. The first holds that they descended from the followers of the Prophet Muhammad who came and settled in Ifat. The second claims that the Argobba are not Muslim-Arab immigrants as they are one of the ancient peoples that accepted Islam very early from religious leaders that came from Arabia. They were major agents of Islamic expansion and state formation in the Horn. For instance, the Makhzumite and Walasma Dynasties established the Shewan and Ifat sultanates respectively, in which the Argobba were dominant. The Christian-Muslim rivalry led to dispersion of the Argobba that can be observed from their fragmented settlements in various areas.

Afar: The Afar lived predominantly in northeastern Ethiopia and northern Djibouti; but some have inhabited southern Eritrea. The Afar had an indigenous governance system known as *makabanto*, which has some democratic features. The Afar are first mentioned by the Arab geographer Ibn Said (1214-86), who described them as occupying the lowland territory near Bab el-Mandeb. Drought forced the Afar to move eastwards until they reached the middle Awash by the sixteenth century. Even though they were actors in the conflict, the Christian-Muslim conflict forced the Afar to move in different directions. Their pastoral economy helped the Afar survive the destructive effects of the wars of the sixteenth century.

The Afar have many historically famous cities such as Maduna and Abasa. Following the Adal Sultanate's collapse in the sixteenth century, the Afar established sultanates like Awsa, Girmi, Tadjourah, Rahaito and Gobad. The Awsa Sultanate succeeded the earlier Awsa Imamate in the Middle Awash. The latter polity had come into existence in 1577, when Mohammed Jasa moved his capital from Harar to Awsa. Awsa declined and temporarily ended in conjunction with *Imam* Umar Din bin Adam's ascension to the throne in 1672. The Sultanate was subsequently re-established by Kedafo around 1734 and was thereafter ruled by the Mudaito Dynasty that he founded. The primary symbol of the sultan was a silver baton. Awsa's economy mainly depended on the Bati-Ginda'e trade route. Later it became a center of Islamic learning led by preachers like Tola Hanfire.

The Somali: the Somali practiced pastoral economy and led a nomadic life for centuries, possibly in search of sufficient pasture. Historically, a council known as *shir* governed the society. The decision-making process was highly democratic, with all adult males allowed equal



participation. These councils at sub-clan, clan and inter-clan level provided a governing structure that enforced law and administered justice. The council ruled on wide-ranging affairs including resource allocation, marriage, trade and crime. A component of *shir*, the *guurti* (council of elders), was the highest political council mandated with resolving conflict and crisis.

Ibn Said noted that Merca town located on the southern Somali coast near Shabele River was a major urban centre that brought large numbers of Somalis together in the thirteenth century AD. The Somali were a strong force behind the strength of *Imam Ahmed*. Yet, their movement did not last for long as they returned to their home base following the Imam's defeat in 1543.

5.3.2. *Gadaa* System and Oromo Population Movement (1522-1618)

The *Gadaa* System

The *Gadaa* system was an institution, through which the Oromo organized socially, administered their affairs, defended their territories, and managed their economies. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the system was fully functional, which makes it reasonable to think that the Oromo had practiced the *Gadaa* system long before. Recent studies based on the *Gadaa* calendar suggest that the system evolved from the earlier Cushitic age-set social organization. In the system, eight years represented one *Gadaa* period, five *Gadaa* periods or forty years represented one generation, and nine generations represented an era. The earliest eras of *Gadaa*, which still remains obscure, was that of *Bidiri Dhoqqe*. Prior to the institution of the prevailing *Gadaa* Borana-Barentu at Madda Walabu around 1450 AD, the Oromo passed through eras known as Teya, Tesa, Munyo, Suftu, Madille, Abroji, Dhittacha and Warden. *Gadaa* was interrupted and restored during many eras because of various internal and external factors.

The *Gadaa* system constituted elements of democracy such as periodic succession every eight years and power sharing to prevent one-man rule. Other principles of the system included representation of all lineages, clans and confederacies. It also served as a mechanism for socialization, education, the maintenance of peace and order, and social cohesion.

The Oromo were organized into ten age-grades and generation sets defining members' responsibilities. The system provided a framework that institutionalized relationships between seniors and juniors and egalitarian relations among members of a grade. Sons joined the first grade as members of the *Gadaa* class (generation class) forty years after their fathers. A common version of age grades and roles associated with them are indicated as follows:



Table 1: Age-grades and their roles

Gadaa-Grade	Age	Roles
Dabbale	birth-8 years	Socialization and education
Gamme	9-16	
Folle	17-24	training, agriculture etc
Qondala	25-32	military service
Raba-Dori	33-40	candidates for political power
Luba	41-48	leaders of Gadaa government
Yuba I	49-56	senior advisors, educators and ritual leaders
Yuba II	57-64	
Yuba III	65-72	
Yuba IV	73-80	

The *Luba* group assumed power for eight years. The head of the government, *Abba-Gadaa Fite* (literally “father of the period”), was assisted by several elected representatives. These included *Abba Bokku* (father of scepter), *Abba Mati* (in charge of *ada*/culture), *Abba Chaffe* (head of the assembly), *Abba Dula* (war leader), *Abba Sera* (father of law), *Abba Alanga* (judge), *Abba Sa'a* (father of treasury), etc. The *Abba Muda* (senior *Qallu*) played vital roles in power transfer and legitimizing the ruling *Gadaa* class. Women formed sisterhood and solidarity groups and maintained their rights by the *Singe* institution. Women from childhood to old age, i.e. *guduru* (pre-pubescent), *qarre* (adolescent), *kalale* (wives of *Luba* and *Yuba*) and *cifire* (wives of *Gadaamoji*/above 80 years) were believed to have sacred power. They were involved on occasions like *arara* (conflict resolution), *guma* (blood compensation), *rakoo* (marriage commitment), etc.

The Oromo Population Movement (1522-1618)

The factors for the Oromo movement are both natural and man-made. Natural factors include demographic increase and consequent need for extra land to accommodate the growing human and livestock population. In addition, the Christian-Muslim conflict from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries might have pressurized mainly pastoral Oromo groups to leave the lands they had inhabited for other areas. As a result, the Oromo organized under the Borana and Barentu confederacies and began moving northward from their common *Gadaa* center, Madda-Walabu.

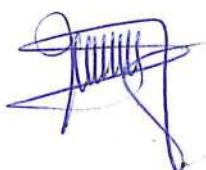
The Oromo movement took place from 1522 to 1618 under twelve successive *Butta* wars of successive *Gogessa/Gadaa* classes. Accordingly, the Melba (1522-30) fought and defeated the Christian regiment Batra Amora led by Fasil and occupied Bale while the Mudena (1530-8)



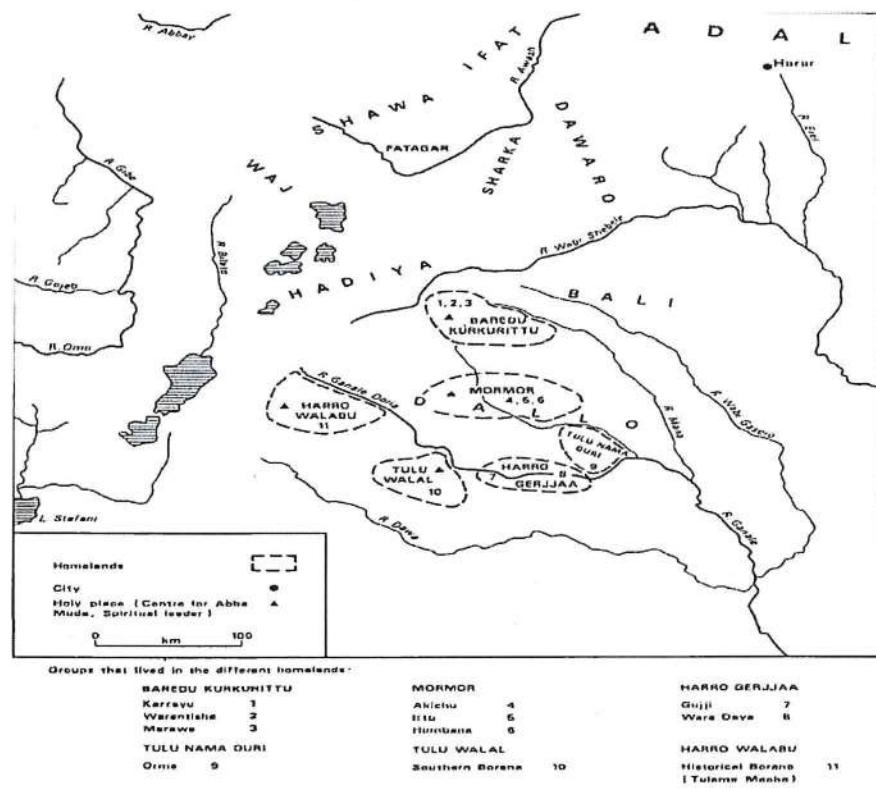
reached the edge of the Awash River. The Kilole (1538-46) controlled Dawaro after defeating the Christian regiment, Adal Mabraq, while Bifole (1546-54) advanced to Waj and Erer. The Michille (1554-62) scored victories over the Christian commander, *Dejazmach* Hamalmal at Dago, and the Jan Amora forces as well as the Adal force led by *Emir* Nur at Mount Hazalo. The Hambisa/Harmufa (1562-70) fought Minas' force at Qacina and Wayyata, occupied Angot, Ganzyi, Sayint etc. Emperor Sartsa- Dengel's cavalry led by *Azazh* Halibo defeated Robale *Gadaa* (1570-78) at Woyna Dega in 1574, but Robale recovered and defeated the force of *Azmach* Zara'a Yohannis, chief of the Christian dignitaries. The Birmaji (1578-86) controlled Ar'ine in Waj, crossed Jama to Weleqa and overwhelmed *Azmach* Deharegot's army. The Mul'ata (1586-94) seized Bizamo, Damot, Gafat, Dambiya, etc.

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

In due course, *Oda* Nabee of Tulama, *Oda* Roba of Sikko-Mando (Arsi), *Oda* Bultum of Itu-Anniyya and Qal'o, *Oda* Bisil of Mecha and *Oda* Bulluq of Jawwi Mecha became major *Gadaa* centers. Other *Gadaa* centers included Gayo of Sabbo-Gona, Me'e Bokko of Guji, *Oda* Dogi of Ilu, *Oda* Hulle of Jimma, *Oda* Gerado/Makodi of Wollo, etc. *Gadaa* leaders such as Dawe Gobbo of Borana, Anna Sorra of Guji, Changare Korbo of Tulama, Makko-Bili of Mecha, Babbo Koyye of Jimma and others laid down cardinal laws in their respective areas.



Map 4: *Gadaa* Centers



Source- Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, p. 15.

5.4. Ethnic and Religious Interaction and Integration

While territorial and religious expansion by the Christian kingdom and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church diffused Christian tradition from north to the south, the wars of *Imam Ahmed* and the population movements of the Argobba, the Afar and the Somali caused the expansion of Islam into the Christian kingdom.

The Oromo population movement brought far-reaching changes to the socio-political map of Ethiopia and the Horn. First, it enabled the Oromo to control large territories in the region. Their advance continued unchecked by the imperial military regiments. Second, it led to the integration of people of diverse backgrounds into Oromo society and the integration of Oromo society into other communities. Within the *Gadaa* system, the Oromo applied two socialization mechanisms: *Guddifacha* and *Moggasa*. *Guddifacha* was the adoption (fostering) of a child, who would enjoy equal privileges with a biological child. Likewise, *Moggasa* was a system of amalgamation of groups into a clan through an oath of allegiance, with all the rights and obligations that such

membership entailed. Third, the interactions resulted in the exchange of institutions. A number of people in the neighborhood of the Oromo adopted the *Gadaa* system and the Oromo language. Similarly, the Oromo adopted the traditions of the people with whom they came into contact. A case in point is the adoption of monarchical systems by the Gibe Oromo states, and the integration of the Oromo into the Christian kingdom's political system, both at the expense of the *Gadaa* system, without abandoning their basic cultural and linguistic markers. It is important to mention the rise of Oromo political elites, warlords, land-owning nobles (Oromo *balabats*) and regional dynasties as a result of integration within the Ethiopian state. These have been outcomes of long processes of integrating the Oromo by the state, effectively implemented since the reign of Sertsa-Dengel. Military service, patrimonial, and political alliances were the three major avenues for Oromo integration into the establishments. The processes continued well into the Gondarine period, the *Zemene- Mesafint*, and the making of modern Ethiopia.

5.5. Peoples and States in Eastern, Central, Southern and Western Parts of the Region

As a prelude to the discussion, it is important to emphasize that it is not possible in the space of a brief teaching module such as this to exhaust all the peoples and states that existed in the region. Therefore, the section explores the history of some of the peoples and states (as illustrations) in the period under consideration. Besides, the discussion of these peoples and states in a separate section does not mean that they had no connection with peoples and polities in northern half of the country. The various peoples and states of the region maintained relations through various avenues of contact such as long-distance trade.

5.5.1 Peoples and States in the East

The Emirate of Harar

During the reign of *Emir* Nur Mujahid, Harar became a walled city. *Emir* Ali ibn Da'ud (r. 1647-62) founded a new dynasty that ruled the Emirate for over two centuries and a half. It was later strengthened by Amirs like Abdul Shakur (1783-94). The Amir's council, *Majlis*, supervised the mosque land called *waqf*, and assisted the Amirs. The Amirs would gradually extend their authority over the surrounding Afar, Argobba, Oromo and Somali through trade, inter-marriage, and Islamic teachings.



5.5.2. Peoples and States in Central and South Central Parts

The Kingdom of Shewa

The kingdom of Shewa was founded by Negasi Kristos (r. 1696-1703), originally from the district of Gera Meder in Menz. Claiming lineage from *Abeto Yaqob*, son of Emperor Lebne-Dengel, he is traditionally considered the founder of the Shewan branch of the “Solomonids.” After establishing his ascendancy, he presided over the Christian communities that inhabited districts like Asendabo, Debadebo and Makfud. Negasi also formed alliance with the Argobba Muslims who lived in the lowlands of Yifat. The second king was *Merid Azmatch Sebestie/Sebastyanos* (r. 1703-18). Abuye/Abiyye (r. 1718-45) made Haramba his capital and tried to subjugate the surrounding Oromo before he was killed by the Karrayu Oromo. However, it was Amaha Iyesus/Amhayyess (r. 1745-75), the great grandson of Negasi, who asserted effective leadership in the whole districts (Bulga, Efrata, Menz, Tegulet etc.). His capital was at Doqaqit but later shifted to Ankober. In addition, he made futile attempts to control the Afar and Abichu Oromo. Asfa-Wosen (r. 1775-1808) conquered Antsokia, Asbo, Gedem, Gishe, Merhabete, Morat and Shewa Meda. Shewa’s economy was mainly based on agriculture, supplemented by trade and craft.

Gurage

The Sebat Bet Gurage, classified as the Western Gurage, included Chaha, Muher, Ezha, Gumer, Inamor, Endegegn/Enner and Gyeto. The other major Gurage group, classified as the Northern Gurage, is variously known as Kistane, Aymalal or Soddo. Additional groups included Dobbi, Gadabano, and Masqan. The Gurage had traditional system of governance developed over centuries: *Yajoka Qicha* among the Sebat Bet and *Gordanna Sera* among the Kistane. Yet, there was no centralized leadership. Power was vested in descent, clan or lineage groups that displayed corporate rights, obligations, and influence. The Gurage leaders also held the title of *abegaz* or *azmatch* combining political and military authority. The staple crop in Gurage is *enset*.

Silte

Local traditions confirm the movement of notables like *Hajji Aliye* from the areas around the Chercher highlands in eastern Ethiopia with large number of followers chiefly the Silte before the sixteenth century. These people settled in the south and western parts of Ethiopia during the conflict between the Christian kingdom and the Adal sultanate as well as the Oromo population



movement. Thus, it is possible that the ethnogenesis of the Silte had benefited from the intermixing of various peoples due to war and population movements. In the Silte highland areas, the cultivation of *enset* was the predominant staple crop while cereals constituted the base for peasant subsistence in the lowland parts. *Khat* and *berbere* (red pepper) remained the two major cash crops in the area although local merchants were also involved in the buying and selling of coffee, mainly from the highland parts of Sidama and Shewa as of the nineteenth century.

Hadiya

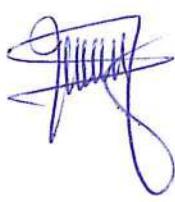
The origin of the Hadiya state goes back to the thirteenth century. Hadiya's population became more heterogeneous after the wars between the Christian Kingdom and Adal, and the Oromo population movement, chiefly the latter. Among others, descendants of the old Hadiya can be traced among the Oromo, Sidama, Qabena and Halaba, and the Hadiya proper with its subgroups: the Mareko, Lemu, Soro, Shashogo and Badowacho. Hadiya's political importance was considerable, thanks to its sizable population and vast territory, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Despite sporadic clashes, Hadiya's relation with the Christian state was largely stable, particularly after the marriage of Emperor Zara-Yaqob to the Hadiya princess Ite Jan Zela, more famously known as Queen Elleni.

Kambata

Four communities of separate origin (the Kambata in the narrow sense, the Dubamo, Donga and Tembaro) coalesced to form the nucleus of the state of Kambata by about 1550-70. This process of state formation was further assisted by Omotic and Semitic peoples who moved into the region at different times. The groups who called themselves Kambata related to one of the seven dominant clans (Kambata Lamala) at the end of the sixteenth century. The Kambata had a traditional administrative institution called the Hambericho Council that had seven members, each representing the seven clans. The council ruled Kambata with a king at the top. The people were *enset* cultivators, sharing similar culture and speaking the same language, Kambatissa.

Halaba

The Halaba inhabited the territory between the Bilate River and Lake Hawasa. At the apex of the indigenous administration was the *Woma* (king) and below him were clan or village leaders. The Halabi Ogete, an assembly of village leaders, handled societal matters such as disputes between clans. The traditional administrative and judicial system functioned based on *Sera*, which



constituted the laws and values of the society. The Halaba economy was largely based on subsistence agriculture and raising of livestock. The main cash crops included red pepper, maize and teff. Halaba's principal center, Kolito, was once a principal market place.

5.5.3. Peoples and States in the South

Sidama

The Sidama indigenous system of governance was led by the *Mote* (king), who exercised political authority in consultation with the council of elders called *Songo*. Meanwhile, the *Woma* handled ritual matters such as offering sacrifices to spirits, circumcision and marriage. Sidama society was divided into generation sets called *Luwa*. It had five grades: *Darara*, *Fullassa*, *Hirbora*, *Wawassa* and *Mogissa*, each lasting eight years. Each class had its own leader named *gaden*, who settled disputes and handled the defense of the society. The Sidama *sera* governed social life based on the moral code, *halale* (the ultimate truth), which was used to administer justice. *Halale* had no enforcement mechanisms, but people abided by its rules to avoid curse or ostracization by the society. *Enset* and coffee are important food and cash crops, respectively.

Gedeo

The dominant tradition traces the ancestry of the Gedeo to Daraso, who was the older brother of Gujo, the father of the Guji Oromo. The seven major Gedeo clans descended from the seven sons of Daraso and were grouped in two houses: the *shole batte* (senior house), consisting of four clans, and the *sase batte* (junior house), containing three clans. The Gedeo had a traditional governance system called *balle*, which was based on age classes and ranking having seven grades with a 10-year period each creating a 70-year cycle. *Sasserogo* was a federation of three territories: Sobbho, Ributa and Rikuta sharing one *Abba Gadaa* who leaves office every eight years to be replaced by a new holder from the next age set. The Gedeo economy was mainly based on *enset* cultivation.

Konso

The Konso practiced a balanced, integrated and specialized agricultural technology. They also adopted soil conservation techniques, notably the construction of terraces, which converted rugged and hilly areas into permanent cultivation. Furthermore, farmers were adept at selecting plant varieties that withstood hot and dry climatic conditions. Konso's economy also depended on bee-keeping and crafts. The Konso lived in walled villages (*paletas*) which were further



divided into wards called *kanta* until the late nineteenth century. Each village was ruled by a council of elders called *hayyota* who were selected through the direct participation of the adult males. Membership to the council was not hereditary but rotated every eighteen years.

5.5.4. Peoples and States in the Southwest

Wolayta

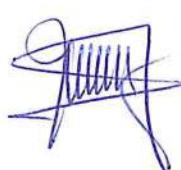
The Wolayta-Malla and the Tigre dynasties successively ruled Wolayta kingdom from the thirteenth to the late nineteenth centuries. The state flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because of the successful wars that the Wolayta fought against their neighbors, and the material, human and territorial gains thereof. At the apex of the hierarchy was the *kawo* (king), assisted by advisors' council. Wolayta land grew a large variety of crops but the dominant food crop was *enset*. Access to land was governed by kinship and political and social status. Furthermore, the *kawo* rewarded people with land on the basis of gallant deeds in battle and other vital contributions to the state. By grants of land or by threats of dispossession, the reigning monarch ensured loyalty to the state. Except for those who worked on the royal estate, landholders paid tribute to the king.

Yem

Initially, an indigenous dynasty called Dida or Halmam-Gamma ruled Yem from its *tunta* (palace) in Dudarkema (Zimarma) near Oya. Its last *ammo* (king), Oyokam/Ammo Dasha was ousted from power in the fourteenth century. This was followed by the establishment of a new dynasty called *Mowa (Howa)*, with its center at Angari. Besides being at the top of the political ladder, the *ammo* acted as a chief priest with attributes of divinity. The *ammo* had a council of twelve advisors called *astessor*. Below them were the *erasho* and the *gagna*, provincial and district governors, respectively. The Yem had traditions of digging *bero* (ditches) for protection. They erected nearly fifty-meter wooden or iron pillars at the state center, Brisi Bita, from where their soldiers patrolled surroundings. Yem's economy combined agriculture, trade and crafts.

Dawuro

Dawuro was inhabited by three major clans: Malla, Dogolla, and Amara. The Kawuka dynasty created a big state from a great number of petty chieftainships on the territory between the Gojeb and Omo rivers in the north, east and south and the Kafa high mountains in the west by about



1700. Kati Irashu and Kati Halala were famous Kawuka rulers. Dawuro is known for defensive stone fortifications. The livelihood of the Dawuro was based on mixed agriculture.



Picture 4: Dawuro stone walls (source- [Photo of Dawuro fortress - Search Images \(bing.com\)](#))

Gamo

The Gamo inhabited the area stretching from Lakes Chamo and Abaya to the Gughe Mountain and beyond. A set of interrelated indigenous laws called *woga* defined land use. The cultivation of *enset* was central in *geze* (highlands) while maize and sweet potato were staple food crops in *bazo* (lowlands). Pottery, tanning and metalworking were additional subsistence modes. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the scattered Gamo settlements were organized in politically autonomous villages called *dere* sharing essential features: 1) *kawo* (hereditary ruler), who also offered sacrifices and symbolized the people's unity; 2) initiates called *halqa*; and 3) assembly site called *dubusha*, where communal matters were discussed and disputes resolved. Through initiation or election, the *dulata* (assembly) elected married men as leaders called *huduga/maga* while *baira* was based on genealogical seniority according to primogeniture.

Ari

The Ari society was organized into ten independent clans headed by a hereditary chief known as *babi*, who was assisted by *godimis* (religious leaders), *zis* (village heads) and *tsoikis* (intelligence agents). The chief exercised both political and ritual power over his respective domain.

Kafa

The kingdom of Kafa emerged in the fourteenth century but became prominent after the middle of the seventeenth century under the Minjo dynasty that had close contact with Enarya, from where the royal title, *tato* (king), and Christianity were introduced. The *tato* was assisted by a council of seven advisors called the *Mikrecho*. The council moderated the power of the king and had a role in royal succession. The kingdom developed a highly organized structure with several tributary dependencies. The political center of the kingdom was Andaracha. Kafa's economy was based on the cultivation of *enset*. The major trade items from Kafa were ivory, gold, slaves, coffee, honey-wax and civet musk. Kafa had a tradition of digging deep trenches (*erio*) as defensive barrier.

5.5.5. Peoples and States in the West

Anywa

The Anywa predominantly inhabited along Pibor, Sobat, Gila, Akobo, Agwei, Oboth, Baro and Alwero Rivers in and around Gambella. Local traditions attribute the origin of the southern Anywa state to a certain founding father called Oshoda. The other Anywa had a governance system whereby each village lived under a chief called *kuaari*, who with the assistance of the nobles (*nyiye*) managed the distribution of farm and grazing fields and settled disputes.

Majang

Linguistic evidence traces the Majang's origin to the Boma plateau in South Sudan. Gradually, their settlement extended to areas near Dembi-Dollo in the north. The Majang practiced shifting cultivation, animal husbandry, beekeeping, hunting and fishing.

Nuer

The Nuer lived in areas that extended across the savannas and marshes of the Bahr el-Ghazal and the Upper Nile of the Sudan. They had been largely settled in the plains of Gambella along the Sobat and Baro Rivers, and in a large area of the Sudan since the nineteenth century. The Nuer had an age-set system combining social and political functions. Nuer boys had to pass through a rigorous test and a series of rites connected with it before they were initiated into adulthood.



Berta and Gumuz

The Berta and Gumuz inhabited the area around the lower course of the Abbay and had a long-standing trade contacts with northern Sudan that resulted in strong Islamic influence. Gold deposits of these areas had attracted others for long.

Kunama

The Kunama, also called the Baza, are one of the ancient inhabitants of western Eritrea on the Gash, and Tekkeze Rivers and northwestern and western Tigray. The Kunama had a customary institution called *sanga-anene* entrusted with the administration of the society, granting asylum to newcomers and performing rituals as part of reconciliation process in cases of homicide. Its office was held by male members and transmitted hereditarily from the eldest brother to the next born through matrilineal line. Agriculture is based on the use of hoe, spades, sickles and ox (camel)-drawn plough. The staple crop of the Kunama is *kina* (sorghum). Other crops are *borta* or *beca* (millet), pulses and *afokina* (maize). The Kunama also keep livestock, mainly goats, sheep, oxen and camels.

5.6. The Gondarine Period and *Zemene- Mesafint*

5.6.1. The Gondarine Period (1630-1780s)

Political Developments

The Gondarine period, which lasted for some 130 years, can be sub-divided into three periods, based on political and cultural criteria. These are foundation and glory (1630-1706), insecurity (1706-1720), and revival and steady decline (1720-1780s). The foundation of Gondar as a permanent royal capital followed the movement of the royal court to the Lake Tana region. Emperor Sartsa-Dengel established his royal capital at Enfraz in 1571. Emperor Susenyos also tried to establish his capital near Gondar at places like Qoga, Gorgora, Danqaz and Azazo. Finally, Gondar was founded as a permanent capital in 1636 by Emperor Fasiledes. The emperor selected Gondar as his royal capital for the purpose of directly supervising the collection of customs on the Red Sea- Lake Tana- Enarya route. It was also near the main caravan route from Mettema to Lake Tana, joining the route from Enarya to the Red Sea. The mountains that formed a semi-circle around the town also afforded protection. Its location was also at considerable distance from the malaria in the lower regions of Lake Tana.

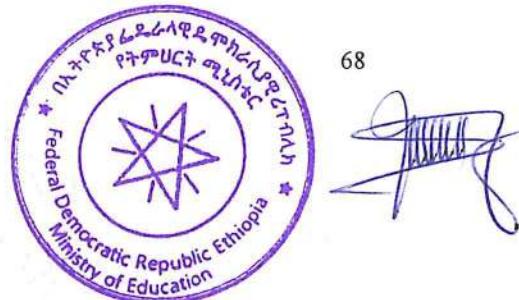


Gondar achieved its glory during the reigns of Fasiledes (r.1632–67), and Iyasu I (r.1682-1706 with the throne name of Adyam Saggad), also known as Iyasu the Great. Fasiledes established the royal capital, restored the Alexandrian faith, and expelled the Jesuits. However, Gondar's remarkable period of glory was that of Iyasu I. He managed to restore the state's control over a large territory. He obtained the vassalage of Musa, the Naib of Massawa, and he was the last emperor based at Gondar to reach as far as Enarya in the Gibe region in 1704. He also stretched the symbolic presence of the state in Tigre and Shewa. He also introduced customs, and undertook tax and land reforms. As such, he is considered as the last powerful emperor before the rise of Tewodros II in the modern period.

A period of insecurity commenced in 1706, when Iyasu the Great was assassinated by a faction spearheaded by his own son, Tekle-Haymanot. With this assassination, a period of instability began, characterized by intrigues and poisoning of reigning monarchs. Tekle-Haymanot was crowned in 1706 before the death of his father and was in turn assassinated by Tewoflos in 1708. Tewoflos was again killed in 1711 by Yostos, who was also poisoned in 1717 and replaced by Dawit III, who himself was poisoned and replaced by Bakkafa in 1721. All these events transpired within the context of factionalism, regionalism and religious controversies.

The Gondarine period showed signs of revival with the ascendancy of Bakkafa in 1721. He tried to restore stability by strengthening the army units, most of which were recruited from among the Oromo units. He also benefited from the political wisdom of his escort, *Etege* Mentewab, also known as *Berhan Mogasa*, who became leader of the dominant political faction after he was incapacitated after 1728.

However, Gondarine politics witnessed a period of decline after 1730. Three regionally based political factions emerged, all aiming to control the power of the *ras bitweddèd* (effectively the king-maker). These were the *qwaregnoch*, headed by *Etege* Mintewab and her kins from Qwara, the Oromo faction from Wollo led by Iyoas's maternal uncles, and the Tigray faction led by *Ras* Mikael Sehul. In a way, *Etege* Mentewab was the architect of all these factions. Everything started when she arranged a political marriage between Wubit, a woman born to an Oromo family in Wollo, with her son Iyasu II (1730-1755). Iyoas, the outcome of the marriage, took power in 1755 and invited his maternal uncles to the royal court, which they began to dominate.



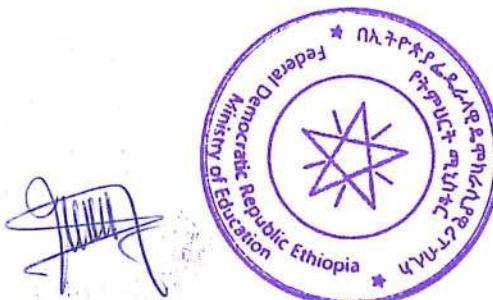
To counterbalance the dominance of the Oromo faction, Mintewab invited *Ras* Mikael Sehul from Tigray to Gondar. The powerful Tigrean lord killed Iyoas and enthroned Yohannes II, marking the triumph of regional lords over the monarchy. It should be noted that ethnic identity wielded minimal sway over the political upheavals in Gondar, with regional identity assuming greater significance. The primary contenders were engaged in a power struggle to dictate to the emperor and attain the prestigious designation of *ras bitwedded* ("king maker").

Cultural Achievements of the Gondarine Period

Despite the enduring and notorious political turbulence, Gondar has bequeathed to history a multifarious and illustrious legacy. It was a center of state administration, learning, commerce, education, art and crafts for more than two centuries. Gondar set the cultural ethos of the region and witnessed several cultural developments. The cultural achievements led some writers to describe the period as the Ethiopian Renaissance.

Architecture: Gondarine kings built impressive secular buildings like castles, bridges, residences, bath, library, towers and fortifications. Many churches with different shapes were also built. In the city's most impressive compound, known as *Fasil Gebbi*, there were several palaces built by Emperor Fasiledes, Yohannes I, Iyasu I, Dawit III, Bakkafa and Queen Mentewab. Gondarine architecture could be said to have started during the reign of Emperor Sartsa-Dengel, who built his castle at Guzara, near the town of Enfraz at about 1586. Although Bahir Gimbi Mikael was constructed during the reign of Lebne Dengel, the distinctive pointed oval dome situated over the center of the church is credited to Sartsa-Dengel.

Both castle and bridge construction predates the reign of Fasiledas. Emperor Sartsa-Dengel built a very fine bridge near his palace at Guzara, over the Garno (Arno) River. Emperor Susenyos likewise erected a bridge over the Blue Nile at Alata. As a result of these achievements, a distinct Gondarine architectural style emerged, which continued from the second half of the sixteenth century to the political decline of Gondar in the middle of the eighteenth century.



Picture 5: Fasiledes' Castle in Gondar

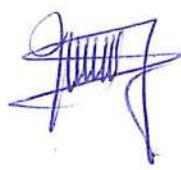


Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gondar#/media/1/238349/11150>

Painting: the period also saw a wealth of religious paintings on manuscripts and on wood, ornaments, weapons and other accessories. The churches built by Queen Mentwab were notable for their beautiful paintings, cross and art works. The distinctive style of Gondarine art has been given special recognition by Ethiopian art historians.

Literature: the imperial and provincial scriptoria produced a great number of manuscripts. Besides the Gospels, the Miracles of Mary, the Lives of Ethiopian Saints and the Litanies, many other kinds of illuminated manuscripts were also produced. There was a rich tradition of book-making. Gondar is also known for its music and poetry.

Trade and Urbanization: Gondar also has the distinction of establishing the first daily market in Ethiopia. The city became the residence of diverse foreign communities: Iberian (Portuguese and Spanish), Indian, Greek and Armenian. It had an estimated population of 60,000-70,000. It served as religious center of Christians, Muslims and the Bete Israel. Besides, it served as the center of Ethiopian Orthodox Church (residence of the *abun* and *echege*) until the middle of the nineteenth century. Many churches served as education centers, which comprised three levels: *Nebab Bet* (Reading school), *Qedasse Bet* (Liturgy school) and higher schools, namely *Zema Bet* (Music school), *Qene Bet* (Poetry school), and *Metsehaf Bet* (interpretation of holy books). Its churches were also centres of excellence in teaching *aqwaqwam* and liturgical chants.



5.6.2. The Zemene- Mesafint (Era of Princes, 1786-1853)

The *Zemene- Mesafint* was a period of political decentralization, i.e. the increase of power of regional lords, following a period of political and cultural prosperity. This period is often dated between 1786 (the ascent to power of *Ras Ali I*, the founder of the Yajju Dynasty), and 1853 (the defeat of the last of the Yajju princes, *Ras Ali II*, at the Battle of Ayshal by *Dajjach Kasa Haylu* (the future Emperor Tewodros II). The process of the erosion of royal power was initiated by *Ras Mika'el*, who deposed King Iyoas in 1769. He then started taking strong measures against the nobility, which made him highly unpopular because of which coalitions of lords of Gojjam, Amhara, Lasta and Wollo defeated him at the battle of Sarbakussa in 1771. Then, several influential war lords evolved over the main political regions: Tigray, Semen, Dembiya, Begemedir, Lasta, Yejju, Wollo, Damot, Mecha and Gojjam.

Among these, the most powerful group was the Yejju (Warraseh) dynasty from Yejju. From its base at Debre Tabor, it controlled the emperors in Gondar for some seven decades. Yejju rule reached its zenith under Gugsa Marso (r.1803-1825) who made incessant struggle against *Ras Walde-Silassie* of Enderta and *Dejjazmatch Sabagadis Woldu* of Agame. His son Yimam (r.1825-8) defeated Hayle-Mariam Gebre of Simen in 1826. Marye, another son of Gugsa (1828-1831) and Sabagadis fought at the Battle of May Aslamay (Dabra Abay) in 1831; both of them were killed even if it was the Yajju who got the final victory.

Major features of *Zemene- Mesafint* include:

- changes in the interregional balance of power from central authority to a decentralized or multi-centered political structure;
- reduction of the emperor's office to that of a puppet king who reigned but did not rule;
- conflicts among regional rulers and warlords over the control of the emperor in Gondar;
- Christological factions resulting in the division of the Church;
- decay of "classical" Gondarine culture like Ge'ez literature, painting, architecture etc.
- the decline of the military regimental system, the emperor thereby being forced to rely on his lords for military support;
- peaceful consolidation of some areas as independent princedoms such as Shewa;
- growing contacts of regional lords with different foreign powers and making and unmaking of fragile coalitions and alliances to advance political interests.

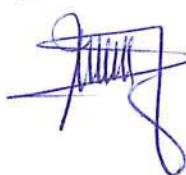


On the other hand, the *Zemene- Mesafint* also witnessed other developments. These include-

- The emperor remained a symbol of political unity and source of legitimacy;
- The *Yejju* elites were keen to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the kingdom;
- Despite their strength, the regional lords only vied to be king-makers, and did not try to ascend the throne themselves, keeping alive the myth of “Solomonid” dynasty in Gondar;
- Diversification of powers and political centres resulted in the multiplication of courtly culture which was previously limited to the royal court;
- The influence of different regional and ethnic cultures broadened the cultural diversity of Ethiopia, fuelling cultural change;
- The internal struggle of the period contributed to the emergence of independent kingdoms which later spearheaded the unification of Ethiopia.

Learning Activities

- Why was *Imam Ahmed*’s force successful at the battle of Shimbra Kure?
- Why did Portugal and Ottoman Turkey involve in the Horn’s domestic affairs?
- What were the major effects of the Christian-Muslim conflicts?
- Discuss the process and outcome of the Jesuits’ evangelical activities in Ethiopia.
- Why do you think Susenyos adopted Catholicism as a state religion?
- What was the ‘closed door policy’ and how did it affect Ethiopia’s relations with Europe?
- Discuss the causes of population movements in the sixteenth century.
- Explain contributions of the Oromo, Argobba, Afar and Somali population movements?
- What was the purpose of the *butta* ceremony and how did it function?
- What is the *Gadaa* system and how did it function in Oromo society?
- Which values of the *Gadaa* system contributed to social integration?
- Discuss the similarities and differences between *Gadaa*, *Luwa* and *Baalle* systems.
- Discuss the evolution and political administration of the Kambata, Wolayta, Harar...
- Briefly describe major achievements of the Gondarine period.
- Discuss the circumstances that gave rise to the *Zemene- Mesafint*.
- List the major features of the *Zemene- Mesafint* and analyze how it affected society.
- Explain the key developments during the period of the *Yejju* dynasty.



UNIT SIX

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS IN ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN, 1800-1941 (10 HOURS)

6.1. Nature of Interactions among the Peoples and States of Ethiopia and the Horn

6.1.1. Peoples and States in South-Central, Southwestern, and Western Ethiopia

Qabena: with elements of Hadiya-Gurage coalition, it emerged as a strong political entity in the south central Ethiopia in the second half of the nineteenth century. It became a center of Muslim revivalist movement in the northeast of the Gibe River. Stirred by Muslim refugees from Wollo and with possible connections even with Mahdist Sudan, the movement swept across a large part of the region and was attended by the fast spread of Islam.

Five Gibe States: monarchical states emerged among the Mecha Oromo in the southwest at the expense of the *Gadaa* system in the early nineteenth century. The war leaders (*Abba-Dula/Moti*) and powerful individuals accumulated wealth by controlling and taxing long distance trade, and used the opportunity to establish hereditary leadership. These states were:

- I. Limmu-Enarya:** the *Abba Dulas* of Limmu like Tesso had fought and defeated the Enarya rulers like Badancho, Gu'amcho and Banaro at different times. Yet, it was Bofo/Abba Gomol (r.1800-1825), who established the Limmu-Enarya state. Bofo abdicated in favor of his son, Ibsa/Abba Bogibo (r.1825-61), under whom the kingdom reached its zenith, incorporating areas like Hagalo, Badi-Folla, etc. Ibsa was succeeded by Abba Bulgu (r.1861-1883).
- II. Guma:** Jilcha Abba Bal'o of Chira killed Sarbaroda of the Dagoye clan and began the formation of the state. He was succeeded by his son Oncho (1810-1830), who completed the state formation. He was in turn succeeded by Jawwe (r.1840-1854).
- III. Gomma:** formed by Abba Boke (1800-1829), who was succeeded by his son Abba Mano (1829-1840). The latter conquered Qattu and enhanced the activities of Muslim scholars/*ulama*, who converted the masses of Gomma to Islam much earlier than other Gibe states.
- IV. Jimma:** an influential woman, Makahore, emerged at Oda Hulle in eighteenth century, but it was Ose Kobi (Abba Faro), who became the first monarch. He was succeeded by Dangila (Abba Magal). The state formation was completed by Sanna/Abba Jifar I (r.1830-55), who left a consolidated state to his successors like Abba Rebu (r.1855-59), Abba Boqa (r.1859-



1861), Abba Gomol (r.1861-75), and the most famous monarch, Abba Jifar II (r.1875-1934). The kingdom had iron mining and smelting centers at Dakkano and Kitto, respectively.

V. Gera: the process of state formation was completed during the reign of Tullu Gunji (r.1835-38). Abba Rago I (r.1838-48) succeeded Tullu.

The monarch's officials in almost all the Gibe states included *Abba Gurmu* (next to the king), *Abba Mizan* (treasurer and foreign affair minister), *Abba Dango* (immigration chief), *Lammi* (envoy), *Abba Qoro* (district governor), *Abba Ganda* (village chief), *Abba Busi* (tax head), *Abba Jiga* (murder case judge), and *Abba-Qawe* (body-guard). Contrary to *Gadaa* values that did not levy any tax, under monarchical system, farmers were forced to pay taxes on each crop measured by traditional instruments called *buchano* (15 kilograms) and later *guboo* (25 kilograms).

The Leqa States

I. Leqa-Naqamte: was founded by Bakare Godana in 1840, and reached its height under Kumsa Moroda (later *Dejjazmach* Gebre-Egzi'abiher), who promoted handcraft work, gold washing, coffee planting and game reserves.

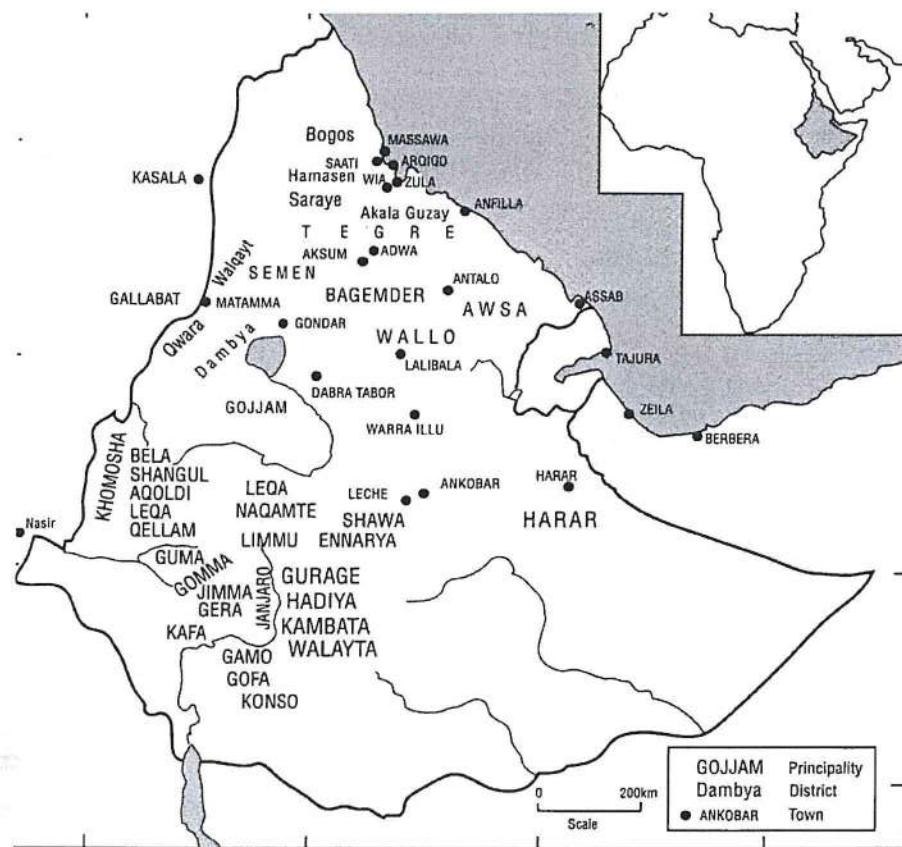
II. Leqa-Qellam: was founded by Tullu and became powerful under his son, Jote, with its center at Gidami and controlling the surrounding areas, including Seyyo-Dambi Dollo.

Ilu: the Tume clan leader Chali Shono (also known as Abba Bor) established a well-consolidated and prosperous state in the early nineteenth century.

Nilotic Sheikdoms: a number of Sheikdoms were established through parallel imposition of Arabic-speaking Sudanese merchants over the indigenous Berta. The merger came to be known as ‘Watawit’. Among these Watawit sheikhdoms, Asosa or Aqoldi gained preeminence under Sheikh Khojale al-Hasan. Bela/Beni-Shangul became famous under Abd al Rahman Khojale, while Khomosha reached its zenith under Khojale Muhammad Wad Mahmud. Similarly, Guba was established north of the Abbay River along the Ethio-Sudanese border. Economically, the sheikhdoms depended on agriculture, gold mining, and frontier trade. The rich gold of the area also attracted foreign powers like the Mahdists and Egyptians, who attempted to control the sheikhdoms at different times.



Map 5: Peoples and States of Ethiopia and the Horn, c. 1800



Source: Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 17.

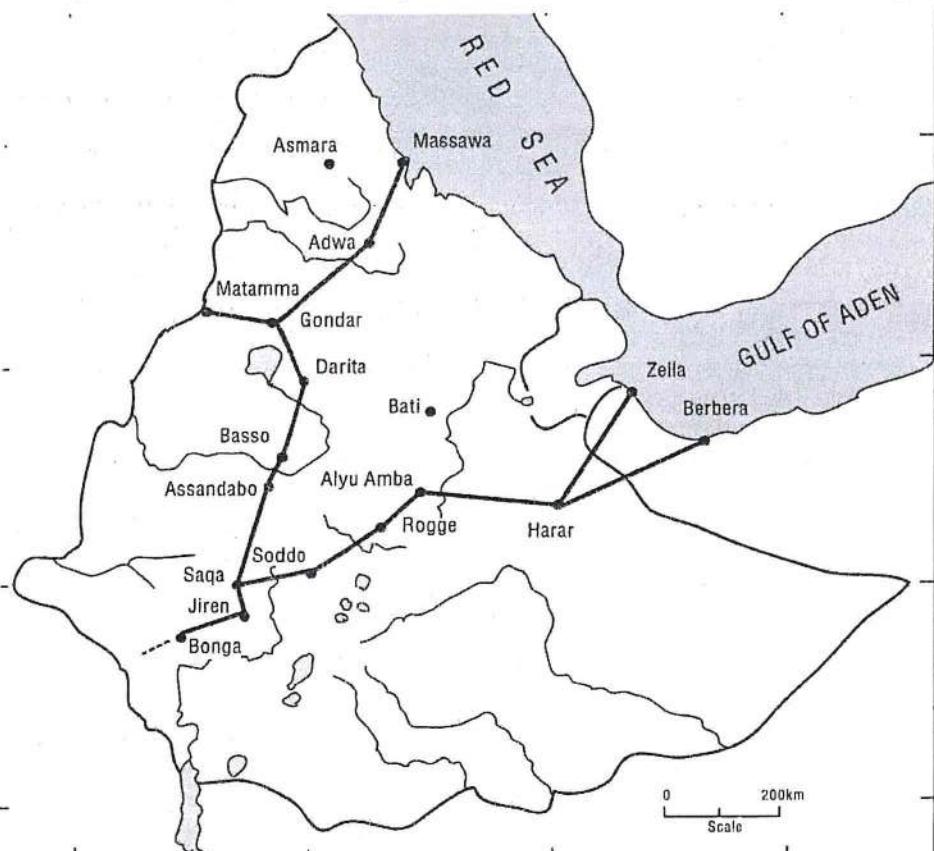
6.1.2. Trade and Trade Routes

The main trade routes linking various territories of the Horn attained prominence during the nineteenth century, partly because of the revival of external trade in the Red Sea region. One route linked peoples and states of southwestern Ethiopia with the northern part of the region. The main market centers along this line were Bonga (the capital of Kafa Kingdom), Hirmata (in Jimma), Saqa (in Limmu), Billo (in Leqa-Naqamte), Asendabo (in Guduru), Basso-Yajube (in Gojjam), Yifag and Darita (in Begemider) and Gondar. From Gondar, one line bifurcated westward through Chilga to Matamma-Qallabat (Gallabat). The other route passed through Adwa, Asmara and entered Massawa. Another split occurred at Basso, to move via Ancharro and Dawwe in Wollo and Awusa in Afar to Tajura, Obbok and Rahe'ita in Djibouti. The second major route also began from Bonga and passed through Hirmata to Agabja-Andode-Toli-Soddo in southwest Shewa and Rogge near Yerer. Then, the line passed through Aliyu Amba or Abdul



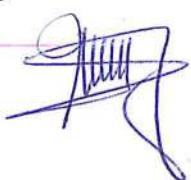
Rasul in northern Shewa and crossed eastward to Harar. From Harar, the route branched into Zeila and Berbera. Ethiopian products were mostly sold in the Middle East.

Map 6: Trade Routes of Ethiopia and the Horn in the nineteenth century



Source: Bahru Zewede, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 23.

The main items exported from the southwest included civet musk, honey wax, coffee, various spices and slaves. Imported products included mirrors and ironware. The major mediums of exchange were salt bars (*amole*), cowrie shells, pieces of cotton cloth (*abujadi*) and Maria Theresa Thalers (MTT). *Amole* was mined from the Taltal plains in Afar bordering Eastern Tigray. The town of Mekelle prospered as the salt was cut into smaller pieces and distributed to the highlands under the supervision of the governor of Enderta. He assumed the title of *balgada* and collected the tributes as tax judge. MTT was a silver coin introduced from Austria to the Horn at the end of the eighteenth century. It bore the image of Maria Theresa, the Austrian queen; hence the name.



At each market center, local peoples were active traders. However, Muslims were the most important carriers of long distance trade, traveling from the interior to the coast. Among these were the Muslim Oromo merchants of the southwestern area known as *Afgala*, northern Muslim merchants (*Jabarti*), and the Sudanese merchants called *Jallaba*. Similarly, the Argobba from the Shewa Kingdom were active merchants who traded via Harar up to the Northern Somali coast.

6.2. The Making of the Modern Ethiopian State

Process of Territorial Unification

The man who ended the *Zemene- Mesafint* was Kasa Hailu of Qwara. He started his career as an assistant to his half-brother, *Dejjazmach* Kinfu of Dambeya, who died in 1839. *Ras Ali II* then gave Qwara to his mother, *Etege* (Empress) Manan. Kasa was annoyed by this and became a *shifta* (bandit). Kasa's fame soon spread and he became a major concern to the Yejju ruling house, who decided to pacify him. Kasa was married to Tewabech, the daughter of *Ras Ali*, and he was appointed the governor of Qwara. However, Kasa still felt that he was not well treated by Ali II and Menen, and resumed his *shiftnet*. A series of battles then followed. First, Kasa defeated *Dejjach* Goshu Zewde of Gojjam at Gur Amba on November 27, 1852. Kasa defeated the four *dejjazmachs* sent by Ali II (Birru Aligaz, Aben, Yazew and Belew), at Taqusa (Gorgora Bichign) on April 12, 1853. This was followed by his victory over *Ras Ali II* at Ayshal on June 29, 1853, and *Dejjach* Wube of Simen and Tigray at Deresge on February 8, 1855. Then, he was crowned by *Abune* Salama, the Coptic bishop at Deresge Mariam, on 9 February 1855, taking the throne name Tewodros II (r. 1855-1868).

Tewodros II then pursued his victory by marching to Wollo and then to Shewa. He wanted to create a strong central government by appointing individuals who would be accountable to him. However, he faced resistance from Tadla Gwatu of Gojjam, Agaw Niguse and Tassama Waldamicha'el of Simen, Tasew Gobaze of Walqayit, Amade Bashir of Wallo, Seifu and Abboye of Shewa. His imprisonment of Europeans, who happened to be in Ethiopia, provoked the British to send a huge military expedition. His army was defeated at the Battle of Maqdela, on April 13, 1868. He committed suicide rather than be captured by the British. Despite his tragic death, Tewodros II holds a distinctive position in the annals of national unity and pride. A product of the *Zemene- Mesafint*, he proved to be its anti-thesis. While his reforms look impulsive and uncoordinated, they established the groundwork for his successors to advance

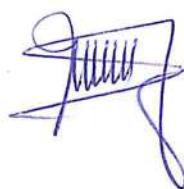


these pivotal national endeavors. Having lived in the full light of native and foreign writers, he stands as one of the most known historical figures in historical records and literary compositions.

Wagshum Gobaze Gabramadhin of Lasta, Bezbez Kasa Mircha of Tigray and Menilek of Shewa then emerged as contenders to the throne. Gobeze immediately assumed the throne as Emperor Tekle-Giorgis II (1868–71). Although he made attempts to create a smooth relation with Kasa Mircha, the quest for state power put them in enmity and it culminated in the Battle of Assam (in Adwa) in July 1871, in which the latter became victorious. Kasa, who was crowned as Emperor Yohannes IV in January 1872, embarked on a state building project with an approach that differed from that of Tewodros II. Yohannes IV (r. 1872-89) attempted to introduce a decentralized system of administration, permitting regional rulers to exercise considerable autonomy. A good example of this was his recognition of Menilek as *negus* of Shewa by the Liche agreement in 1878. Similarly, Yohannes designated *Ras* Adal Tesema of Gojjam as *negus* Tekle-Haymanot of Gojjam and Kafa in 1881.

Emperor Yohannes IV sought to end the religious controversy within the EOC and to bring about religious unity in the country as a whole. In this regard, he presided over the Council of Boru Meda (1878), where *tewahedo* was declared the only doctrine of the EOC. This was followed by a campaign to convert Muslims and adherents of other religions into Orthodox Christianity. Accordingly, the leading Wollo leaders such as Mohammed Ali and Amede Liben heeded the emperor's call, rather reluctantly, converting to Christianity and changing their names to *Ras* Michael and *Dejjach* Hayle-Mariam, respectively. Others accepted the emperor's demands outwardly but remained Muslims, becoming "Christians by day and Muslims by night." Still others resisted and fled to Arsi, Gurage, Jimma and the Sudan or revolted under the leadership of Sheikh Tolla (Talha) Jafar that provoked harsh retributive measures by the emperor.

Although the emperor had designated Mengesha Yohannes as his successor before his death at the Battle of Metemma on March 9, 1889, rivalry over power split the monarch's camp and thus, Mengesha was unable to make a viable bid for the imperial throne. As a result, and thanks to the resources he had amassed in the course of his territorial expansion, the throne was assumed by *Negus* Menilek of Shewa, who became Emperor Menilek II (r. 1889-1913). Mengesha refused to submit. The tension was resolved after Menilek led a campaign to force Mengesha's submission



in 1889. *Ras* Mengesha was appointed as governor of Tigray after a temporary arrangement in which *Ras* Mekonnen Wolde Mikael ruled the area for about a year.

Territorial Expansion

Although successive emperors and regional lords made territorial expansion their mission in the nineteenth century, the most successful was Menilek of Shewa because of his access to modern firearms, his control of resource-rich areas that enabled him to build his military muscle, and the dedication of his generals. The process of territorial expansion by Menilek can be divided into three phases: when he was king of Shewa (1865-89), from his coronation to the Battle of Adwa (1889-96) and the Adwa aftermath (1896-1900).

Menilek had already incorporated the Tulama and Eastern Mecha Oromo territories before the 1870s after controlling local leaders, notably Ashe Rufo of Salale, Dula Ara'e of Gullale, Tufa Muna of Gimbichu, Ture Galate of Soddo and others. Some Oromo leaders such as *Ras* Gobana Dache, *Fitawrari* Habte-Giorgis Dinagde, *Dejjach* Balcha Safo (*Abba Nefso*) and others helped Menilek in this process of expansion.

The northern Gurage, the Kistane, peacefully submitted to Menilek from 1875-76 because of their religious affinity and geographical proximity to the Kingdom of Shewa, as well as fear of the surrounding Oromo. On the other hand, the western Gurage, led by Hasan Enjamo of Qabena, strongly resisted Menilek's force until *Ras* Gobana broke their resistance in 1888.

In the areas south of the Abay River, particularly in Horro Guduru, *Ras* Adal Tesema of Gojjam had already established his control since the mid-1870s. Although the Gojjam force was crushed by *Moti* (King) Abishe Garba's Horro force at Chomman, Adal's force ambushed Abishe and his entourage at a place called Kokor. Thus, the Gojjam force controlled the area until June 6, 1882, when it was defeated at the Battle of Embabo by the Shewan force. Thereafter, Leqa-Naqamte, Leqa-Qellem and Jimma Abba Jifar peacefully submitted to Menilek, who promised them recognition of their autonomy. Meanwhile, Garbi Jilo (of Leqa-Billo), Tucho Dano (Leqa-Horda), Ligdi Bakare (Leqa-Naqamte), Genda Busan (Sibu-Sire), Mardasa Konche (Nonno Migira) and Turi Jagan (Nonno Rogge) formed a coalition and defeated Menilek's army led by the Nadew brothers (Dasta, Dilinesaw and Tesemma) at the Battle of Gara Dobbi. Similarly, in



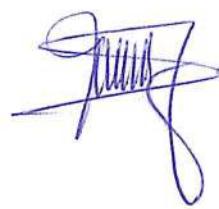
the west of the Didessa River, an alliance of Wachu Dabalo of Sibu, Jorgo Dagago of Noole Kabba and others fought Menilek's local allies like Moroda and Amante Bakare at Sambo Darro.

In the Gibe area, Firissa of Guma fought Menilek's army from 1889 to 1901. Similar resistance was posed by Abba Bosso of Gomma, although he was defeated by *Ras* Demisew Nesibu in early 1900. Also, *Ras* Tesemma Nadew's force incorporated Ilu Abba Bor into the imperial state after series of fightings with Fatansa at places like Qersa Gogila.

Of all the campaigns Menilek conducted before he became emperor, perhaps, the most sustained and bloody were those against the Arsi Oromo. There were altogether six campaigns from 1882-1886. Menilek encountered fierce resistance from the Arsi led by notables like Sufa Kuso, Damu Usu, Lenjiso Diga, Gosa Dilamo and Roba Butta. Initially, the Arsi defeated Menilek's force at Dodota and Qal'ata. Yet, with the intelligence supplied by local supporters, *Ras* Darge Sahile-Selassie's force defeated the Arsi at the battle of Azule on 6 September 1886. This was followed by what is known as the Anole incident of 1887, which inflicted heavy retribution on the Arsi. [There is disagreement among historians on the veracity of the incident and on whether there is a need to highlight it, as the campaigns of territorial expansion were often attended by atrocities as was the case for instance in Kafa and Wolayta].

In the east, Menilek's commander, *Dejjach* Wolde-Gabr'el, fought against the Ittu in 1886 and incorporated Chercher. A year later, *Dejjach* Mekonnen's army marched into Harar. The resisting forces of *Emir* Abdullahi (r.1885-1887) of the Harari and Bakar Ware of the Eastern Oromo were defeated in the final engagement at Chalango on 6 January 1887. This was followed by the appointment of *Dejjach* (later *Ras*) Makonnen as governor of the province.

The Great Famine or *Kifu Qen* of 1888-92 also contributed to Menilek's territorial expansion to parts of southern Ethiopia. Accordingly, Menilek's army occupied Dawuro-Konta and Kambata in 1889 and 1890, respectively. From the early 1890s to 1894, Menilek's army-controlled Bale, Sidama, Gamo Gofa and Wolayta. In the campaign to Wolayta, Emperor Menilek and many notables such as *Ras* Mikael, *Fitawrari* Gebeyehu Gurmu, *Lige Mekwas* Abate Buayalew, *Dejjach* Balcha Safo, *Ras* Wolde-Giorgis Abboye and Abba Jifar II participated. Wolayta's resistance led by *Kawo* (King) Tona against Menilek's force was defeated in 1894 in which large number of people lost their lives. This was followed by the conquest of Gedeo, Borana and



Konso. The incorporation of Kafa paralleled the Wolayta experience in terms of human cost. The king of Kafa, *Tato* Gaki Shercho, fought and lost to Menilek's army led by *Ras* Wolde Giorgis in 1897. Beni Shangul-Gumuz was incorporated after the Battle of Fadogno in 1897/98. This was followed by the occupation of Maji in 1898/99. Tesema Nadew also controlled Baro (Sobat) and Nasir in Gambella around this time.

After Menilek, the process of centralization and establishing a unitary state continued by abolishing regional autonomies in the early decades of the twentieth century. In due course, the following regions were reduced to mere provinces by Teferi-Mekonnen (later Emperor Haile-Selassie I): Wollo (after the Battle of Segele in 1916 when *Nigus* Mika'el was defeated), Begemedir (after the Battle of Anchim in 1930 at which *Ras* Gugsa Wole was defeated), Gojjam in 1932 (after the detention of *Ras* Hailu) and Jimma in 1933.

6.3. Modernization Attempts

Tewodros II had better information about western governance and technology than his predecessors and he took some important measures in this regard. He introduced military titles like *Yasr Alaqa* (corporal), *Yamsa Alaqa* (sergeant), *Yashi Alaqa* (major) etc. He strived to replace the regional armies of the *Zemene- Mesafint* with a salaried national army. He tried to manufacture firearms with the help of European missionaries and Ethiopian artisans at his workshop in Gafat (near Debre Tabor). About 35 cannons were produced, of which the biggest one was "Sebastopol." He attempted to build a small navy on Lake Tana.

Moreover, Tewodros II began the construction of Ethiopia's first embryonic road network linking Debre Tabor with Gondar, Gojjam and Maqdela. Other measures included land reform and banning polygamy. The use of Amharic writing became more developed, and a library was established at Maqdela, all of which contributed to the development of literary Amharic. He wrote letters to different foreign powers in Amharic. He endeavored to reduce the amount of land held by the church as well as the number of priests and deacons serving every church. This brought him into conflict with the EOC, precipitating his downfall. His reforms were not fully realized owing to internal and external challenges.

Emperor Yohannes IV was the first Ethiopian monarch to appoint a foreign consul to serve as his representative in London. He hired a French Mechanic (Rene), a Hungarian gunsmith (Andre),

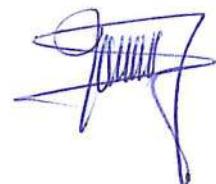


an Italian builder (Giacomo Naretti) and a Greek physician (Nicholas Parisis). He was also the first to introduce modern smallpox vaccine, replacing traditional inoculation. His reign also witnessed extensive treatment of syphilis in several towns.

The post-Adwa period was marked by the establishment by Emperor Menilek II of a postal service and telecommunications/telephone-telegraph, the construction of the railway line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa, the opening of the Bank of Abyssinia in 1905 and the introduction of his own silver coin to replace the MTT. His reign also witnessed the foundation of Itege Hotel (now Taytu Hotel) in 1907, Menilek II School in 1908, the Russian Red Cross hospital in 1906 and Russian-run Menilek II Hospital in 1910. The emperor also introduced European style ministerial system in 1907. Accordingly, he appointed *Afe-Nigus* Nesibu Meskelo (Minister of Justice), *Azazh* Metaferia Melke-Tsadiq (Minister of Imperial Court), *Bejirond* Mulugeta Yigezu (Minister of Finance), *Fitawurari* Habte-Giorgis Dinagde (Minister of War), *Negadras* Hailegiorgis Woldemikael (Minister of Commerce and Foreign Relations) and *Tsehafe-Tizaz* Gebre-Selase Welde Aregay (Minister of Pen). After he was incapacitated through illness, Menilek designated *Lij* Iyasu as heir to the throne and *Ras* Tesemma Nadew as regent in 1908.

Lij Iyasu (r. 1913-16) banned the *quragna* system that involved chaining the plaintiff and defendant until justice was settled. He tried to reform the *leba shay* system, a quirky method of detecting criminals. He set up municipal police called *Tirnbulle* for Addis Ababa. He initiated auditing of government accounts. He tried to integrate Ethiopian Muslims into the administration structure. His rule also witnessed introduction of flour-mill, sawmill, tannery, soap-factory etc.

The two rulers of the diarchy (dual rule) of Empress Zewditu and *Ras* Teferi (r. 1916-1930) had different views of Western culture. Teferi had keen interest to boost the country's image on the global stage through modernization. A number of reforms based on European model were taken following his coronation as Emperor Haile-Selassie I in 1930. Some of these were the promulgation of Ethiopia's first constitution in 1931, the establishment of *Kebur Zelegna* (Imperial Body Guard) with the help of Belgian military mission in 1930, and the opening of Ethiopia's first Military Academy at Holeta with the help of a Swedish military mission in 1934.



6.4. Socio-Economic Developments

6.4.1. Agriculture and Land Tenure

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an increasing demand for farming and grazing land. The role of agriculture in the politics of the period could be understood from the competition to control surplus-producing areas. The quest for land was one factor for territorial expansion by Menilek. Land was required, among others, to settle and feed the warriors and their families. Hence, the incorporation of the southern half of the country into the imperial state resulted in the redefinition of access to resources in these areas. The state institutionalized different forms of surplus expropriation and mechanisms to ensure political control in the areas that had peacefully submitted and those that resisted. The former relatively enjoyed self-administration but were subjected to pay *qurt gibir* (fixed tax). The latter were placed under the *naftegna-gabbar* system, whereby local peoples were made tribute payers to the *naftegna*. Literally, *naftegna* means man-at-arms. In this context, *naftegna* refers to northern soldiers stationed in the southern territories under the imperial banner.

The major force of change was the exploitative nature of the system that altered both settlement patterns and agricultural systems. One effect of the *naftegna-gabbar* system was the creation of classes like *ballabat* (landlords), *gabbar* and tenants. The landholders were largely government agents while the local population was reduced into *gabbar* and later tenants. One major factor that brought change to agricultural practices was the beginning of the *qalad* system (land measurement) in the 1890s, by which certain social classes gained access to land while the local peasantry in parts of the south was dispossessed. Later, land was categorized into *lam* (cultivated), *lam-taf* (partly-cultivated) and *taf* (uncultivated) to facilitate taxation.

6.4.2. Slavery and Slave Trade

Slave trade expanded in the Horn due to increased demand for slaves in foreign markets, particularly in the Middle East, during the nineteenth century. Slaves were sold to Egypt, Arabia, Ottoman Turkey, Persia, and India through the Sudan, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden ports. Slaves were required for agricultural works, in the army and as sources of revenue. Thus, several regional and local rulers acquired slaves through raiding, kidnapping, war captivity, debt bondage and purchase from open markets. Major sources of slaves were the southern and southwestern parts. To cite just a few examples, slave raiders captured Bilile from Guma in 1837



and sold her to a German prince, Herman Pickler Muskau, in Cairo, who changed her name to Mahbuba and made her his mistress. Similarly, Hika (later Onesimos Nasib) was kidnapped in Hurumu in 1869 when he was four years old. He was sold at Massawa, and was later freed by a Swedish mission, after which he translated the Holy Bible into Afan Oromo at Menkulu (near Massawa). Aster Gano was also sold from Limmu, but she was emancipated in 1886 and assisted Onesimos in the translation of the Holy Bible.

Successive Ethiopian emperors tried to stop the slave trade although not slavery itself as of the mid-nineteenth century. *Ras* Teferi banned the slave trade in 1923 and issued a decree in 1924 to emancipate slaves. The Office for the Abolition of Slavery was set up in 1932. Freed slaves were kept under the supervision of *Hakim* Warqineh Eshete. The Italians proclaimed the abolition of slavery immediately after their occupation. After liberation, the emperor issued another decree in 1942 abolishing any form of slavery and the institution of slavery.

6.4.3. Manufacturing

The opening of legations in the post-Adwa period was followed by the coming of many expatriates, who either came with skills or became agents of the introduction of modern manufacturing. Armenians, Greeks, Italians and Indians brought entrepreneurial capacity to develop local manufacturing industries. Among these, the Holeta Grain Mill and Massawa Salt Processing were set up in 1896 and 1904, respectively. About 25 factories were established in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Asmara and Massawa up to 1927. These included cement factories, wood and clay workshops, tanneries, soap and edible oil plants, ammunition factories, breweries, tobacco processing plants and grain mills. Artistic Printing Press and Ambo Mineral Water Plant were established before the Italian occupation. More than 10 manufacturing industries were set up after 1928, including during the short-lived Italian occupation.

6.4.4. Urbanization

The expansion of both local and long-distance trade since the early nineteenth century had transformed old markets into towns. In addition, the railway linking Djibouti and Addis Ababa began operation in 1917, followed by the evolution of several fast-growing towns, including Dire-Dawa, Adama, Mojo, Bishoftu and others. On the other hand, many centers that once served as "royal camps" evolved into towns. Conversely, many towns declined when "royal



"camps" shifted to other centers. One of the towns that grew through such process was Addis Ababa. Empress Taytu Betul chose the place for its hot springs, Fel-Wuha/ Hora Finfinne, in 1886. Similarly, in southern Ethiopia, a number of towns emerged as of the late nineteenth century when Menilek's generals established *katamas* (garrison towns), including Gobba, Ticho, Gore and Arjo, in order to maintain control of the occupied provinces.

6.5. External Relations

6.5.1. Agreements and Treaties

As of 1804, regional rulers had made independent foreign contacts and signed treaties. The agents of these relations were mainly travelers who came to the Horn with the motives of adventure and scientific research. They were also sometimes involved in fostering friendship and trade relation on behalf of their governments. Some of them, however, came with the covert mission of colonialism. Meanwhile, various rulers of the region had also dispatched their own delegations to various countries of the world. One of the earliest private travelers was Henry Salt, who reached the court of *Ras Wolde-Selassie* of Tigray on August 28, 1805. He came for scientific reasons, but he claimed that his mission was to establish friendship between Great Britain and Ethiopia. He returned in 1809 after concluding an agreement with the *ras*. Other travelers, including Christian Kugler, also arrived in the 1830s. Captain W.C. Harris, leading an official British mission, visited Shewa and signed a treaty with *Negus Sahle -Selassie* (1813-1847) in 1841. The French Rochet d'Hericourt also claimed to have signed a treaty with Sahle Selassie in 1843 but was subsequently found to have been forged. John Bell and Walter Plowden came in the 1840s and the latter signed treaty with *Ras Ali II* in 1849. Travelers from Germany like Eduard Ruppell arrived in 1846. The Italian Geographic Society arrived in 1869.

Furthermore, other regional lords had connections with religious centers in the Middle East. For instance, when Egyptians threatened the Ethiopian religious community settlement at Deir Al-Sultan in Jerusalem, lords like Ali II and Wube sent letters to Queen Victoria of England in the early 1850s to request support against the Egyptians.

Tewodros II seemed more oriented towards obtaining Western military support to avert foreign aggression. Yohannes IV tried to create strong relations with Europeans so as to regain lost territories, delimit boundaries, defend the sovereignty of the state, and solve external challenges more through negotiation than war. Yohannes and the British Rear Admiral William Hewett on

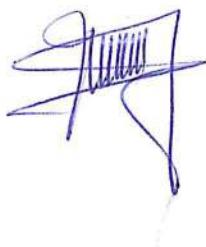


behalf of Egypt signed a treaty at Adwa on 3 June 1884 to safely evacuate the Egyptian troops trapped by the Mahdists troops along the Ethio-Sudanese border through Ethiopia. In return, Bogos was to be restored to Ethiopia and the latter was to use Massawa as a free port for the transit of goods. On the basis of this agreement, Emperor Yohannes facilitated the withdrawal of the Egyptian troops and Britain restored Bogos to Ethiopia. Yet, Britain secretly transferred Massawa from Egypt to Italy in February 1885. Yohannes incurred the lasting enmity of the Mahdists by helping the trapped Egyptians.

While he was king of Shewa, Menilek established commercial relations with Italy that helped him to acquire arms. Menelik's relations with Italy reached its climax with the signing of the Treaty of Wuchale (in Wollo) on May 2, 1889. The treaty was drafted by Count Pietro Antonelli, the Italian envoy. The treaty had twenty articles and had both Amharic and Italian versions. Moreover, when *Ras* Makonnen visited Italy in October 1889, the Italians made him sign an additional Naples convention, which introduced the phrase "effective occupation" to legitimize the territories that the Italians had come to occupy after the treaty. Accordingly, the Italian government formally declared Eritrea as its colony in January 1890.

The most controversial element of the Wuchale Treaty was Article XVII. The Italian text said that Ethiopia "consents to use" Italian support for conducting foreign affairs, while the Amharic text said that she "may use" that support. Based on the Italian version, Italy announced that all foreign powers had to deal with Ethiopia only through Italy. European powers except Russia gave recognition to this Italain claim. The Italian effort to colonize Ethiopia through a combination of tricky treaties, persuasion and subversive methods failed. Menilek publicly abrogated the treaty in February 1893. Tigrian lords including *Ras* Mangasha Yohannes, *Ras* Sebhat Aragawi and *Dejjach* Hagos Teferi, whom the Italians had hoped to enlist to their side, joined the Ethiopian camp. Italian determination to occupy Ethiopia and Ethiopian resistance against colonialism led to the Battle of Adwa (1 March 1896).

After Adwa, different foreign countries opened their legations in Addis Ababa. Furthermore, Emperor Menilek made boundary agreements with the neighboring colonial territories like French-Somaliland (Djibouti) on March 20, 1897; British-Somaliland (now Somaliland) on June 4, 1897; the Italian colony of Eritrea on July 10, 1900; Anglo-Egyptian Sudan on May 15, 1902; British East Africa (Kenya) in 1907 and Italian-Somaliland in 1908. *Lij* Iyasu showed a tendency



to side with the Central Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Ottoman Empire) during the First World War (1914-18) believing that the defeat of the Allied powers (France and Britain) would allow Ethiopia to push Italy out of Eritrea and Somalia. He also befriended the Somali nationalist leader, Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan (1864-1920). One of the successes of Ethiopia's foreign relations in the early twentieth century was her admission to the League of Nations in 1923. A year later, Teferi made his grand European tour.

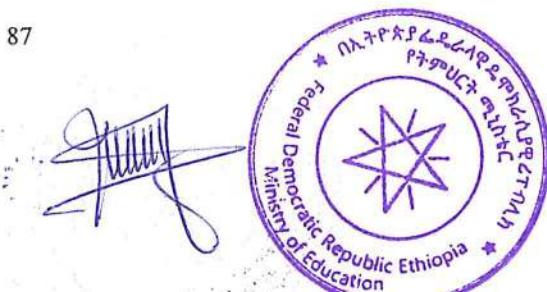
6. 5. 2. Major Battles Fought Against Foreign Aggressors and Patriotism

Wad Kaltabu (1837): Kasa and Kinfu Hailu defeated the Egyptians in eastern Sudan.

Dabarki (1848): was fought between Kasa Hailu and Egyptian forces. Although they showed extraordinary courage, Kasa's forces lost the battle owing to the Egyptians' superior military organization, better training and arms. Yet, the deadly effect of the artillery and the discipline of Egyptian troops gave Kasa a lesson to modernize his military force.

Maqdala (1868): in 1862, Tewodros II sent a letter to Queen Victoria through Consul Cameron requesting assistance. Yet Captain Cameron came back to Ethiopia via Egypt without bringing any response. Suspecting him of plotting with Egypt, Tewodros imprisoned him along with other Europeans. Consequently, Queen Victoria sent a letter through Hormuzd Rassam, which did not satisfy Tewodros II. After some unsuccessful negotiations, the British parliament decided to take military action. Subsequently, 32,000 troops led by Sir Robert Napier were sent through Massawa and reached Maqdala. Up to 8,000 of Tewodros' soldiers, led by his general Gebriye, were defeated by the British at the battle of Aroge on April 10, 1868. Tewodros committed suicide at Maqdala on April 13, 1868. The British troops followed it up by burning his fortress and looting hundreds of manuscripts, religious and secular artifacts, including his crown.

Gundet and Gura: Egyptians showed a strong interest to occupy Northeast Africa with the ambition of controlling the source of the Nile in the nineteenth century. Following their occupation of the Sudan in 1821, they moved to occupy Ethiopia on several occasions. For instance, Khedive Ismail Pasha sent his troops to invade Ethiopia in three directions in 1875. Mohammed Rauf Pasha led the Zeila front and the result was the occupation of the Harar Emirate between 1875 and 1885. Werner Munzinger, the architect of Ismail's scheme, led about 500 Egyptian troops through Tajura, but he and his troops were all killed by the Afar at Odduma. Colonel Arendrup and Arakel Bey led 2,000 well-armed troops through Massawa. Emperor Yohannes IV and his famous general and right-hand man, *Ras Alula Engida*, mobilized about 20,



000 troops, and severely defeated the Egyptian troops at Gundet on November 16, 1875. Notwithstanding this setback, Egyptians reorganized their forces and sent their army led by Muhammed Ratib Pasha, Hassan Isma'il, and the American Confederate generals General William Loring, General Charles Stone and Colonel William Dye. However, the Ethiopian forces again defeated them at Gura (March 7-9, 1876). It is important to stress that some Europeans and Americans were in the service of the Egyptians. For instance, Munzinger was a Swiss born adventurer and former French Consul at Massawa. Arendrup was a Danish Citizen while Loring, Dye and Charles Stone were Americans.

Dogali: With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Red Sea region acquired great strategic significance. Italy's interest in the Horn began when an Italian private shipping company (Rubatino) bought the port of Assab from the local chiefs in 1869. Assab was transferred to the Italian government in 1882. Massawa was also transferred by Britain from Egypt to Italy in 1885. Subsequently, the Italian forces occupied Sa'ati, Aylet and Wia in what was then known as Mereb Milash. However, *Ras* Alula decisively defeated them at Dogali on 26 January 1887. Then, Italy signed a Treaty of Neutrality with Menilek in October 1887 to isolate Yohannes IV.

Metemma: in reaction to the Hewett/Adwa Treaty, the Mahdists opened attacks on Ethiopia. The first clash was at Kufit between *Ras* Alula and Uthman Digna in September 1885. Yohannes ordered *Nigus* Tekle-Haymanot to repulse the Mahdists in January 1887, but the Mahdists led by Abu Anja defeated Tekle-Haimanot's troops at Sar-Wuha in Dembia a year later. Meanwhile, the Mahdists were defeated at Gute Dilli (in Najjo-Wallagga) by Menilek's commander *Ras* Gobena on October 14, 1888. Yet, Menilek and Tekle-Haimanot conspired against the emperor, who first devastated Gojjam and, postponing his campaign to Shewa, marched to Metemma where he died fighting the Mahdists on March 9, 1889.

The Battle of Adwa and Its Aftermath

The disagreement on the Wuchale Treaty led to war between Ethiopia and Italy. Not content with the occupation of Eritrea, the Italians crossed the Mereb River to conquer Ethiopia. Following Menilek's proclamation for general mobilization, about 100,000 troops gathered at Wara-Illu in South Wollo. The force led by *Fitawrari* Gebeyehu routed the Italians at Amba Alage and forced them to retreat to Mekelle. The Italians were besieged there and denied access to a water well,



which they had used from 7-21 January 1896, by a stratagem developed by Empress Taytu. After some negotiations, the besieged Italian troops were set free and joined their compatriots.

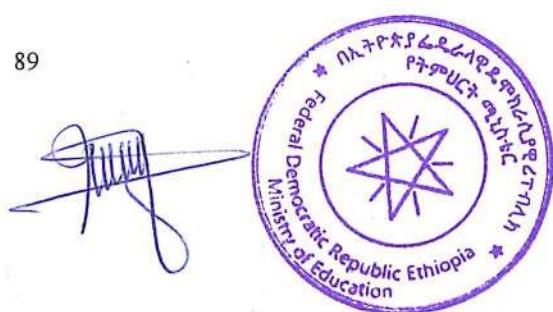
Ethiopian forces decisively defeated the Italian columns led by Generals Oreste Baratieri, Vittorio Dabormida, Giuseppe Arimond, Matteo Albertone and Elena at Adwa on 1st March 1896. About 8, 000 Italians were killed, 1,500 wounded and 3,000 were captured; 4, 000-6, 000 Ethiopians are said to have been killed. Italy was forced to recognize the independence of Ethiopia by the treaty of Addis Ababa signed on October 26, 1896. A number of powers also recognized the independence of Ethiopia. The Battle of Adwa has become a source of pride not only for Ethiopians but also for Africans and the black race in general. The victory of black people over white colonizers inspired Africans to fight against colonialism. The well-known Pan-Africanist, Marcus Garvey, inspired his followers in his “Back to Africa” movement. He used phrases like “Ethiopia thou land of our fathers.”

6. 5. 3. The Italian Occupation (1936-41) and the Patriotic Resistance

Background

The Fascists led by Benito Mussolini came to power in Italy in 1922, and were determined to restore the power and glory of ancient Roman Empire by erasing the shameful scar of Adwa. Their policy of subversion aimed at sowing dissatisfaction in Tigray, Begemedir, Gojjam and Wollo. Beside their legation in Addis Ababa, the Italians had consulates in provincial towns such as Adwa, Gondar, Debre Markos and Dessie that played a significant role in propagating discontent, and gathering vital military and political intelligence. This responsibility was entrusted to Corrado Zoli, Italian governor of Eritrea (1928-1930). The Italian legation in Addis Ababa, headed by Giuliano Cora, led the policy of ‘rapprochement’, a pseudo reconciliation tactic, which was trying to persuade the Ethiopian government to establish cordial relations. For instance, the signing of the twenty-year Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1928 was a manifestation of the success of the rapprochement policy.

Mussolini, who had made all the necessary preparations to launch the invasion of Ethiopia, was only searching for a pretext. He found it in the Walwal incident. The Walwal Incident (December 5, 1934) was the result of lack of boundary demarcation and effective administrative control in the frontiers. Taking advantage of this porous border, the Italians occupied Walwal.



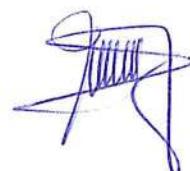
When the Ethiopians protested, they refused to give back Walwal and even attacked the Ethiopian soldiers who were stationed nearby. Although the number of Ethiopians who died during this border clash was three times as high as that of the Italians, it was Italy which demanded apology and reparation from Ethiopia. Ethiopia took the matter to the League of Nations and a period of diplomatic wrangling followed.

The 1935 Invasion and its Aftermath

The war was started on the northern front when the Italians crossed the Mereb River on October 3, 1935 and launched a three-pronged invasion across Adigrat, Enticho and Adwa. The Ethiopian counter offensive was led by *Ras* Emiru Haile-Selassie on the western front, *Ras* Kasa Hailu (also commander of the entire northern front) and *Ras* Seyoum Mengesha on the central front, and *Ras* Mulugeta Yigezu (the War Minister) on the eastern front. The Ethiopian army launched a major offensive against the Italians on January 20, 1936, intending to isolate Mekelle, but failed due to lack of coordination among the above-mentioned commanders. The Ethiopian force lost to the Italians at the first Battle in Temben on January 24. Then, the Italians advanced to the impregnable natural fortress of Amba-Aradom, to the south of Mekelle, where Ethiopian forces were stationed, and scored yet another decisive victory in which *Ras* Mulugeta Yigezu lost his life. Moreover, the forces of *Ras* Kasa and *Ras* Seyoum were outnumbered by the Italian troops and were defeated at the Second Battle of Temben (February 27-29, 1936). *Ras* Kasa and *Ras* Seyoum narrowly escaped and joined the Emperor at Korem.

On the western front, the Ethiopian army under *Ras* Emeru put strong resistance against the advancing Italian force. Thanks to *Ras* Emeru's better leadership quality, the number of deaths of Ethiopian soldiers was less than those on the other fronts. The series of battles between the Ethiopian and the Italian forces culminated in Maychew on March 31, 1936. Although the Ethiopian army under the command of the emperor (especially members of the *Kebur Zabegna*) put strong resistance, they were not able to achieve victory. Many Ethiopian soldiers lost their lives from the Italian ground and air bombardment. Then, the Italian forces controlled Dessie and Addis Ababa on 4 April and May 5, 1936, respectively.

The Ethiopian army on the Southern Front was better equipped and well led by *Ras* Desta Damtew (in the south) and *Dejazmach* Nesibu Zamanuel (in the southeast). The Ethiopian army lost to the Italians at Qorahe (November 1935) and Genale Dorya (January 12-14, 1936). In the

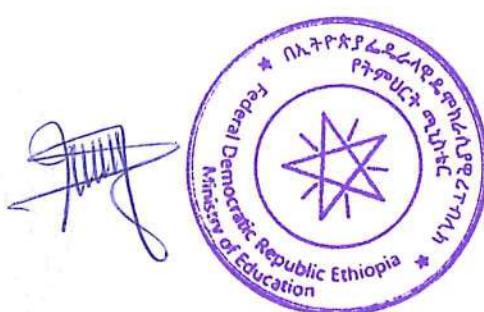


ensuing battles, the *askari* (Eritrean recruits) deserted the Italians and joined the Ethiopian force which boosted the moral of the troops of *Ras Desta*, who continued to challenge the Italians until he was captured and executed at Goggeti in Gurage in early 1937. The number of Italian soldiers lost on the southern front was larger than that of the north, which slowed the Italian advance to the center; Badoglio entered Addis Ababa before Graziani even occupied Harar.

Between Haile Selassie's fleeing the country on May 2, 1936 and the Italian entry, Addis Ababa was subjected to the burning of buildings, looting, and random shooting. The major targets were the imperial palace, the rich and foreigners, many of whom saved their lives by taking refuge in foreign legations. The Italians deliberately delayed their entry so that the people of the city would consider them as 'angels' of peace, and accept their rule. After their control of the capital, Marshal Badoglio immediately reported the situation to Mussolini, who announced to the Italians and the world about their control of Ethiopia with the phrase "Ethiopia is Italian!"

The Italians immediately merged Ethiopia with their colonies of Italian Somaliland and Eritrea and named the combination Italian East Africa (IEA) or *Africa Orientale Italiana* (AOI). It had six regions: Eritrea (including Tigray) with its capital at Asmara; Amhara (including Begemidr, Gojjam, Wollo and Northern Shewa), with its capital at Gondar; Oromo and Sidama (including the southern and southwestern provinces), with its capital at Jimma; Eastern Ethiopia with its capital at Harar; Somalia (including Ogaden), with its capital at Mogadishu; Addis Ababa (later changed to Shewa), the capital of the entire IEA. The governors of IEA were: Marshal Badoglio (till the end of May 1936), Marshal Graziani (till February 1937) and finally Amadeo Umberto, the Duke of Aosta. A top-heavy bureaucracy and corruption characterized the IEA administration. For instance, Badoglio reportedly pocketed about 1,700,000 MTT confiscated from the Bank of Ethiopia. 50% of Amadeo Umberto's administration was characterized as inept and 25% as thieves. The Italians destroyed non-Italian foreign firms, such as Mohammedaly and A. Besse, and replaced them with governmental enterprises that controlled the industry, trade and agriculture. They were relatively successful in the sectors of trade and industry as compared to the agricultural. For instance, they planned to settle Italian farmers in selected areas like Wegera, Chercher and Jimma, but they only accomplished 10% of their target.

The Italian administrative control and legacy were largely confined to urban areas as follows:



- Architecture, where the Italians left an indelible mark in towns such as Addis Ababa, Jimma, Adwa, Gondar, Desse, Harar, Asmara, Mogadishu and others.
- Introducing urban facilities like clean water and electricity;
- Social legacies (expansion of prostitution, adoption of European habits-including eating and dressing styles, and adoption of Italian words);
- The consolidation of cash economy;
- Road construction and development of motor transport;
- The sense of division: deliberately fostering ethnic and religious tension.

The Patriotic Resistance Movement

The first phase of resistance was waged by commanders of the Southern Front: *Ras Desta Damtew*, *Dejjach Beyene Merid* and *Dejjach Gebre Maryam Gari*. A five-pronged assault on the capital involving *Asfawesen* and *Aberra Kasa*, *Dejjach Balcha Safo*, *Balambaras* (later *Ras Abebe Aregay*) and *Dejjach Fikre-Mariam Yinnnadu* was also made in the summer of 1936, but it failed for lack of coordination. *Abune Petros*, who was the spirit behind the offensive, was executed and became a martyr. *Abreha Deboch* and *Moges Asgedom* hurled a bomb at Graziani in Genete-Le’ul palace compound at Sidist Kilo on February 19, 1937, wounding him seriously and killing some others. The Italian Black Shirts reacted by chopping heads, burning down houses with their inhabitants and disemboweling thousands in Addis Ababa. About 30,000 Ethiopians were reportedly killed in three days. Special targets were educated Ethiopians (including members of the Black Lion Organization) and the EOC. 297 monks were executed in Debre Libanos monastery on May 21, 1937.

This reign of terror marked the transition from conventional resistance to guerrilla warfare (2nd phase). There arose women who led their own army like *Lekyelesh Beyan*, who was captured after an Italian air bombardment in January 1941. *Kebedech Seyoum*, the wife of *Dejjach Abera Kasa*, maintained peace and order in Salale as well as leading the Resistance. The patriots also included *Dejjach Umar Samatar*, Colonel *Abdisa Aga*, *Dejjach Gebrehiwot Meshesha*, *Dejjach Abbai Kahsay*, *Woizero Shewareged Gedle*, *Zeray Dires*, Colonel *Jagama Kello*, *Woizero Sinidu Gebru*, *Ras Amoraw Wubneh*, *Lij Haile Mariam Mamo*, *Dejjach Habte Mariam*, Colonel *Belay Haileab*, Major *Matias Gemedo*, Captain *Kifle Nesibu*, *Dejjach Geresu Duki*, *Dejjach Bekele Woya*, *Dejjach Belay Zeleqe*, *Dejjach Mengesha Jembere*, *Dejjach Negash Bezabih*, *Lij Haylu Belew* and many others.

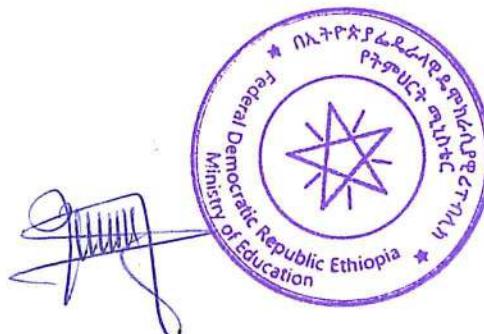


Yet, the resistance was handicapped by the Ethiopian collaborators called the *banda*. Moreover, there was no one national organization to coordinate the activities of the many patriotic groups dispersed in many parts of the country with no unified command structure. Relations between guerrilla groups were characterized by parochialism and jealousy. Some guerrilla groups spent more time fighting one another than attacking the declared enemy.

Things began to change when the patriots suddenly received external support from Britain when Italy entered World War II on June 10, 1940 on the side of Germany against France and Britain. London recognized Emperor Haile-Selassie as a full ally on July 12, 1940. The British brought the emperor to the Sudan to serve as a rallying point for the Resistance. They then launched a three-pronged attack on the Italians. In the north, General William Platt led the forces that attacked the Italians in Eritrea. Colonel Sandford and Major Wingate accompanied the Emperor from the Sudan into Gojjam at the head of British and Ethiopian troops called the Gideon force in January 1941. General Cunningham led the attack from Kenya and entered Addis Ababa on March 6, 1941. Emperor Haile-Selassie returned to Addis Ababa on May 5, 1941.

Learning Activities

- Discuss the circumstances that gave rise to the Gibe monarchies.
- Elaborate the role of local and long-distance trade in the interactions between peoples and states of Ethiopia and the Horn.
- Did the nineteenth century territorial expansion contribute to the interaction and integration of peoples in Ethiopia and the Horn? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- Elucidate Tewodros' administrative policies, military reforms and their outcomes.
- Explicate internal and external circumstances that led Menilek II's expansion to south.
- Assess the divergent paths Emperors Tewodros II, Yohannes IV and Menilek II pursued in their administration of the empire.
- Explain the circumstances that led to the foundation of Addis Ababa as Ethiopia's capital.
- Describe *Lij* Iyasu's efforts to reform the country's justice system and police force.
- What was the enduring interest of Ethiopian monarchs and regional leaders in establishing contacts with the outside world? What major obstacles did they encounter?
- Discuss the activities of the patriots focusing on their achievements and weaknesses.



UNIT SEVEN

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, 1941-1995 **(7 HOURS)**

7.1. Post-1941 Imperial Period

7.1.1. External Relations

Ethiopia and Britain

Britain recognized Ethiopia's sovereign status with mutual diplomatic accreditation, but it continued to exercise the upper hand because of its role in the liberation of Ethiopia from Fascist occupation. The British considered Ethiopia Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA). The 1942 Anglo-Ethiopian agreement gave Britain final authority over Ethiopia's foreign affairs, territorial integrity, administration, finances, the military and the police. British citizens held key posts in the Ethiopian government such as advisors and judges. The emperor had to obtain approval from the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in East Africa, Sir Philip Mitchell, to implement sovereign matters such as the declaration of war or declaration of a state of emergency. The British assumed control over currency, foreign exchange and foreign trade.

The Emperor resented such restrictions to his powers and opened a diplomatic offensive to remove them. As a result, Britain relaxed the restrictions imposed upon Ethiopian government. Accordingly, the second Anglo-Ethiopian agreement (signed in 1944) lifted the priority accorded to the British minister over all other foreign diplomats in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government could now employ non-British foreign personnel and it regained control over a section of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway. The British also agreed to evacuate their army from the region once they had equipped Ethiopia's military force, a task mandated to the British Military Mission to Ethiopia (BMME) that assisted in organizing and training of Ethiopian army until 1951. Haile-Selassie I Harar Military Academy, which was established in 1958, was modeled after the British Military Academy at Sandhurst.

Nevertheless, Britain did not yield to Ethiopia's territorial demands. Britain insisted that the Ogaden should be merged with the former Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland to form what they called "Greater Somalia." Similarly, the western and northern lowlands of Eritrea were considered to be part of the Sudan. Furthermore, it wanted to integrate the Tigrigna speaking



highlands of Eritrea with Tigray to form a separate state. Therefore, Ethiopia's claims to Eritrea and Ogaden were rejected at the London Conference of the Allied powers in September 1945.

The territorial issues were resolved only after a decade. The British left parts of Ogaden in 1948 and completely withdrew from the region in 1954. In Eritrea, people who wanted union with Ethiopia rallied behind the Unionists while the Liberal Progressive Party and later the Muslim League campaigned for separation and independence. In 1948, the question of Eritrea was referred to the UN, which appointed a commission of five from Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and South Africa to find out the actual wishes of Eritreans. After a period of investigation, Guatemala and Pakistan recommended granting Eritrea independence. While South Africa and Burma recommended Federation, Norway recommended union with Ethiopia. On December 2, 1950, UN decided by Resolution 390V to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia, which came into effect in 1952. However, this arrangement satisfied neither the unionists nor the independence bloc and nor the Emperor. The Eritrean Parliament, under pressure from the emperor and the unionists, dissolved the Federation on November 14, 1962.

Ethiopia and the United States

American interest in the region began to grow chiefly after the US acquired an Italian communication base in Asmara known as Radio Marina, later renamed Qagnew after the Ethiopian force that fought on the side of the Americans in the Korean War (1950-3). The Ethiopian vice Minister of Finance, Yilma Deressa, visited the US in 1943 to request expertise to assist Ethiopia's development. In response, USA extended the Lend-Lease Agreement to Ethiopia and sent a technical mission in May 1944. At the beginning of 1945, the emperor and the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt met in Egypt and discussed, among other things, recognition of the American Sinclair Company's prospecting for oil in the Ogaden.

The Point Four Agreement and the Ethio-US Treaty were signed in 1952 and 1953, respectively. The first enabled subsequent US assistance in the military, agriculture, education and public health, while the second extended the use of the Qagnew base by the US in return for military assistance. Following the 1953 treaty, the US launched the American Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) to equip Ethiopia's armed forces. For example, over 2, 500 Ethiopians received various forms of military training in the US between 1953 and 1968. The US also



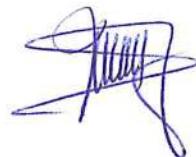
supplied anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, naval craft, and weapons for the infantry. Sixty percent of US military aid to Africa had been directed to Ethiopia by 1970.

Civil aviation, telecommunication, road transport, and education were other spheres in which the Americans took active part. Ethiopia concluded an agreement with the Transcontinental and Western World Airline (TWA) to establish Ethiopian Air Lines (EAL) in 1945. The Imperial Board of Telecommunication was established with the help of the International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) organization between 1950 and 1952. With a financial loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Imperial High Way Authority (IHA) was set up in January 1951. Ethiopianization of such organizations took some time due to shortage of Ethiopian personnel. For example, the IHA was run by the Americans until 1962; key management and executive posts of the Ethiopian Airlines were seized by the Americans until 1971. In the field of education, the US offered scholarship opportunities for many Ethiopians to attend in the United States for their second and third degrees. Meanwhile, many American volunteers taught in Ethiopian schools under the Peace Corps Program.

7.1.2. Socio-Economic Developments

In the post-1941 period, agriculture provided employment for about 90% of the population, generating about 70% of the GDP and supplying almost 100% of the country's income from export trade. More than 66% of northern peasants cultivated less than 0.5 ha in the 1970s. The government granted land to many of its supporters in southern Ethiopia. The tenant population as percentage of total rural population in the newly incorporated regions varied from 37% in Sidama Governorate General to a staggering 73% in Ilu Abba Bor and 75% in Hararghe, whereas tenancy in the northern provinces averaged 11%, consisting mainly of religious minorities and occupational castes. Tenants surrendered up to 60 % of their produce to landlords who mostly lived in towns or the capital. In addition to formal tributes, smallholder and landless farmers were obliged to make varied payments and to render labor services to the lords. Sharecrop tenancy arrangements were so heavy that increasing production only increased the exploitation of peasants. Such conditions discouraged peasants from maximizing their production beyond subsistence levels.

The deteriorating economy, coupled with external pressure from donors, induced the government to establish a Land Reform Committee in 1961. This later became the Land Reform and



Development Authority, later renamed the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration. The condition of the farming population further worsened with the expansion of commercial farming (mechanization of farming) in the 1960s and 970s that caused the eviction of tenants. The government attempted to enhance the productivity of small farmers by launching comprehensive agricultural package programs such as the Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU) and the Wolayta Agricultural Development Unit (WADU).

Meanwhile, overall domestic output increased nearly three and a half times after 1950 and better progress was registered in manufacturing. The number of industrial enterprises grew to over 400 and the industrial working force increased to nearly 60,000. The infrastructure expanded considerably. Moreover, public revenue and expenditure both grew nine and tenfold respectively. Banking facilities expanded with the State Bank of Ethiopia being formed in 1942. Also, a private bank, Addis Ababa Bank, was established in 1963. There was relatively high level of modernization that was reflected in music, sports, cuisine, and dress styles. However, much of Ethiopia remained traditional with a low living standard; Ethiopia was one of the least developed countries. While the manufacturing sector, producing only light consumer goods, contributed less than 5 % of the national income, industrialization was limited to the capital and its vicinity, Asmara and Dire Dawa. Industrial investment was also primarily of foreign origin.

7.1.3. Consolidation of Autocracy

Emperor Haile-Selassie embarked on consolidating his power through the bureaucratization of government, the building of a national army and a centralized fiscal system. In order to staff the expanding bureaucracy, education was promoted at both school and college levels. The two most popular and prestigious secondary schools, Haile-Selassie I Secondary School and General Wingate School, were opened in 1943 and 1946 respectively. The University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) was inaugurated in 1950. This was followed by the Engineering and Building College in Addis Ababa, the College of Agriculture in Alemaya (Haramaya in Hararghe) and the Public Health College in Gondar. These were brought together in 1961 to form Haile-Selassie I University, which was renamed Addis Ababa University after 1974.

Another major preoccupation of the imperial regime was the strengthening of the military and security apparatus. Thus, the ministries of Defense and Interior consistently received the highest budgetary allocations.



The traditional aristocracy, although well off economically, had lost most of its political privileges. Based on the traditional *shum shir*, the emperor appointed and demoted his ministers. The emperor appointed eleven ministers in 1943, but their subservience to the monarch was stated in explicit terms. The prime minister was allowed to select his cabinet members for approval by the emperor only in 1966. The most powerful of the ministers in the post-1941 political order was *Tsehafe-Tizaz* Wolde-Giorgis Wolde-Yohannis, who headed the Ministry of Pen from 1941 to 1955, and held the portfolios of Justice and Interior ministries on various occasions. In reality, he was the *de facto* prime minister. His access to the emperor and the latter's trust in him made him very powerful. The royal family, leading members of the nobility, and the *abun* were members of the crown council, which was an advisory body to the emperor.

The 1931 constitution was revised in 1955. It clearly stated that the emperor's "personality was sacred, his dignity inviolable and his power indisputable". However, the constitution introduced universal adult suffrage and an elected chamber of deputies with a four-year term, and a senate serving for six years and appointed by the emperor with certain property qualification. Yet, the emperor was the head of the three branches of government: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. As the years progressed, the emperor started to dedicate his attention to foreign affairs. He played a significant role in the Non-Aligned Movement and the drive for African unity.

7.1.4. Oppositions and the Downfall of the Monarchical Regime

Plots and Conspiracies

Some patriots were opposed to the restoration of the emperor to the throne because he had fled the country when it needed him most. This feeling of resentment was exacerbated by the privileges and rewards accorded to exiles and *bandas* (collaborators). One such critic was *Dejjazmach* Belay Zeleke, to whom the emperor had offered governorship of one of the southern Ethiopian provinces to remove him from his base in Bichena District of Gojjam. Balay rejected the offer, and forces from Dabra Marqos and Addis Ababa invaded Balay's district in February 1943. After three months of fighting, Balay surrendered and was detained in Fitche, from where he escaped a few months later but was caught on his way to Gojjam with his brother Ejjigu, taken back to the capital and publicly hanged.

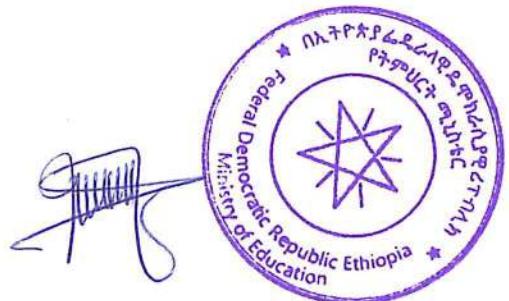


Another dissident, *Bitweded* Negash Bezabih, plotted to assassinate the emperor and proclaim a republic in 1951. Negash and his accomplices like Beqele Anasimos were arrested during one of their clandestine meetings and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

The most fierce and sustained opposition came from *Blatta* Takele Wolde-Hawaryat, who first hatched a plot with Yohannes Iyasu as front and with the support of some contingents of the army. Nonetheless, the plot was uncovered and he was detained. Released in 1945, he was involved in another plot in 1946 and was detained up to 1954. He tried to assassinate the emperor on November 17, 1969 but failed. He then barricaded himself in his house and engaged in a shoot-out with the police in which he was killed.

The most serious challenge came in the form of a *coup* attempt by the Neway brothers, Brigadier General Mengistu and Germame. As governor of Wolayta, Germame monitored police activities, introduced a settlement program in which he distributed government holdings to landless peasants and ordered written tenancy agreements. He was then summoned back to Addis Ababa for explanation. Yet, unable to condemn Germame's intentions, Haile Selassie sent him to Jigjiga where he continued his radical reforms. While the emperor was on state visit in Brazil, the two brothers started detaining ministers and other members of the nobility. They also took over the radio station and spoke about the backwardness of the country. Crown Prince Asfawosen was declared to be a salaried constitutional monarch and delivered a speech on Radio Addis explaining the rationale of the coup and promising the establishment of new factories, schools etc. On December 14, 1960, a new government to be headed by *Ras* Emiru Haile-Selassie was declared. Major General Mulugeta Buli was chosen as chief of staff of the armed forces.

However, the army and the air force refused to side with the rebels, and with the support of the Americans and the patriarch, the loyalists, led by General Merid Mengesha and *Ras* Asrate Kassa, crushed the coup and hunted fleeing brothers. They were spotted near Zuquala Mountain and, in the following shootout, Germame died while Mengistu was wounded, captured, tried and hanged. In the meantime, the emperor had triumphantly entered the capital. The regime made some concessions, but did not address the root causes that triggered the coup. Thus, opposition only grew more overt and began to gain mass support.



Peasant Rebellions

The First Woyane Rebellion of 1942-43

The inequities of the system, corruption and greed of the *beherawi tor* (Territorial Army) unit stationed there and general administrative inefficiency led to the peasant protests. The 1942 land decree also forced peasants to pay tax arrears whose collection was problematic. The nobility took advantage of the popular discontent thanks to the able leadership of *Blatta* Haile-Mariam Reda. Finally, the government's retribution against the Raya-Azebo on allegation of cattle raids on the Afar territory sparked general rebellion. The first confrontation took place on January 11, 1942, when the imperial force was defeated and humiliated by the peasants. The rebels further scored an astounding victory in Addi Awuna on May 22, 1943. Soon small towns around Mekelle like Qwiha and Enda-Iyyasus fell to the rebels' hands on October 14, 1943. The imperial army, supported by the British Royal Air Force, crushed the rebellion in October 1943. The emperor ordered reprisals against peasants suspected of supporting the Woyane.

The Yeju Rebellion

Yeju peasants rose in 1948 after their appeal against land alienation was ignored by the government. Led by *Qegnzmach* Melaku Taye and Unda Mohammed, peasants stormed and freed inmates held in Woldiya prison. The *nech lebash* (settler militia) quelled the unrest and eventually the leaders were caught and publicly flogged. Throughout the 1950s, localized skirmishes expanded to Qobbo, Hormat, Tumuga, Karra-Qore, etc. led by notables like Ali Dullatti (*Abba Jabbi*). Peasants revolted in 1970 against the introduction of mechanized agriculture that encroached on pastureland, and killed *Qegnzmach* Abate Haylu, a member of the local nobility and the main beneficiary of the process. Finally, the rising was suppressed by the local militia.

The Gojjam Peasant Rebellion

Dejjach Kebede Tesema, governor of Gojjam appointed by the central government, initiated land assessment and classification to determine taxation and raised tax rate from what it had been prior to 1935. A revolt broke out in Mota, Qolla-Daga Damot and Mecha districts led by people like *Dejjach* Abere Yimam in 1950. As a result, the tax rate was reduced by 1/3 and Kebede was removed and replaced by Haylu Belew, a hereditary ruler of Gojjam.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be a name, located to the right of the stamp.

Haylu's successor, *Dejjazmach* Tsehayu Enqu-Selassie, again appointed by the central government, imposed contributions to build the emperor's statue in Debra Marqos. In addition, peasants were ordered to pay tax arrears and register their arms with penalty fees. Meanwhile, peasants were victimized by the ravages of the *nech lebash* under the pretext of eradicating banditry. Above all, an attempt was made to introduce agricultural income tax, which the parliament adopted in November 1967 and this sparked the 1968 uprising led by veterans of the anti-Fascist resistance, who had taken titles for themselves such as *leul* and *fitawrari*. The government was forced to transfer *Dejjach* Tsehayu to Kafa, declare amnesty, abandon the new tax and cancel all tax arrears going back to 1950. Despite these concessions, the rebellion spread throughout most of Gojam, except Agaw-Midir and Metekel. Finally, the rebellion was crushed by the combined forces of the army, police and *nech lebash* at the end of 1968.

The Gumuz Rebellion

The 1952/3 Gumuz rebellion is named after its famous leader, Abba Tone, who served the regime as *Abba Qoro* (sub-district chief) responsible for tax collection, maintenance of law and order as well as community mobilization for public works in time of peace and for war during conflicts. The people were discontented with the unjust system in general and heavy taxation and mal-administration in particular. Although Abba Tone reported the peasants' complaints to higher authorities in Nacco and Gimbi, they were unable to resolve the problem. Meanwhile, the Gumuz were determined not to pay taxes unless the government addressed their concerns. An open clash broke out when tax collectors, with the backing of the police, attempted to force the people to pay land taxes. In the fighting, Abba Tone and his followers were outgunned and outnumbered by the police. Abba Tone was captured, detained and later released on pardon.

The Gedeo Peasant Rebellion

The Gedeo witnessed the denigration of their culture and an unprecedented level of land expropriation by members of the northern nobility who were vying for coffee farms in the 1960s. The major contender was the emperor's daughter, Princess Tenagnework. Petitions to higher authorities to curb the continued land alienation proved futile. Then peasants refused to pay *erbo* (1/4 of agricultural produce payable to the landlords), armed themselves with traditional weapons like spears, swords and arrows, and clashed with the imperial army at Michille in 1960. Over a hundred peasants lost their lives while much of their property was destroyed and the



rebellion was suppressed. Finally, *Afe Nigus* Eshete Geda fined the *hayicha* (elders) accused of supporting the revolt.

The Bale Peasant Rebellion

The causes of this rebellion included the introduction of the *qalad* and the accompanying land measurement in 1951, high taxation, religious and ethnic subjugation (imposition of the Christian settlers' culture on Muslims) that reached to unprecedented level after the appointment of Warqu Enqu-Selassie as governor in 1963. Further, the Somali government extended material and moral support as part of its strategy of realizing "Greater Somalia". The revolt broke out in El Kerre led, by notables like Kahin Abdi. Initially, rebel groups conducted isolated hit-and-run raids against military garrisons and police stations. Soon, however, they began to coordinate their activities under an umbrella organization, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), engaging in conventional war.

Haile Selassie tried to win the population by developing alliances with notable Oromo leaders and he was able to recruit some members of local ruling houses, but he failed to contain the popular revolt, which quickly spread to Wabe, Dallo and Ganale *Awrajas* (sub-provinces). In Gola-Abbadi forest, the rebels even attacked government aircraft. Further, the rebels killed *Girazmach* Beqelete Haragu of Adaba and *Fitawrari* Wolde-Mika'el Bu'i of Dodola in 1965 and 1966, respectively. The government put Bale under the martial rule of Wolde-Selassie Baraka, the head of the Fourth Division Army, in December 1966. The army, police, Territorial Army, *nech lebash* and *wedo zemach* (volunteers) launched massive operations in 1967. Meanwhile, the rebels lost support from Somalia after Mohammed Siad Barre took power in 1969 and the rebellion ended in the early 1970s after some of its leaders, including the self-styled General Waqo Gutu, surrendered to the government forces.

Movements of Nations and Nationalities

The Mecha-Tulama Welfare Association (MTWA) was formed in January 1963 to expand educational, communication and health facilities in Oromo land. Founding members of the association included Colonel Alemu Qitessa, Qedida Guremessa, Lieutenant Mamo Mezemir and Haile-Mariam Gameda. In the next two years, the association attracted large number of members of the elite, including such high-ranking military officers as Brigadier General Taddese Birru (the Commander of the Fetno Derash/Rapid Deployment Force). It organized successful rallies



in Gindeberet, Dandi, Arsi (Dera and Iteyya). Starting with development programs like building schools and clinics, the association began to raise contentious issues including that of land. Leaders of the association even went further and plotted to assassinate the emperor on the anniversary of his coronation in November 1966, but the plot was foiled by security forces. A bombing incident in one of the cinemas at the capital in which the association was implicated finally led the regime to ban the association in 1967 followed by the imprisonment and killing of its prominent leaders. Taddese was captured while retreating to the bush and sentenced to death, which was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment and he was exiled to Gelemso, where he remained until the outbreak of the 1974 revolution. The *Derg* executed Taddese for allegedly instigating armed struggle in 1975.

The biggest challenge to the imperial regime came from Eritrea. Following the abrogation of the federation, Eritrean exiles founded the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) in Cairo in 1958; this later evolved into Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF, or *Jabaha* in Arabic) in 1961. Splinter groups such as Popular Liberation Forces (PLF) and Salfi Natsenet Eritrea (Front for Eritrean Independence) split from the ELF in June 1970, eventually leading to the founding of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF, or *Sha'abiya* in Arabic) in early 1972.

The Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM)

Students at the University College of Addis Abab (UCAA) formed the University College Union (UCU) to coordinate their activities in the late 1950s. The National Union of Ethiopian University Students (NUEUS) was established in 1963 to coordinate the activities of university students throughout the country. The parliament's rejection of the 1964 tenancy reform bill triggered student protest in the following year, when students came out demanding "Land to the Tiller." Factors that contributed to sharpening the students' ideology included: increased awareness of the country's backward conditions *vis a vis* other African countries which they learned from politically more conscious scholarship students from different parts of Africa, and the Ethiopian University Service (EUS), launched in 1964. The emergence in 1964 of a radical group with Marxist-Leninist leanings known as "the Crocodiles" marked an increase in militancy. The Main Campus Student Union (MCSU) and the University Students Union of Addis Ababa (USUAA) with its paper *Tagel* (Struggle) were established in 1965 and 1966, respectively. Outside the country, students were organized under the Ethiopian Students Union in



North America (ESUNA), with its paper called *Challenge*, and the Ethiopian Students Union in Europe (ESUE), with its paper *Tateq* (gird yourself).

Throughout the 1960s, a rallying cry of student demonstrations was “Land to the Tiller,” but other local and global issues were also raised. With the students’ demands for the respect of the rights of nations and nationalities, the government was alarmed and started taking measures against leaders of the movement ranging from press campaigns to detentions and killings. Furthermore, the regime deported a large number of students to the torrid Gibe River Valley in 1972. Meanwhile, students’ opposition was elevated to hijacking of aircrafts.

7.2. The *Derg* Regime (1974-1991)

7.2.1. Rise and Consolidation of the *Derg*

Soldiers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) stationed at Negele-Borana mutinied from January 8 to 15, 1974, protesting against their bad living conditions. They detained the commander of the ground forces who had been sent to pacify the situation. Meanwhile, soldiers of the Second Division in Asmara, the Fourth Division in Addis Ababa and the Air Force in Bishoftu (Debre-Zeyt) mutinied demanding salary increments, and other reforms.

Teachers throughout the country protested against the implementation of an education reform program known as Sector Review, which they deemed disadvantageous for and biased against the poor. The Ethiopian Teachers’ Association (ETA) had coordinated demonstrations against the program in December 1973. It called a general strike demanding a number of other social reforms on February 18, 1974. On the same day, taxi drivers went on strike demanding 50% increase in transport fees due to rise of petrol prices that followed the Arab-Israeli Yom Kippur war of 1973. Students, workers and the unemployed youth joined the protests, during which vehicles, particularly buses and luxury private automobiles, were attacked.

The government responded by suspending the Sector Review, reducing petrol prices and raising the salaries of soldiers. The cabinet of Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold was replaced by that of Endalkachew Mekonnen on February 28. The Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions (CELU) successfully staged a general strike on March 8. Then, 100,000 Muslim residents of the capital and their Christian sympathizers came out demanding religious equality on April 20.



Meanwhile, the soldiers and NCOs' Coordinating Committee set up in February was joined by officers like Colonel Alem Zewd Tessema of the Airborne Brigade, who then became its leader. The Committee arrested Aklilu and hundreds of high-ranking officials in April. The Defense Minister, Lt. General Abiy Abebe, set up the National Security Commission to restore order and respect for the government authority. The *Derg*, which eventually seized political power, was officially formed on June 28, 1974 when it held its first meeting at the headquarters of the Fourth Division. "*Derg*", a Ge'ez word for "committee", was the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Territorial Army. Yet, officers above the rank of major, suspected of supporting the old regime, were not included. Thus, Major Mengistu Haile-Mariam of the Third Division of Hararghe and Major Atnafu Abate of the Fourth Division became chairman and vice-chairman, respectively. The *Derg* also declared the motto, "Ethiopia Tikdem" ("Ethiopia First"), "Yaleminim Dem" ("Without any bloodshed") and exercised power parallel with Endalkachew's cabinet for some time. The emperor was caught in the middle, trying to keep a balance between the two. However, Endalkachew was imprisoned and replaced by *Lej* Mikael Emiru on August 1. Then, Anbessa Bus Company and St. George Brewery, in which the emperor and the imperial family held more than 50% stakes, were nationalized. Moreover, a British documentary film that revealed the hidden horrors of the Wollo famine was exploited by the *Derg* to discredit the emperor. Finally, Emperor Haile-Selassie I was deposed and detained at the Fourth Division headquarters on September 12.

The *Derg* then proclaimed itself the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC). Soon, civilian revolutionaries, who had started calling for the establishment of a provisional people's government, started gathering around the Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions (CELU), the university teachers' group known as Forum, and the students. The Army Engineers Corps, the First Division (the former Bodyguard) and the Army Aviation also opposed the prospect of a military government. However, the *Derg* imprisoned the leaders of CELU and the Forum. The militant Army Engineering Corps was also violently crushed on October 7. Lieutenant General Aman Mikael Andom, chairman of the PMAC, was shot dead on November 23 after a disagreement within the *Derg* over the issue of Eritrea. Aman believed in peaceful approach to resolve the Eritrean problem, while some radical members of the *Derg*, chiefly the First Vice-Chairman Mengistu Haile-Mariam, advocated a military solution. At the same time, the *Derg* announced the execution of some 52 prominent members of the old regime who had been



detained and half a dozen other leaders of the military units, who had opposed the *Derg*, as a “political decision.”

7.2.2. Attempts at Socio-Economic Reform

The *Derg* took a series of measures that aimed at fundamentally transforming the country. *Edget Behibiret Zemecha* (Development through Co-operation Campaign) was inaugurated in December 1974. In this campaign, all high school and university students and their teachers were to be sent to the countryside to help transform the life of peasants through programs such as literacy campaigns and the implementation of the impending land reform proclamation. However, the campaign was opposed by most of the civilian left as a mechanism that the *Derg* designed to remove its main opponents from the center. To appease the opposition, the *Derg* changed its slogan of “Ethiopia First” to “Ethiopian Socialism.”

Banks and insurance companies were nationalized following a series of proclamations in February 1975. Over seventy private commercial and industrial companies were then nationalized. On March 4, 1975, the *Derg* made a radical land reform proclamation, which abolished all private land ownership and set the upper limit on family holdings at ten hectares. Another proclamation nationalized all urban lands and extra houses on July 26, 1975. The campaigns showed *Derg*’s belief in mass mobilization. There was the “Green Campaign” of 1978 aimed at bringing about rapid economic development, the literacy campaign of 1979 aimed at eradicating illiteracy, and the “Red Star Campaign” of 1982 that aimed at solving the Eritrean problem once and for all. However, of these campaigns, only the literacy campaign registered some degree of success. The land reform proclamation ended landlord exploitation, but failed to make the peasant master of his land because the state ended up being the ultimate owner. On the other hand, nationalization killed private initiative and introduced a highly bureaucratized management of resources. The state, with its enhanced role and growing proportion, gained tremendous capacity to reward or penalize. The *Derg* used peasant associations and cooperatives with monopolistic government enterprises such as *Ersha Sebil Gebeya Dirijit* (Agricultural Marketing Corporation) to control the countryside, and the *kebele* (urban dwellers’ associations) to control the towns.



7.2.3. Political Movements and Opposition

Initially, the leftist opposition to the *Derg* came from two rival Marxist-Leninist political organizations: the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party/EPRP (formed in Berlin in 1972) and the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON in its Amharic acronym), founded in 1968. In the meantime, the *Derg*, pushed by the dominant leftist political discourse, gradually abandoned "Ethiopian Socialism" and embraced Marxism-Leninism. With the setting up of the Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs (POMOA) in April 1976, the *Derg* proclaimed the National Democratic Revolution Program, which was the Chinese model for socialist revolution, and identified feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism as the main enemies of the people. The *Derg*'s leftist organization known as *Abyotawi Seded* (Revolutionary Flame) was launched a few months later. In 1977, Emaledeh (Union of Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist Organizations/UEMLO), composed of Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Organization/MLRO (*Malerid* in its Amharic acronym), *Meison*, *Sed*, *Wezlig* (Workers League) and *Ech'at* (Ethiopian Oppressed Masses Revolutionary Struggle) was established.

Meanwhile, the struggle between the EPRP and the *Derg* had created a civil war scenario since September 1976, when the *Derg* started executing EPRP militants while the EPRP squads assassinated the *Derg* members and supporters. The EPRP also tried to kill Mengistu himself in mid-September. Then the *Derg* carried out massive search, arrest and destruction campaigns against the EPRP and its sympathizers. The *Derg* and its civilian allies unleashed the "Red Terror", initially targeting the EPRP, which was said to have declared "White Terror," and later including others like *Meison*, EPLF and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

The *Derg* itself was beset by internal struggles in late 1976. Mengistu had eliminated his potential rivals, Major Sisay Habte and Major Kiros Alemayehu. Many other key members of the *Derg* were accused of being EPRP members or sympathizers. On their part, members of the *Derg* such as Lieutenant Alemayehu Hayle and Captain Moges Wolde-Mikael resented the growing dictatorial power of Mengistu and his alliance with *Meison* and other pro-*Derg* leftist organizations. Assisted by the chairperson, Brigadier General Teferi Benti, they adeptly restructured the hierarchy of the *Derg*, resulting in the marginalization of Mengistu. Yet, Mengistu struck first by executing Teferi and other dissenting members within the *Derg* on 3 February 1977. Subsequently, Mengistu reassured his leadership of the *Derg*, assuming the roles



of both chairman and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He subsequently appointed his loyalists to key positions.

In the meantime, the Somali National Army had crossed the border into Ethiopia and carried out military operations in Degahbour, Kebridehar, Warder and Gode, taking control of Jigjiga and large pockets of land in the summer of 1977. Within a couple of months, the cities of Harar and Dire Dawa were endangered. Yet, the government mobilized a force of about 100,000 peasant militia and other forces that were trained at Angetu, Didessa, Hurso, Tateq and Tolay in a short time. Finally, with the help of 17,000 Cuban troops and forces from Southern Yemen Democratic Republic, the Somali Army was defeated at Kara-Mara near Jigjiga on March 4, 1978. The *Derg* had also severed relations with the USA in early 1977, when the American cultural and military institutions ended their operations in the country. After a month, Mengistu concluded agreements with Moscow for economic, cultural and military cooperation.

In the north, Eritrean insurgents encircled Asmara while a pro-monarchy organization, the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) marched inroads from the Sudan. However, the Eritrean insurgents were pushed back by the end of 1978 and EDU was crushed near the Ethio-Sudan borderland in places like Metema, Abder Raffi and Satit-Humera.

The *Emaledeh* began falling apart with the defection of *Meison* in 1977. The other competing member organizations, *Ech'at*, *Wezlig* and *Malerid*, were successively expelled from *Emaledeh*, and their leaders and members were either executed or detained as they tried to retreat to the countryside. Only *Sedek* remained as the authentic Marxist-Leninist organization in the country. The Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia (COPWE) was set up in December 1979. The Workers' Party of Ethiopia/WPE was inaugurated in September 1984, during the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the coming of the *Derg* to power.

In the interim, CELU was replaced on January 6, 1977 by the All Ethiopia Trade Union (AETU), which was later re-named Ethiopian Trade Union (ETU). Similarly, the All Ethiopia Peasants' Association (AEPA) was formed on April 22, 1978 and was later renamed Ethiopian Peasants' Association (EPA). The Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA) and Revolutionary Ethiopian Youth Association (REYA) were established in 1980. After an election which was predictably won by WPE, the *Beherawi Shengo* (National Assembly) proclaimed the



People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) in 1987, officially replacing the *Derg*. A typically Communist constitution was put in place; Colonel Mengistu became President of PDRE, secretary general of WPE and Commander in chief of the armed forces, with Fisseha Desta as Vice President and Figre-Sellassie Wegderes as Prime Minister with five deputies.

In the meantime, the government responded to the 1984/5 famine by massive resettlement of the affected peasants, mostly of Tigray and Wollo provinces, in Southwestern Ethiopia. The villagization program that followed further alienated the majority of peasants. Moreover, Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) in 1985 was a blow to Mengistu's agenda. He reluctantly declared a mixed economy, which was too little too late, in March 1990.

On the other hand, the EPLF scored a major victory in March 1988 at Afabet, north of Asmara, from its stronghold in Naqfa-Raza. It followed this significant victory with the capture of the port town of Massawa in 1990. Moreover, the TPLF (which grew out of *Mahber Gesgesi Bihere Tigray*/Association of Progressives of the Tigray Nation or Tigrayan National Organization/TNO, established on 17 September 1974) scored its most decisive victory at Enda-Selassie, Western Tigray, in February 1989.

Meanwhile, disgruntled commanders of almost all military units coordinated and led a coup against Mengistu when he left the country on a state visit to the German Democratic Republic in May 1989. However, the coup was so poorly organized that loyal palace troops encircled the leaders before they could even announce their intentions to the public. Mengistu returned triumphantly to take his revenge. The coup leaders were all imprisoned or executed.

The TPLF, after liberating Tigray, continued to move forward and made organizational adjustments to form a broader front known as the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The member organizations were TPLF, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Ethiopian Democratic Officers' Revolutionary Movement (EDORM). The EPRDF forces drove the *Derg* out of Gondar, Gojjam and Wollo, and parts of Wallaga and Shewa, approaching the capital from the north and west in a series of stunning campaigns in 1990 and 1991. Other liberation fronts, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Islamic Front for Liberation of Oromia, the



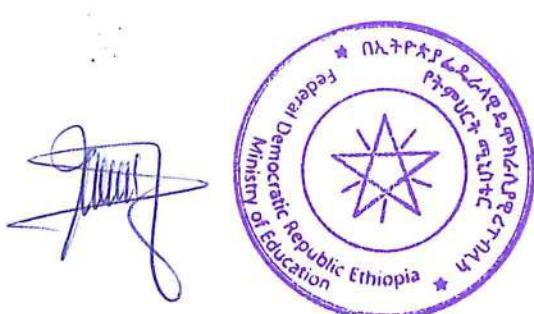
Afar Liberation Front, the Sidama Liberation Front, the Beni-Shangul Liberation Front and the Gambella Liberation Front, also became active. OLF forces dismantled the Derg's 131st Brigade in battle that liberated Asosa and Bambasi in the then Wallaga Province in 1990. In the meantime, negotiations for a peaceful end to the conflict were undertaken between the government, the EPLF, and the TPLF in Atlanta, Nairobi and Rome.

Mengistu fled the country first to Nairobi and then to Harare (Zimbabwe) on May 21, 1991. The PDRE Vice President, Lt. General Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan, appealed for an end to the civil war on May 23, 1991. Prime Minister Tesfaye Dinqa left for the London peace conference mediated by the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Mr. Herman Cohen, on May 27, 1991. EPRDF forces triumphantly entered Addis Ababa in the early hours of May 28, 1991.

7.3. Transitional Government

A handful of organizations, many of which were organized along ethnic lines, assembled to review the draft Charter prepared by the EPRDF and the OLF on 1 July 1991. The gathering was called the Peace and Democracy Transitional Conference of Ethiopia. The USA was at the forefront in providing the necessary diplomatic backing for the Conference. The Conference was attended by delegates from the UN, the OAU, the G7 Group, the US, the USSR, the Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti and Eritrea. The Conference debated and approved the Transitional Charter on the basis of which the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was created. Representatives of 27 organizations formed a Council of Representatives (COR), which acted as a legislative body ('Parliament'). This transitional parliament had 87 seats of which 32 were taken by the EPRDF and the remaining 55 seats were divided among the 23 non-EPRDF organizations. At the same time, a Council of Ministers was formed as an executive branch, with Meles Zenawi serving as the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). Meles then appointed a Prime Minister (Tamirat Layne) and a seventeen-member Council of Ministers. Key posts were given to EPRDF and the OLF members.

The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) was ratified in December 1994, and it took effect following federal elections in mid-1995. The constitution stipulates that the country would have federated states based on ethno-linguistic, identity and settlement patterns. The federal arrangement sought to devolve power to the regional states by

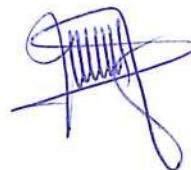


accommodating the country's ethno-linguistic groups. After the election, Meles assumed the premiership while Dr. Negasso Gidada, representing OPDO, became president (head of state).

Meanwhile, the EPLF set up a Provisional Government of Eritrea in 1991. This was followed by a referendum to decide the fate of Eritrea, in which the majority of the population voted for secession from Ethiopia. The Government of Eritrea was formed with Isayas Afwerki becoming the first president of the country after independence in May 1993.

Learning Activities

- Discuss important manifestations of the British and the Americans' dominance in Ethiopia's domestic and foreign affairs in the 1940s and 1950s respectively.
- Assess Eritreans' reactions about the future fate of their country in the 1940s and 1950s.
- What administrative and economic measures did Emperor Haile-Selassie take after his reinstatement to the throne and how did those measures help to consolidate his power?
- Discuss the major socio-economic and political developments in post-1941 Ethiopia.
- What was the context that led to the promulgation of the Revised 1955 Constitution?
- Explain the domestic challenges to the power of Emperor Haile-Selassie I immediately after the expulsion of the Italians. Describe the nature of the plots.
- Explain the causes, course and consequences of the 1960 coup attempt.
- Discuss the causes for and the consequences of the Woyane, the Gojjam and the Bale peasant rebellions, relating to the downfall of the imperial regime.
- Discuss the origin and development of the Ethiopian Student Movement, identifying the domestic and international causes of the movement.
- Account for the causes, course and consequences of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution.
- Identify and discuss major socio-economic reforms of the *Derg*.
- Explain the main factors for the downfall of the *Derg*.
- Explain essential features of the EPRDF-led government with reference to its measures.



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