AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE SHAWAN – AMHARA CONQUEST OF THE OROMO and SIDAMA REGIONS OF SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA 1865-1900

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Khartoum for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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TO the Memory of MY PARENTS
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my grateful thanks to the University of Khartoum for the financial support I received throughout the long period of research of the present study. I extend my sincere thankfulness to all the people who in one way or another offered their help and assistance. Special mention and particular acknowledgement should, however, be made to Dr Fadwa Abdel Rahman Ali Taha, Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary History in the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum.

Dr. Fadwa has not only been extremely inspiring and tirelessly helpful as my supervisor, but has also undertaken the onerous task of typing the draft manuscripts containing so many Amharic terms, titles, personal and place names etc…, besides references in Italian, French, and occasionally German. Above all I owe her inestimable debt and immense gratitude for the constant encouragement and unreserved support she has rendered to me without which the writing of this dissertation would never have been accomplished.
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ABSTRACT

The singular unparalleled process of Shawan Amhara territorial expansion during the era of the late nineteenth century European colonial conquest of sub-Saharan Africa and the resultant position of the subject Oromo and Sidama population within the emergent multi-ethnic, multi-cultural modern Ethiopian state deserve a more detailed and documented study than have hitherto been possible. The present study, therefore, is primarily intended to serve that purpose. Its main objective is to incorporate, elaborate upon and substantially add to the results of what have already been published on the subject in one single and hopefully coherent work.

The researcher used an analytical approach to the information collected from published translated Ethiopian chronicles, unpublished and printed primary European archival source materials, published accounts of the European residents, explorers and travelers in Shawa and the Oromo and Sidama countries during the times of Menilek or soon afterwards, and the published secondary sources.

The most important results reached are that the campaigns of Shawan Amhara military conquests conducted during the late nineteenth century had more than tripled the territorial extent of the historic Orthodox Christian Ethiopian state and almost doubled the size of its population. The successful accomplishment of the conquests was mainly the result of an almost unmatched military superiority of the Shawan armies over the fighting forces of their adversaries in both man – power and armament.

The military preponderance of the Shawan Amhara was also an instrumental factor in ensuring the effective administrative control they managed to establish over the conquered territories and the systematic exploitation of their economic and human resources. It was also a determinant factor in the decisive defeat of the Italian invading forces at Adwa in 1896. The result had been the survival of the independence of a considerably enlarged Ethiopian state during the era of the European scramble and colonial conquest of sub – Saharan Africa. Internally the outcome had been the sustained maintenance and consolidation of the newly established Shawan Amharan politico –
military hegemony and domination over the emergent greater Ethiopian polity, though the northern Eritrean highlands were ceded to the Italians in 1896.
VI
الصحة الجنوبية الأفريقيا في العصر。

نتيجة كانت تدخل دعائم تثبيت السيطرة الإرترياية مرتفعة أن من بالرغبة بآكلة الأمور الاجتماعية العسكرية في عام في الإطالية عندها التنازع الشمالي 1896.

1896.
PREFACE

Of all the published literature on the modern history of Ethiopia the two studies of the reign of Menilek II as king of Shawa by Kofi Darkwah and as king of Shawa and emperor of Ethiopia by Harold Marcus, both published in 1975, still remain the best informative and authoritative. Nevertheless, the two works devote only very limited space and attention to the significant theme of the late nineteenth century Shawan Amhara military conquest of the largely Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions of southern Ethiopia than it should legitimately deserve. In the same way others, such as Markakis (1974), Addis Hiwet (1975), Holcomb and Ibsa (1990), Asafa Jalate (1993), and Tishole Tebebu (1995), provide brief summaries of the expansion and formation of the enlarged Ethiopian empire-state as a required background for their central socio-political studies of modern Ethiopian society. And even though more information and insight on the subject have been provided by a few published periodical articles much still remains to be done.

The singular unparalleled process of Shawan Amhara territorial expansion during the era of the late nineteenth century European colonial conquest of sub-Saharan Africa and the resultant position of the subject Oromo and Sidama population within the emergent multi-ethnic, multi-cultural modern Ethiopian state deserve a more detailed and documented study than have hitherto been possible. The present study, therefore, is primarily intended to serve that purpose. Its main objective is to incorporate, elaborate upon and substantially add to the results of what have already been published on the subject in one single and hopefully coherent work.

The main sources which are used for this study may be grouped for convenience into four categories; (i) published translated Ethiopian chronicles, (ii) unpublished and printed primary European archival source materials, (iii) published accounts of the European residents, explorers and travelers in Shawa and the Oromo and Sidama countries during the times of Menilek or soon afterwards, and finally (iv) the published secondary sources.

Accesses to Ethiopian archival sources have been practically ruled out. Most of the country’s state papers are said to have been destroyed or had disappeared during the
1935-36 Italo-Ethiopian war and the Fascist occupation of the country which followed. The whereabouts of any remnants that may have survived are still unknown. Some unpublished Amharic manuscripts, mostly in private possession have not been made available except to a very few Ethiopians and outsiders. The rich information they provided, sometimes supplemented by oral data collected during field work, was made use of in a few of the published periodical articles referred to in the study.

Two traditional Ethiopian sources are used for the present study. The main source is the two volume French translation of the official Amharic chronicle of the reign of Menilek II that ends in 1909. It was compiled by his Sahafe Tezaz (“Minister of the Pen”/Private Secretary) Gobra Sellassie, annotated and published by Maurice de Coppet in 1930-32. Most probably the chronicler wrote his work under the personal guidance and supervision of his sovereign. As to be expected historical event that were not considered credible or favourable to Menilek were either glossed over or only hinted to very briefly. Also the military campaigns, which were led personally by Menilek received relatively more coverage than others that were commanded by any of his leading generals. The other Ethiopian source is Carlo Conti Rossini’s Italian translation of an anonymous Arabic chronicle of Harar, which was published in 1919. As far as one can possibly judge there is no reason to consider its contents as anything but fairly reliable British archives at the Public Record Office and the India Office Library in London contain much information on Ethiopia. Most of it is concerned with the internal affairs of northern Ethiopia in the 1860s-1880s, the external relations of its rulers and conditions in the adjacent Afar and Somali coastal regions. The volume of the information beings to build up after Menilek became emperor in 1889, especially following the battle of Adwa and the arrival at Addis Ababa of the Rodd mission and the first accredited British resident envoy Harrington in April 1897 and 1898 respectively. Even so much of the official correspondence deals with the internal affairs of Ethiopia, the struggles within the Shawa royal court for power and imperial succession and the competition among the European powers with interests in the neighbouring regions for paramount political influence and commercial advantage in the country. The only parts of the southern Ethiopian regions that were of interest and concern for the British and thereby warranted being reported about were the borderland territories lying close to their Somaliland and
East African protectorates beside the Anglo Egyptian Sudan. The Oromo and Sidama populated highland regions in the interior were not included among them. The British archival sources, therefore, provide very little concerning these territories which is of value to the purpose of the present study.

The brief French archival material used for this study is contained in a few of the files that are catalogued under the series Nouvelle Acquisitions Française, Memoirés et Documents which are deposited at the Ministère des Affaires Etrangers in Paris. It includes some letters and extracts from the journal that was kept by Pierre Arnoux when he was in Shawa and copies of notes and letters of Menilek, Massaia, Bremond, Lagarde and others.

The official Italian archival documents of the former Ministero d’ Africa Italiana are deposited under the label ASMAI as part of the archives of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri in Rome. Most of their contents are almost exclusively centered on the Italian relations with the rulers of northern Ethiopia and Shawa, especially after their occupation of Massawa in 1885. Some selections of the documents are printed in the official Italian Government’s Libro Verde, Etiopia XV (Rome, 1890), and in Carlo Giglio, ed., L’Italia in Africa, Etiopia – Mar Rosso. Vol. III Documenti, 1857-1885 (Rome, 1958).

The paucity of the available primary archival source material renders the contribution of the published correspondence and accounts of the Europeans who resided in Shawa or travelled through the country into parts of the Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions during the times of Menilek or soon afterwards particularly indispensable. Included in this category are the letters and reports written by members of the Italian Geographical Society’s mission in Shawa, Marquis Orazio Antinori. Leopoldo Traversi and Vincenzo Ragazzi, who were based at Let-Marefia close to the Shawan capital Entotto. Also included in this category is some of the correspondence of Count Pietro Antonelli the accredited official representative of the Italian Government at the Shawan royal court between 1883 and 1889. All the four Italians were reportedly intelligent, well-educated astute and keen observers. They were favourably well placed to have been able to report accurately and carefully on the events they witnessed or the information they collected while they were in the country. Traversi and Ragazzi had the added advantage of having accompanied Menilek on some of the military expeditions, which he led.
personally in parts of the south. On the other hand, Antonelli’s frequent attendance at the Shawan royal court and his knowledge of Amharic enabled him to maintain close relations with several of the prominent Shawan notables and thereby gain access reliable information. He, too, travelled on a few occasions in Menilek’s company to meet with Emperor Yohannes. Some of their correspondence and reports are published in such journals as Bolletino della Società Geografica Italiana, Bolletino della Società Africana d’Italia, L’Esploratore Commerciale and Cosmos. Another category consists of the substantial published literature provided by some of the European explorers and travellers in Shawa and parts of the Oromo and Sidama countries at the times of Menilek’s rule and shortly afterwards. Among such sources are the accounts of the Italians Antonio Cecchi, Gustavo Bianchi, and Cardinal Massaia, the Frenchmen Paul Soleillet, Jules Borelli, J.G. Vanderhym, Alphonse Aubry and Henri Audon and the Austrian Friederich Bieber.

Cecchi’s published two volume narrative provides very rich and valuable information about conditions in the Oromo territories beyond the Awash and Abbay rivers and in the Gibe region in the southwest before the battle of Embabo. Similarly, Bianchi’s account reports on his journey from Shawa through the Oromo territories lying immediately to the south and southwest on his way to Gojjam in early 1880. Massaia had been in Shawa for almost eleven years between early 1868 and June 1879. Even so, his published volumes provide disappointingly very little, which is of value on the southern Oromo regions during that period which was not directly linked to his missionary interests.

Though much of the published account of Soleillet and the latter articles by Aubry and Audon tend to focus on matters that were of commercial interest they still provide some material, which is of value to the present study. Borelli’s published journal, which consists of daily entries, contains valuable information which he collected when he was in Shawa and during his travels from Entoto to Harar and the Gibe region between early May 1887 and November 1888. The published account of Vanderhym narrates, among other information, details of his travels in the company of Menilek on the military expedition that ended with the conquest of Wallamo. Finally, Bieber’s two volumes contain substantially valuable material on the Sidama kingdom of Kaffa and its conquest by the Shawan Amhara, which he had collected while he was in that country in 1919.
Nevertheless, one have to admit that limitations of the available source material allowed for the conquest of some regions to be more informatively covered than that of others. One only hopes that more exhaustive future research would permit for a more detailed and better balanced reconstruction of the process of Shawan Amhara conquest of the Oromo and Sidama regions than have hitherto been possible to be carried out.
### ABBREVIATIONS

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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>African Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASMAI</td>
<td>Archivio dell’ex – Ministero d’ Africa Italiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Nationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSAI</td>
<td>Bolletino della Società Africana d’ Italia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSGI</td>
<td>Bolletino della Società Geografica Italiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUCAA</td>
<td>Bulletin of the University College of Addis Ababa, Ethnological Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>Cahiers d’ Études Africaines</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>L’Esploratore Commerciale</td>
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<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Ethiopia Observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td>Horn of Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>IJAHS:</td>
<td>International Journal of African Historical Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAEH</td>
<td>Journal of African Economic History</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAH</td>
<td>Journal of African History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAHS</td>
<td>Journal of African Historical Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JES</td>
<td>Journal of Ethiopian studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JHMAS</td>
<td>Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>JHSN</td>
<td>Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>Libro Verde</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAE</td>
<td>Ministère des Affaires Etrangers (France)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAEI</td>
<td>Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Itlay)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;D</td>
<td>Memoires et Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Nouva Antologia (di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAF</td>
<td>Nouvelle Acquisitions Française</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM</td>
<td>Oriente Moderno</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDM</td>
<td>Revue des Deux Mondes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSE</td>
<td>Rassegna di Studi Ethiopici</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSO</td>
<td>Rivista di Studi Orientali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Le Semeur d’Ethiopie’</td>
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<tr>
<td>QDC</td>
<td>Questions Diplomatiques et Coloniales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPI</td>
<td>Storia e Politica Internazionale</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Amhara Court Titles And Personnel:-

**Negusa Nagast** Literally, “king of kings” i.e. the traditional title of the emperor.

**Atse** Emperor

**Negus** King

**Bitwadad** Chief royal councilor

**Blatengetta** Chief administrator of the royal palace

**Sahafe Tezaz** Private royal secretary / i.e. Minister of the Pen

**Afa Negus** literally, “mouth of the king”/ i.e. royal spokesman

**Agafari** Chief royal steward

**Azaj** Royal judge

**Bajerond** Royal Treasurer

**Balamwal** Young royal favourite

**Masafent** Royal princes

**Makwanent** Chief office holders at the royal court

**Lij** Title of children of royal blood or of prominent nobles

Amhara Military Ranks And Titles:-

**Ras** highest military rank

**Ras Bitwadad** Most favoured Ras

**Dajazmach** Second highest military rank below Ras; abbr. Dajach when it is followed by a personal name

**Qanazmach** Commander of the right wing

**Garazmach** Commander of the left wing

**Fitawrari** Commander of the vanguard or advance forces / the imperial Fitawrari was the Minister of War
Maredazmach  Commander of the rear or reserve forces
Abegaz  Commander of a frontier post or regional garrison
Balambaras  Commander of a fortress
Turk-Bacha  Commander of the royal regiment of riflemen
Shalaqa  Commander of a thousand soldiers
Shambal  Head of five hundred soldiers
Mato Alaqa  Head of a hundred soldiers
Hamsa Alaqa  Head of fifty soldiers

**Amhara Ecclesiastical titles:**

Abun / Abuna  Traditional title of the Patriarch or Metropolitan of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church / Abuna is used when the title is follower by a personal name.
Ichege  Chief administrator of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Kahenat  The clergy
Alaqa  Head of a monastery or an important church
Mamher  Head of a group of learned clergy in a monastery or a church
Abba  Literally, “Father”/ title of respect for the clergy

**General Amhara Glossary:**

Agher tor  Foreign battle or war
Amba  A flat-topped, steep – sided mountain
Amole  Salt bar; used as currency in the nineteenth century
Araki  Teff wine
Ashkar  Retainer or follower
Asrat  The annual ten percent tax on agricultural produce
Ato  Title equivalent to “Mr.”
Awaj  Royal proclamation

XVI
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Balabbat</td>
<td>Literally, “one who has a father”/ i.e. a member of the land owning group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balg</td>
<td>The little rains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brundo</td>
<td>Raw meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dega</td>
<td>The very elevated highlands above 7,000 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elafin</td>
<td>Private royal quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanno</td>
<td>Adventurous free-lance warriors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabbar</td>
<td>Tribute and tax-paying subject peasants in the conquered territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesgassa</td>
<td>A military excursion of short duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghebi</td>
<td>Royal residence / palace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gondari</td>
<td>Name of the royal regiment of riflemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudad</td>
<td>Land farmed by a group of subject tenants, which was used to provide grain to the royal palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katama</td>
<td>Garrison town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keramt</td>
<td>The heavy rains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maderia</td>
<td>Untaxed land allotted to civil servants and the military who were settled in the conquered territories in lieu for salaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meslenie</td>
<td>The official who represented the royal court or the high officials in the lands allotted to them in the conquered regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naft</td>
<td>Gun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naftenya</td>
<td>Literally, “one who has a gun”/ i.e. the term applied to the administrators and soldier-settlers in the conquered territories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagadras</td>
<td>Chief Customs – collector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagarit</td>
<td>Literally, “drum”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qolla</td>
<td>the unhealthy hot, arid lowlands, and deep river valleys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qurt Gheber</td>
<td>Annual tribute paid by vassal rulers in the conquered territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest / Rist</td>
<td>Inheritable land owned by an extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semon</td>
<td>Land allotted to the Church in the conquered territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siso</td>
<td>Land that was allowed to be kept by the former ruling families after the conquest of their countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shamma  A scarf – like cloth that covers head and shoulder
Shanqalla  A collective term applied by the Ethiopians to all negroid peoples
Shifta  Bandit or outlaw
Shum  Title of a governor of a district
Shum-Shir  Literally, “appoint – remove”
Teff  Maise – like grain
Tej  Honey wine
Tor  Battle / war
Warari  Soldiers who served as advance patrols or scouts during a military campaign
Wayna Dega  Fertile intermediate highlands
Woizerro  Lady / equivalent to “Mrs.”
Yekin Agher  Conquered / colonised country
Zemacha  A military expedition which lasts for from two to four months

Select Oromo Glossary:-

Abba  Literally, “Father”/ i.e. possessor – usually a title of respect
Abba Boku  Literally, “Father or possessor of the Boku” / i.e. the title of the executive leader of the gada – group in power
Abb Dula  Literally, “Father of War”/ i.e. the title of the war leader of the gada – group in power
Abba Gada  Literally, “Father of the Gada”/ i.e. another title of the war leader of a governing gada – group
Abba Ganda  Literally, “Father / possessor of a district”/ i.e. title of a chief of a district
Abba Kella  An officer who commands a cavalry unit guarding a border post
Abba Lafa  Literally, “Father / possessor of land”/ i.e. a land owner

XVIII
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abba Mizan</td>
<td>Literally, “Father of the balance”/ i.e. the title of the official who was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsible for foreign merchants and foreigners in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abba Muda</td>
<td>Literally, “Father of anointing”/ i.e. the spiritual head of traditional</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Oromo religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abba Qoro</td>
<td>Title of an officer responsible for administering a district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afkala</td>
<td>Local Oromo petty traders in the Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bideru</td>
<td>A suspended hallowed tree-trunk used as a sounding object or drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boku</td>
<td>A wooden scepter held by the Abba Boku as a symbol of his authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buta</td>
<td>One of the most important Oromo festivals during which each member of a</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>ruling gada – group celebrated by slaughtering a bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chafe</td>
<td>The meadow general assembly attended by the leading members of a governing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gada – group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagno / Daggo</td>
<td>A custom official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donachu</td>
<td>Crown prince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genne</td>
<td>Lady of royal blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gennefa</td>
<td>The king’s / ruler’s first wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossa</td>
<td>Clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jila</td>
<td>A pilgrim to the Abba Muda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kella</td>
<td>A frontier gate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemi</td>
<td>Royal messenger or ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luba</td>
<td>The fifth gada – group / i.e. the governing gada-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massera</td>
<td>Royal residence of a king / i.e. palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mogga</td>
<td>Uninhabited and forested region, which separated neighbouring political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moti</td>
<td>Title of the king or ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qalll</td>
<td>A ritual expert of traditional Oromo religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waq</td>
<td>God in Oromo Traditional religion / i.e. the “sky god”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Glossary:-

Adila  The royal title of the monarch among the Hadiya Tufta, the Tambaro and the Kambata
Amno  The royal title of the Janjero (Yama) monarch
Angher Heracho  Title of the chief of the royal Janjero clan
Damamwit  A Gurage deity
Damin  Title of a tribal chief among the Qottu Oromo
Doččo  The greatest of the Kafficho spirit cults
Eqqo  A Kafficho spirit cults
Garad  Title of a village chief among the Qottu Oromo
Goqo  Name of the warrior clan among the Wallamo (Walayta)
Jihad  The Muslim Holy War
Katama Rascho  Title of the commander of the Kafficho royal guards
Kawa  Royal title of the Wallamo (Walayta) monarch
Mawa  Name of the royal Janjero (Yama) dynasty
Mikrecho  The Kafficho royal advisory council
Qottu  The Muslim Oromo cultivators in the neighbourhood of Harar
Tato  Royal title of the Kafficho monarch
‘Ulama  Muslim learned men
Yaro  The Kafficho traditional supreme being, the “sky god”
INTRODUCTION

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the majority of the African peoples inhabiting the greatest parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, were living under independent African rule largely unaffected by any form of foreign authority. In some small regions, however, lived modest numbers of European settlers such as in the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, the Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal as well as in the offshore islands of Mauritius and Reunion. Some Omani Arab settler communities were living in the small city-states of the East African coast and the neighbouring islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Some traders of various European nationalities were stationed at selected localities on the West African coastal enclaves, but they were rent-paying tenants to the local indigenous authorities.1

In political terms those African societies continued to live within a complex variety of largely dissimilar types of socio-political institutions. These included states or kingdoms, city-states and principalities of varying administrative structures, political and military powers, densities of population, histories and territorial size with borders which often fluctuated with alterations in the politico-military fortunes of the polity concerned. At the extreme opposite end there were the small groups of localised wandering bands of hunters and food gatherers who inhabited the remote hot and arid desert regions of Southern Africa, the inaccessible parts of the East African Rift Valley and the humid dense tropical rain forests. In between these two categories were the vast majority of African people who were organised in small chiefdoms and stateless communities whose members were held together by kinship and lineage ties, neighbourhood relations and age-set arrangements.2 A special category labelled the “demi-state” has sometimes been suggested to describe a chiefdom which expanded and became dominated by one particular person but was not yet equipped with viable administrative and political structures. It usually broke down on the occasion of the sudden removal of that individual.3

3- Hallett, R., op. cit., p. 38
In the geographically favourable conditions of the Sudanic savanna belt, the light woodlands and margins of the tropical rain forests, the plateau grasslands of Central Africa and the interlacustrine region of East Africa centralised states were already in existence for a considerable length of time before the nineteenth century. The large medieval kingdoms of the Western Sudan had already broken down and disappeared. They were replaced by several small polities that ranged from the principalities of Futa Jallon and Futa Toro, the Wolof and Serer states, the Bambara states of Segu and Kaarta and the state of Macina. In the Central Sudan there were the Hausa city-states, the sultanates of Kanem-Bornu, Bagirmi and Wadai. Further eastward were the state of Dar Fur and the tottering Funj sultanate of Sinnar in the Eastern Sudan. To the east of the Funj kingdom was the ancient Christian kingdom of Ethiopia located on the northern and central interior highlands of the Horn of Africa.¹

In the margins of the tropical forests and closer to the West African coast were found a number of substantial states and kingdoms by the beginning of the nineteenth century. They included the Edo kingdom of Benin in southeastern Nigeria, the powerful Yoruba empire of Old Oyo and its small tributary states to the west of Benin, the state of Nupe to the north of Yorubaland, the autocratic Fon kingdom of Dahomey, the Akan Confederacy of Ashante (Asante) and the coastal Fante states in Ghana.²

In Bantu Central Africa centralised states were found in the regions to the south of the Congo rain forests, such as the two substantial Lunda kingdoms of Mwata Yamvo in southwestern Zaire and Mwata Kazembe in southern Katanga as well as the kingdom of Ovimbundu to the south of the Lunda states and the Luba – Lomane states. All around each of the major states were found a number of smaller polities which were often tribute-paying satellites.³ The once powerful kingdom of Old Kongo, which attained the peak of its power in the fifteenth century, had already broken down into small independent provinces. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the authority of its king was reduced to the immediate surroundings of his capital.⁴ In the interlacustrine region of East Africa were to be found the six major states of Buganda, Bunyoro, Karagwe, Ankole, Rwanda and Burundi. Around each

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² Ibid., pp. 12-13
³ Ibid., pp. 16-18
⁴ Ibid., pp. 20-21
of them were several smaller tribute-paying states.\textsuperscript{1} In the southern Zimbabwean plateau, the valleys of the Zambezi river and the plains of southern Mozambique several states arose at least from the fifteenth century onwards. For a time most of them were tributaries recognising the overlordship of the Mwenemutapa of Great Zimbabwe. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, most of them including the Lozi kingdom broke away and became independent.\textsuperscript{2} In contrast to the States of West Africa, the Sudanic savanna belt or the Ethiopian region the states of Bantu Africa had been almost isolated from foreign contacts until the nineteenth century. The only exceptions had been the Portuguese connections with the kingdom of Old Kongo in northern Angola, their penetration in the coastal regions of Angola, up the Zambezi river and the coastal areas of Mozambique.\textsuperscript{3}

Many African polities of almost all types had been profoundly altered during the course of the nineteenth century. Once powerful states and kingdoms collapsed and disintegrated into a number of small independent and mutually hostile political units. Other states were overthrown and replaced by larger and more centralised polities, while some had managed to recover and prosper after being overrun and conquered. Some political units had prospered economically and underwent processes of internal consolidation and outward expansion, while others lost some portions of their territory but retained their basic structures and power intact. And, above all, new and more often much larger polities were created where none had existed before, and new ones were still being built up on the eve of the European partition and conquest of the continent.\textsuperscript{4}

These major and far-reaching transformations have been described by Hargreaves as “a sort of African partition of Africa, a radical reshaping of political structures and boundaries taking place throughout the century.”\textsuperscript{5} In the view of Elizabeth Colson these historical changes were mainly the direct reaction of African societies to the impact of the long-distance trade with the Europeans and their activities. The changes are said to have been more far-reaching in West Africa than in East Africa in accordance with the variations in the intensity of the European impact.\textsuperscript{6}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid., pp. 18-20
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Ibid., pp. 21-22
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 22-24
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Colson, E., op. cit., p. 27
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Hargreaves, J.D., “West African States and the European Conquest,” in Gann and Duignan, op. cit., p. 199
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Colson, E., op. cit., p. 27
\end{itemize}
Colson’s interpretation has been criticized by Ajayi as an unjustified exaggeration of the significance of European influences as a factor for the change. He argues that European presence during the period when the changes were taking place was still very limited to the coastal areas and its role as a factor for change, if it existed at all, was only very marginal. He concludes that for the most of West Africa the role of the internal politics of the states of the forest region and the Islamic revival in the Sudanic belt were far more significant. The Bakongo people of the Old Kongo kingdom, the Yoruba of ancient Old Oyo and the Edo people of Benin had created organised states of their own well before the advent of the Europeans. Conversely, several pre-colonial African communities like the Ibo of southeastern Nigeria, the Bisa to the north of the Zambezi river and the Yao to the east of Lake Nyasa had been actively engaged in long-distance foreign trade but did not become organised in centralised political units. Ajayi contends that even in states that were economically largely dependent on trade with the Europeans such as the city-states of the Niger Delta the impact of European influence on their structural development may have been greatly over emphasised.

The Islamic reformist movements which were started by the establishment of the Fulani Muslim theocracies of Futa Jallon and Futa Toro soon spread to the Central Sudan. Between 1804 and 1810 the Fulani jihad led by ‘Uthman dan Fodio resulted in the overthrow of the Hausa city-states and their replacement by the single politically and religiously centralised substantial theocracy of the Sokoto Caliphate with its twin capitals of Sokoto and Gwandu. The jihad also extended the frontiers of Islam and Fulani domination southwards through the establishment of new Muslim emirates such as those of Nupe, Adamawa and Ilorin. The unsuccessful attempt by the jihadists to extend their control over Bornu led to the fall of the Saifawa and its replacement by a new Kanembu dynasty, the ascendency of the Shuwan Arab aristocracy and the beginnings of the reforms of Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanami. The example of ‘Uthman dan Fodio jihad in Hausaland was followed by that of Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr, also known as Ahmadu Lobbo or Sehu Ahmadu, in

3. Ibid
Macina in 1818 which resulted in the creation of an independent theocratic state with its capital at Hamadallahi. The Tukolor jihad of al-Hajj ‘Umar Ibn Sa’id Tal al – Futi ended in the establishment of an extensive theocratic régime that included the former states of Segu and Kaarta, the emirate of Macina and parts of the Senegambian region.

The adventurous trader turned conquering warrior Samore Toure, using Islam as an appealing ideology, embarked on a career of military conquest that eventually led to the emergence of an extensive Mandingo empire in the Upper Niger region. In the Eastern Sudan the decaying Funj Sultanate of Sinnar was toppled by the Turco-Egyptian armies of Muhammad Ali in 1820. Further Egyptian expansion in the Sudan was revived by the Khedive Ismail who attempted to extend his control up the Nile to the Equatorial region and the Great Lakes. Turco-Egyptian presence was terminated by rise of the Mahdist state following the fall of Khartoum in 1885. In the Nilotic region of Bahr al-Ghazal al-Zubair Rahma Mansur, the most outstanding northern Sudanese jallaba ivory and slave trader, established for himself an independent commercial principality. With the aid of his bazinger private army which was hardened, well-disciplined and well-supplied with firearms he succeeded in defeating the armies of the sultanate of Dar Fur. Later his possessions were taken over by the Turco-Egyptian administration following his forced detension in Egypt and the elimination of his son Sulaiman. Rabih Ibn Fad Allah, better known as Rabih al-Zubair, a former lieutenant in the service of al-Zubair, had broken away from the latter’s son Sulaiman. Leading his contingents of bazinger warriors into the eastern parts of present day Central African Republic he overran several local principalities, including Dar Kuti, and several Zande chiefdoms. In the process he collected tribute from local rulers and built up the strength of his army. After having been repulsed by the armies of Wadai Rabih turned westwards to conquer the sultanates of Bagirmi and Bornu. With his capital located at Dikwa to the south of Lake Chad he became the

1 - Ibid., pp. 14-17
2 - Ibid., pp. 17-23, 341-349, 361-382
3 - Person, Yves, “The Atlantic Coast and the Southern Savannah,” in Ajayign and Crowder, op. cit., pp. 297-301
4 - Hallett, R., op. cit., p. 80
ruler of the whole region that extended from the borders of the emirate of Kano in the west to those of Dar Fur in the east.\(^1\)

Further to the east of the Funj kingdom was the ancient Christian empire / kingdom of Ethiopia on the northern and central highlands of the Horn of Africa. Its relative isolation, economic stagnation, internal political divisions and the feebleness of her imperial monarchy were brought to an end by Emperor Tewodros in the mid-nineteenth century. Revival of imperial paramountcy and internal consolidation begun by Yohannes were energetically continued by Menilek II. During his reign as king of Shawa and as emperor of Ethiopia the extensive expansion of Ethiopia’s dominions was carried out.\(^2\)

During the 1880s the major internal issues facing the rulers of the newly established paramountcies of the Western and Central Sudan were centered around the problems of effectively controlling their substantial states in the face of internal opposition and rivals. Externally they were, like their counterparts elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, to confront the challenge posed by increasing European encroachment.\(^3\) In the same period the West African polities of the forest zone underwent uneven processes of change. Following the collapse of the empire of Old Oyo at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Yoruba became organised into several mutually hostile sub-groups or city-states that fought against each other for territory and control of trade routes. The most important among them were Ibadan and Abeokuta.\(^4\) The kingdom of Benin was little affected by the abolition of the slave trade since palm oil soon became the main item in its foreign trade. The kingdom’s problems, however, arose from the loss of control over access to the coast to the middlemen of the Niger Delta who monopolised canoe transport, and from the effects of the prolonged civil wars of the period 1854-1880. Otherwise the kingdom’s power

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3 Person, Yves, “Western Africa, 1870-1886,” in Fage and Oliver, op. cit., pp. 245-256
and basic institutions remained intact. The Fon autocratic kingdom of Dahomey, which was previously much involved in the slave trade adapted itself easily to the change to the trade in palm oil. Continued imports of guns and gun powder from the coast turned the kingdom to one of the most powerful states in West Africa and enabled her rulers to expand their territories northward and westward. Though it lost part of her territory to Fulani jihadists Dahomey still maintained its internal cohesion and its political and military powers intact.

The Ashante (Asante) confederacy continued to prosper and grow militarily powerful as its rulers concentrated on palm oil and kola nuts production and trade with the Europeans on the coast in exchange for firearms and gun power beside other consumer imported goods. While maintaining its hold over the coastal Fante states Ashante also expanded northwards to secure her traditional trading connections with Hausaland. The kingdom’s conflict with the Fante states led to British involvement on the side of the Fante and consequently to the outbreak of the Anglo-Ashante wars of the nineteenth century.

The only West Africa region where the European trading activities had the most obvious impact was that of the swamps and creeks of the Niger Delta and the Oil Rivers. Formerly a flourishing slave trading centre it turned to be also the major palm oil producing and trading region. The local African communities, with previous experience in trading with the interior, readily adapted themselves to the new promising commercial opportunities. They built up small, but powerful, trading polities such as Bonny, Brass, Kalaber, Opobo and others. Their local merchant princes who monopolised canoe transport and mobile naval military power became the undisputed powerful middlemen between the palm oil producers in the interior and the European traders on the coast.

The hinterland and interior regions of East Africa had been isolated from foreign contact and influence before the beginning of their penetration by the Muslim Swahili-Arab traders in search for ivory and slaves in the 1830s onwards. Travelling along the major trade routes that led inland from the Merima coastal ports they passed through various regions leading to the shores of Lakes Malawi and Tanganyika and

1- Ibid., pp. 137-138; Atmore, A.E., “Africa on the Eve of Partition,” in Fage and Oliver, op. cit., p. 49
2- Ibid., pp. 154-155, 161; Atmore, op. cit., pp. 46-47
3- Boahen, Abu, “Politics in Ghana, 1800-1874,” in Ajayi and Crowder, op. cit, pp. 167-170, 194-198; Atmore, op. cit., pp. 45-46
further beyond to Buganda and Bunyoro in the northern interlacustrine region. The economic, social and above all political impact of their interaction with the African societies of the interior, which varied from one region to another, had been far-reaching. In general those who lived along the major central trade routes, such as the Nyamwezi in particular, were the most affected.\textsuperscript{1} Increased African involvement in commercial activities, the extension of the areas with which they traded and consequently increased sources of wealth were the obvious results.\textsuperscript{2} The trade in slaves, where it predominated, brought about raids, wars and devastation to the regions from which slaves were taken.\textsuperscript{3}

A major political result of the Swahili-Arab penetration of the interior had been the extension inland of the political relations of the Sultan of Zanzibar with some of the rulers of the interior African states and chiefdoms. Another, though more significant, aspect was the settlement of some of the Zanzibar traders in selected commercial centres like Tabora, Ujiji and Karagwe where they chose one of their numbers as governor. Their control of commerce, wealth and possession of imported guns and gun powder and the resultant social, political power and prestige allowed them to interfere in the politics of the neighbouring African communities by taking sides in local disputes, engaging in conflicts on their own or helping a particular ruler to maintain his authority. The interrelationship between the Swahili-Arab settler traders and the African rulers were mutually beneficial for both sides as the traders also needed the protection of the rulers for their continued residence and the conduct of their commercial functions.\textsuperscript{4}

Nevertheless, the most remarkably significant impact of the presence of the Swahili-Arabs had been on the nature of African political authority and the pattern of relationships within each particular polity as well as between one polity and its neighbours. As political authority became increasingly dependent on military force rather than on religious basis individuals who possessed wealth and firearms usually became powerful. They succeeded in attracting more followers and allies and eventually gaining political power. Equally states whose rulers possessed substantial wealth from the proceeds of commerce and easier access to larger quantities of

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\textsuperscript{1} Unomah, A.C. and Webster, J.B., “East Africa: The expansion of Commerce,” in Flint, J.E., op. cit., pp. 267-277
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., pp. 284-292
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 298-300
\textsuperscript{4} Unomah and Webster, op. cit., pp. 306-310
\end{flushleft}
imported firearms and ammunition gained more power and influence than their less fortunate neighbours.¹

In this way Mtyela Kasanda, better known as Mirambo, a ruler of two small Nyamwezi chiefdoms, made use of his wealth and military power to become the ruler of a much enlarged and more powerful independent state which dominated the central Tanzanian region that extended between Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika. Similarly Nungu Ya Mawe, a Nyamwezi prince who had failed in assuming political power in his own chiefdom, led his followers in conquering the less powerful societies in the surrounding neighbourhood and establishing the autonomous state of Kiwele. Mirambo, Nungu Ya Mawe and other Nyamwezi state-builders maintained large armies, composed mainly of Nguni, Massai and detribalised run away mercenaries, commonly known as ruga ruga, and armed them with guns and spears. Leading their armies in battles they expanded their states by extending their political authority over conquered people who, were not related to their own tribal groups.²

In the interlacustrine region the impact of the Arab-Swahili traders was restricted to the kingdoms of Buganda and Buryoro. The conflict between the two was fuelled by the possession of firearms obtained by both sides in exchange for ivory. Buganda, which appeared to have been stronger under Suna and his successor Mutesa, expanded her territories on almost all directions. In contrast the arrival of the Khartoum based ivory traders coming into Bunyoro during the reign of Kabarega from the north was disruptive. The westward extension of the Zanzibari commercial network beyond Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika was accompanied by the establishment of Swahili-Arab and Nyamwezi trading settlements on the marginal regions of the Lunda kingdom of Mwata Kazembe. This eventually led to the fragmentation and the near break down of the kingdom.

Swahili-Arab and Nyamwezi traders essentially came as peaceful new comers in search for ivory and slaves. They gradually built up their power by the acquisition of added quantities of firearms and ammunition.³ They became increasingly powerful enough to challenge and overthrow many of the chiefs of the small tributary polities on the periphery of the Lunda state and incorporate their people under their own

¹- Ibid., pp. 310-316
²- Ibid., pp. 316-318 See also Shorter, A., “Nungu Ya Mawe and the “Empire of the rugaruga, JAH, 111, 2 (1968), pp. 235-259; Bennett, N.R., Mirambo of Tanzania Ca. 1840-1884 (New York, 1971); Atmore, op. cit., pp. 73-74
³- Unomah and Webester, op. cit., 291-294; Atmore, op. cit., 73-74
control.\(^1\) Swahili-Arab traders led by Hamid bin Muhammad el-Murjebi, better known as Tippu Tip, penetrated into the Congo forest regions beyond the Kasai river. They deployed their private \textit{waungwana} irregular forces\(^2\) armed with firearms to raid villages and take away young men and women prisoners to be ransomed for ivory or sold as slaves.\(^3\)

At nearly the same time the Nyamwezi trader Msiri led his followers into the copper producing region of Katanga on the western fringes of the Kazembe kingdom and the borderlands of the Mwata Yamro Lunda state in the west. Though they came as traders they soon developed ambitions to assume political power. Msiri steadily built up his power and influence. Through the use of his private army of followers equipped with firearms, known as the Yeke, he made himself the autonomous ruler of a state which included most of the northern and western parts of the Kazembe kingdom with its capital at Bunkeya. Thus the Kazembe kingdom, already weakened by internal factional disputes, became substantially fragmented.\(^4\)

In Western Central Africa the Chokwe, a previously insignificant people, were turned in 1850s into ferocious warrior elephant hunters. Well armed with guns and gunpowder Chokwe bands continuously moved on the central plateau hunting elephants and selling ivory in exchange for more supplies of guns and gunpowder. In the meantime they incorporated captives within their own ranks thereby substantially increasing their strength. They also established their own caravan trading network as rivals to the Swahili-Arab and Nyamwezi traders. The overall impact of the violent methods they resorted to was the subversion of the large Lunda kingdom of the Mwata Yamvo which they almost destroyed.\(^5\)

Two new, though late, developments worthy of note were the responses of the Bemba state in northeastern Zambia and the Luba Lomami kingdom to the west of Lake Tanganyika to the impact of the Swahili-Arab long distance trade. The consolidation and expansion of the Bemba state, founded in the late eighteenth century, was continued during the nineteenth century by raiding neighbours

\(^1\) Brimingham, D., “The Forest and the Savanna of Central Africa,” in Flint, J.E., op. cit., pp. 244-245
\(^4\) Birmingham, op. cit., pp. 245-247; Atmore, op. cit., pp. 75-76
particularly for cattle, slaves and salt and annexing parts of their territories. The processes were significantly intensified after the Bemba made contacts with the Swahili-Arab traders from about 1850 onwards. They began exchanging ivory and slaves with them for firearms, ammunition, cloth and other items. The acquisition of new weaponry enabled the Bemba to increase the scope of their elephant hunting and slave raiding and at the same time accelerate the consolidation and expansion of their state. It also contributed towards strengthening their links with the Swahili-Arabs and in repulsing attacks of their Nguni neighbours.¹

The rulers and chiefs of the Luba Lomami state, the largest and most centralised of the Luba kingdoms, traditionally monopolised the commercial exchange of ivory and slaves with the Bisa traders for cloth, beads, salt and other goods. By the beginnings of the 1870s, when the kingdom was at the peak of its power, it maintained commercial connections on almost all directions. It was linked eastward across Lake Tanganyika with the Swahili-Arabs of Ujiji and with the Bisa in the southeast. In the southwest it was connected with the main routes of the Atlantic long distance trade which were frequented by the Ovimbundu traders. In the direction of the west it was linked with the Lunda kingdoms through the intermediary of the Luba state of Kaniok. Trading was conducted on the basis of mutual goodwill and benefits. Guns were used for elephant hunting, slave raiding, as items of commercial exchange or even for the personal protection of the Bisa traders themselves.²

By the early 1870s the kingdom’s economic and political fortunes began to decline as its ivory and slave resources were increasingly been obstructed. More powerful ivory and slave raiding Yeke-Nyamwezi and Swahili-Arab traders using firearms became established to the south and north of the kingdom respectively. The Lunda were forced, therefore, to obtain slaves from within their own kingdom to buy the firearms they needed for their own defense. This resulted in ruinous internal conflicts and instability ending in the people of the kingdom themselves becoming the victims of the ivory and slave raiding by their new neighbours.³

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Nguni-speaking Bantu people occupied the relatively densely populated fertile and well watered southeastern coastal regions between the Indian Ocean and the Drakensberg mountains in the interior.

¹ - Birmingham, D., op. cit., pp. 247-249
² - Ibid., pp. 250 – 251
³ - Ibid., pp. 251-253
They were, similar to the rest of the Bantu peoples of the greater parts of South Africa, organised in several small independent chiefdoms ruled by clan chiefs unaffected by any form of foreign influences. Under continued pressure of population expansion several groups tended to split from their chiefdoms and move away with their cattle to establish themselves in new unoccupied grazing and farming lands. This process of continued expansion, however, became increasingly difficult during the course of the following decades. Most parts of the interior plateau to the west, other areas to the north and south were already settled. Movement still further southward was blocked by the northward advance of the White settler frontier from the Cape Colony up to the Fish river. At the same time trade in ivory with the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay to the north was being extended to the coastal regions and westward to the inland plateau. Conflicts and wars between the rulers of the chiefdoms became more frequent and some ambitious rulers attempted to build up much larger units by extending their political authority over neighbouring clan leaders.  

It was in such circumstances that the establishment and expansion of the centralised politico-military autocracy of the Zulu kingdom under the leadership of Shaka had its origin. Through the systematic use of hardened discipline, skills and improvised military tactics of warfare and the incorporation of many of the young men and women of the defeated clans into the ever growing ranks of his followers Shaka succeeded in transforming the former small clan into the much larger Zulu ‘nation’ which came to dominate what became known as Zululand. The wide-spread violence, migrations and demographic changes which accompanied the rise of the Zulu kingdom, known as the ‘Mfecane’ i.e. time of troubles, had far-reaching consequences. Most importantly was that it provided the opportunity for several able leaders to build up, in their different ways, substantially large centralised states.

Taking advantage of the high and easily defendable steep flat-topped mountains and narrow valleys of northeastern Lesotho Mosheshoe was able to gather many small groups of refugees together with his own followers under his protection and paramountcy into a large centratised and military strong kingdom well defended by horse - mounted gunmen. The Nguni chief Sobhuza, following his defeat at the

2- Omer-Cooper, op. cit., pp. 326-335
3- Ibid., pp. 339-341
hands of Zwide, withdrew with his followers into the regions of present day Swaziland. He gradually united the various chiefdoms of the area under his political control giving birth to the large centralised Swazi kingdom.\textsuperscript{1} The military commander Mzilikazi broke with Shaka and moved away leading his followers through prolonged campaigns of conquest during which he incorporated many of the young war captives into the ranks of his army. He eventually ended up in Matabeleland where he settled down with his following and established the Ndebele kingdom subjecting the local Shona people as tribute-paying vassals.\textsuperscript{2} Shoshangane, another Nguni leader who was separated from Shaka, moved with his followers northward. While on his way he continued to build up the strength of his army by incorporating young war captives. Finally he settled down in modern Southern Mozambique where he established the powerful Gaza kingdom which was organised on Zulu patterns.\textsuperscript{3}

A few people, such as the Hehe of the highland regions to the northeast of Lake Malawi, managed to respond positively to the mounting Nguni pressure. Under the leadership of Munyigumba and his son Mkwawa and through the use of borrowed Nguni weapons and tactics of fighting the petty Hehe chiefdoms were merged into a large and powerful politico-military state. The Hehe were, therefore, enabled to withstand Nguni aggression and later to maintain their control over the Swahili-Arab traders.\textsuperscript{4} Other people such as the Lozi, living on the plains of the Zambezi River, were conquered for a short time after 1840 by warrior Nguni groups from the south known as the Kololo. They subsequently succeeded in regaining their independence about 1864.\textsuperscript{5}

The case of the Shawan Amhara conquest of the rich and relatively densely populated Oromo/Sidama regions of southern Ethiopia is not basically different from the aforementioned developments occurring nearly everywhere in Sub-Saharan Africa throughout the nineteenth century. To a large measure the conquest was made possible as a result of some external and internal developments. One of them was the renewal of European commercial interest in the regions of the Horn of Africa in general, especially after the opening of the Suez canal in 1869. The other was the resultant significant revival of the Ethiopian foreign oriented long distance caravan

\textsuperscript{1} Omer-Cooper, op. cit., pp. 343-348
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., pp. 349-350
\textsuperscript{3} Birmingham, D., op. cit., pp. 233-234
\textsuperscript{4} Omer-Cooper, op. cit., pp. 343-348
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., pp. 325, 326
trade. The necessities arising from the on-going internal competitive struggles for power within the Ethiopian polity were significant. They made it an urgent requirement for rival contestants to obtain as much as possible of added sources of political and military prowess. This in turn led to the drive to secure, among other things, exclusive control over the sources of Ethiopia’s valuable exports including slaves and the main trade routes through which the exports flowed on their way to the coastal ports. Other objectives included maintaining control over numerous tribute-paying conquered subjects and reservoirs of abundant manpower available for recruitment as soldiers. It was in this way that conquered Oromo/Sidama inhabited regions were expected to provide the means for whoever conquered them to build up and maintain large armies and to equip them with expensively purchased firearms and ammunition.

Of all the peoples of the Ethiopian empire-state the Shawan Amhara were the most favourably positioned to undertake the conquest and occupation of those lands and gain the substantial gains that may result from the exploitation of their enormous resources. Their principality was distant from the centre of imperial authority and far removed from the direct threat of external aggression. It had the advantage of being geographically located immediately adjoining the Oromo/Sidama inhabited regions on the north. The gradual southward extension of its southern borders at the expense of the neighbouring small Oromo tribal groups had become an almost established policy of the successive Shawan rulers since the time of Ammahayyu in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the reign of Menilek Shawa was relatively more stable, prosperous and comparatively more independent than the other Ethiopian provinces. The Shawan ruler had been motivated by a personal ambition of becoming emperor since he came to power in 1865. As the turn of events was to confirm he proved to have been the suitable ruler under whose leadership the conquest and occupation of the Oromo / Sidama regions were made.

Preoccupation with the conquest of Wallo which was completed by 1876 and the state of his troubled relations with his more powerful overlord Emperor Yohanne up to the Liche agreement of 1878 distracted the attention and the military efforts of Menilek away from southern territorial expansion. The limited southern expansion was mostly confined to cattle and slave raiding military escursions of short duration.

1. Atmore, op. cit., p. 18
2. Atmore, op. cit., pp. 38-39; Abiv, op. cit., pp. 147, 154
Their progress was held up by Oromo resistance at the upper valleys of the Awash river for a considerable length of time. From 1878 onwards, however, the drive of the process of conquest became more determined and increased in pace and in intensity.¹

After the battle of Embabo in 1882 the challenge of Gojjami competition over the conquest of the southwestern Oromo regions was eliminated. Between 1882 and 1886 the subjection and incorporation of the Oromo kingdoms of Jimma Abba Jifar, Limmu, Gomma, Gumma and Gera as well as the Oromo of Leqa Naqamte, Leqa Qellam and Illubabor was completed. In 1885 the Ittu Oromo of the Chercher highlands were subdued. After six years of often bloody military campaigns between 1881 and 1886 the Arussi (Arsí) Oromo were finally conquered. In January 1887 the Harari and the small Oromo groups inhabiting their immediate surroundings were conquered and incorporated. Following the accession of Menilek to the imperial throne in 1889 the conquest was suspended on occasion of the outbreak of the Great Famine of 1888-1892, known locally as Kefu qan (Évil Dayş).² It was caused by a combination of drought, locust invasion, rinderpest and cholera epidemics. The northern and central provinces were the most immediately affected regions. The loss of lives, cattle and grain as well as widespread starvation and disease added to the effects of recent armed conflicts. The consequences of the famine continued for a long time after the immediate effects gradually withered away. Only small parts of the recently conquered lands felt the direct impact of the famine. Some contingents of the imperial army were temporarily stationed in the conquered territories mainly to be supported by the governing authorities there.

Following the resumption of the military campaigns the Sidama kingdom of Wallamo (Walayta) was conquered 1894. The conquest and occupation of Sidamo followed between 1894 and 1895. The process of conquest was only briefly interrupted to concentrate on the war effort before confronting the Italians at Adwa, but were resumed soon afterwards. The powerful Sidama kingdom of Kaffa was finally conquered in 1897. Similarly in 1897 the Arussi Oromo of the highlands of Bale were subdued. In the same year, too, the gold producing sheikhdoms of Bani Shangul, Aqolda (Asosa) and Khomosha, adjacent to the Wallagga Oromo on the

borderland between Ethiopia and the Sudan, were subdued and annexed. The pastoral Borana Oromo in the far southeast were nominally subdued and incorporated in 1899. Further additions of conquered and annexed territories were made into largely hot and arid Somali inhabited lowlands in the southeast in competition with the British, Italians and French who were extending their respective spheres of influence inland from their coastal protectorates or into humid tropical marginal regions in the far south and southwest. Their occupation was intended to create protective buffer zones to secure the safety of the newly conquered and occupied rich, fertile and relatively densely populated Oromo/Sidama highlands in the interior.

In a few cases where local rulers like Abba Jifar II of Jimma, Kumsa Moroda of Leqa Naqamte and Jote Tullu of Leqa Qellam submitted peacefully and accepted their tributary status under Shawan Amhara overlordship they were allowed to retain a certain measure of autonomy. They continued to govern their people with little interference as long as they remained loyal and paid their tribute regularly. Other rulers and their subjects who chose to resist the conquerors were dealt with very harshly. Their lands were devastated, villages were burnt, cattle and other movable valuable possessions were looted, their young men and women were rounded up and enslaved. When the wars of conquest were over the lands of those who resisted the conquerors were occupied. The imposition of the Pax Shawana signalled for the subjugated Oromo/Sidama the beginning of their domination by the Shawan Amhara. Manned fortified military garrisons, katamas, were established at selected elevated locations in the conquered regions. They were intended to pacify the conquered lands and to keep control over their subject population. Shawan Amhara and assimilated Amharised Oromo military and civil administrative officials, eclesiastical functionaries together with their retainers were stationed in the conquered territories as settlers. None of them were paid for their services. All of them depended on the produce of the lands granted to them and the tribute paid to them, in cash, kind, labour and other multiple services and obligations, by the indigenous inhabitants who remained on the lands as peasants in lieu of pay. The latter were deprived of the ownership of land and reduced to the status of serfs as a result. Later new settlers arrived from the northern and central Ethiopian provinces as well seeking to make a

1. Markakis, op. cit., pp. 101, 105, 106
Indigenous local officials were appointed to act as intermediaries between the conquering authorities and their conquered subjects.1

The notable feature of several among the many aforementioned developments occurring throughout the nineteenth century was the emergence of paramountcies which possessed the characteristics of assimilative “national” states.2 In some cases deliberate efforts were made to absorb and assimilate conquered people and impress on them consciousness of distinctive identities such as common languages, social and cultural affinities and shared loyalties to ruling groups and states. The best examples of such polities were the Nguni military autocracies of the Zulu, Basuto, Swazi, Ndebele and Shoshangan’s Gaza kingdom.3 Elsewhere similar developments were a result of a large period of the evolution of commonly shared socio-political and cultural traditions as well as historical experiences. These included the Hausa-Fulani caliphate of Sokoto, the Bornu sultanate, the kingdoms of Benin, Buganda, Bunyoro and Rwanda.4 Other states such as Ashante (Asante) and Dahomey were more recent political formations.5 The empires of al-Hajj ‘Umar, Samore Toure and Rabih Ibn FadL Allah, on the other hand, were basically military conquest states in which practically no efforts were made to foster the evolution of communal identities and loyalties.6

At the beginning of the twentieth century Ethiopia emerged as the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa which survived the European colonial conquest as a politically independent state, though it lost parts of its northern highlands to the Italians. The case of Liberia, the other contemporary independent African state, was totally different. Liberia was originally founded as a suitable place for the settlement of Afro-Americans and Caribbeans recently freed from slavery and, therefore, was not a target for European conquest and colonisation.7 Ethiopia owed the maintainance of her independence largely to her success in decisively defeating the Italians at the battle of Adwa in March 1896. The military victory was followed by the official

1 - Ibid., pp. 105-106; Marcus, op. cit., pp. 191-193
2 - “Introduction,” in Flint, J.E., op. cit., pp. 3-4
3 - Ibid., pp. 4, 5-6
4 - Ibid., pp. 4, 7
5 - Ibid., p. 4
6 - “Introduction,” in Flint, J.E., op. cit., p.7
diplomatic recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the country by the European powers. Political independence was further consolidated by the conclusion of separately negotiated agreements with France, Italy and Britain which delimitated the newly extended Ethiopian borders in the southeast, south and southwest. In many respects the Shawan Amhara experience may be said to have been comparable with the near contemporary local African expansive “imperialisms” of the Khedive Ismail and the Zanzibari Sultans Sayyid Sa’id and Bargash in consort with the Swahili-Arab traders. Ismail endeavoured to extend his dominions in the Sudan southward up the Nile in the direction of the Lake Victoria region, along the Red Sea and the Somali coasts as well as into parts of Ethiopia. His ambitious plans were frustrated by the outbreak of the Mahdiya in the Sudan and the onset of a crippling financial crisis that erupted in Egypt. At nearly the same period the Zanzibari sultans Sayyid Sa ‘id and Bargash were gradually extending their informal power and influence into some parts of the interior regions of East Africa. They concluded trading agreements and exchanged gifts with several local rulers in the interior to facilitate and protect the commercial interests of the Zanzibar based Swahili-Arab traders. The traders themselves succeeded in building up considerable political power and influence where their settlements were established in the interior regions. Attempts to transform those informal commercial spheres of influence into political paramountcies were aborted by the establishment of European colonial rule. The only difference between the expansive enterprises of Khedive Ismail and the Zanzibari sultans and the Swahili-Arab traders on the one hand and the expansionism of the Shawan Amhara on the other was on their eventual outcome. The Shawan Amhara did succeed where the other failed.

Ethiopia continued to survive as an independent state throughout the colonial era, with the exception of the brief period of Italian Fascist occupation between 1935 and 1945. The position on the Oromo and the Sidama people, and others similarly forcefully subdued and incorporated within the extended boundaries of Ethiopia was essentially one of conquered, colonised and oppressively governed subject people.

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3 - Unomah, op. cit., pp. 306-310, 318
Practically all possible sorts of strenuous ways and means were undertaken by their Shawan Amhara conquerors to dominate them and maximise the systematic exploitation of their labour and the rich resources of their conquered lands. In the meantime no parallel policies and practices were adopted towards integrating and assimilating them into the newly enlarged and revived Greater Ethiopia.
Chapter 1
Northern Ethiopia, Shawa and the Outside World 1855 – 1878

In the mid–nineteenth century, the Christian Ethiopian1 Kingdom occupied the vast temperate northern and central regions of the highland massif of north-eastern Africa, generally known as the Horn of Africa. The surrounding regions consisted of lowlands, arid plains, deserts and sea coasts. The kingdom's northern and north-western borders with the Turco-Egyptian Sudan extended from the hinterland of Massawa, across the mountainous regions of northern Eritrea, to the course of Takazze (Atbara) river to the South of Kassala. From there it continued southwards to the twins towns of Gallabat/Matamma close to the province of Dembya, and then to the Abbay (Blue Nile) river marking the western border of Gojjam in the south–west. The southern borders were not in any acceptable sense, clearly defined as they tended to fluctuate frequently with changes of the political power and military potentials of the rulers of the southern provinces of Shawa and Gojjam. Nevertheless, they may be said to have extended south-eastwards from the great southern loop of the Abbay, along the high plateau region and the valleys of the Awash river to the edges of the eastern escarpment.2

In Ethiopia's internal politics, political dominance and cultural pre-eminence had been for many centuries, the preserve of the Tigreans who inhabitewd the northern parts of the highlands above the Takazze river. Then as a result of the shift of the centre of imperial power from Tigre to Lasta and then, since the late thirteenth century, to the central provinces of Bagemder and Amhara the northern Amhara of those provinces are said to have replaced the Tigreans as the dominant political and cultural

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1 Ethiopia is the official name which the country adopted since becoming a member of the League of Nations in 1923. The term is of Greek origin; literally meaning "the land of peoples with burnt faces", i.e. dark-skinned. The Christian Ethiopians dislike being referred to as "Habash" and to their country as "Habasha" or as "Abyssinians" and "Abyssinia". It is not uncommon, however, for the Ethiopians to use the term Habash and Habasha in informal conversation.


inheritants of the semitised Christian civilization of ancient Aksum. Consequently, it was from amongst the ranks of their nobility that occupants of the imperial throne belonged. The southern Amhara of Shawa and Gojjam, by contrast, were regarded as politically and culturally insignificant. Yohannes IV (r.1872-1889) was the only Tigrean who assumed imperial dignity ever since the so-called restoration of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270, with the exception of the short and ineffective reign of Yostos (r. 1709 – 1714).

The kingdom was ruled by emperors resident at the imperial capital Gondar, who styled themselves with the royal title of Negusa Nagast za Ityopya ("King of Kings of Ethiopia"), and claimed lineage links between their imperial dynasty and King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba (Makeda) who was said to have reigned in Ethiopia; through an alleged liaison between the two during the queen's short sojourn at the king's court in Jerusalem in the tenth century B.C.

Imperial political power and authority, theoretically absolute, had diminished continuously due to the forceful intervention by the powerful among the regional nobility in royal politics. The decline continued during the period of Ethiopia's relative isolation from political and cultural developments in the outside world following expulsion of the Portuguese from the country by Emperor Fasiladis (r.1632-1667). The only external link Ethiopia continued to maintain was with the Coptic Orthodox Church and its Patriarch at Alexandria in Egypt, who possessed the sole authority of appointing and consecrating the Abun ("Archbishop") of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Imperial political power and prestige reached their lowest ebb during 1796-1855, a period known in Ethiopian history as the Zamana Masafent ("The Era of the Princess/Judges"). It was a dismal interlude in Ethiopia's past

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3 The Kerba Nagast ("Glory of the Kings"), written in the fourteenth century, contains details of the traditional legend of the visit of Makeda the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon in Jerusalem, her seduction and the birth of a son, Ibn Hakim ("son of the Wise") acknowledged as the legitimate son of Solomon who, after his accession to the throne of Ethiopia took the throne-name of Menilek. Budge, R.A. Walis (trans.), The Queen of Sheba and her Only Son Menylek (Cambridge, 1962); Ullendorff, E., op.cit, pp. 143-144; Huntingford, G.W.B., "The Constitutional History of Ethiopia", JAH, 111, 2 (1962), pp. 311-315; Levine, N.D., Greater Ethiopia, pp. 92-112; Greenfield, R, Ethiopia: A New Political History (London, 1976), pp. 41-42.
characterized by almost incessant struggles and wars among the powerful of the regional nobility for political pre-eminence and the highest post of Ras Bitwaddad ("Guardian of the Monarch"). In the meantime, they steadily usurped most of the powers and prerogatives of the emperors. As a result, successive emperors were reduced to puppets; they "merely reigned but did not rule". They were often deposed, replaced or even murdered on occasions. A Gondari emperor practically had no army of his own, and his annual royal income was shamefully pitiful. Nevertheless, the emperors still preserved their shallow aura of legitimacy due to their alleged Solomonic descent, and the royal imperial title of Negusa Nagasat remained exclusively for them.

Conventionally, common allegiance to imperial sovereignty, general adherence to the Christian Orthodox faith and Church and to some extent almost similar traditions and customs of the country's inhabitants were often regarded as major cohesive and unifying factors. However, the highly fluid and imprecise legal process of determining imperial successions, and the availability of several eligible claimants at one and the same time; the refractory tendencies of the provincial nobility; the doctrinal divisions and sectarian disputes within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which usually assumed regional political significance; and the local disposition of the population at large were obvious obstacles inhibiting the attainment of political unity and cohesion. Other contributory factors include the rugged mountainous nature of the country, and the primitive and hazardous means of transport.

In the circumstances, any attempt made towards the achievement of effective centralized imperial power and authority was destined to have been personal and ephemeral. What mattered most were the strong personality and unmatched high prestige of the reigning emperor and his command of impressive and awe-inspiring military potentials both in man-power and weaponry, rather than mere presumed Solomonic dynastic claims and cherished unitary political conceptions. Thus, throughout most of its history since the sixteenth century the Ethiopian state was in fact an association of loosely connected semi-autonomous regional units rather than a united and centralized polity. Until the mid-nineteenth century the country
disintegrated into a number of almost independent provincial feudatories whose most powerful rulers held real power and influence, thereby dominating Ethiopian politics. The common interdependence that bound them and their subjects was provided not by the shadowy imperial monarchy, but by the Ethiopian Orthodox church which remained the sole repository of Ethiopian national identity.

Oromo political and military dominance was finally eliminated by Kassa Haylu. He was originally of a humble family background, though distantly related to a local ruler of the small district of Qwara in the western province of Dembya. He started his early career as a Shifta (Bandit) fighting as a leader of a group of rebels and malcontents, against Turko–Egyptian troops in the lowlands along the Ethiopian–Sudanese borders, and sometimes serving as a soldier of fortune offering his military services to various regional rulers. Becoming a successful and powerful military commander, with a large number of followers, Kassa attracted the attention of Ras Ali II and his mother Empress Mennen. To avoid the possible threat that he may pose to their own positions, and to win him to their side, they came to terms with him. He was promoted to the high rank of Dajazamach, appointed governor of Qwara and grudgingly agreed to his marriage to Ras Ali's daughter Tawabech.

Political disunity, near continuous power struggles, and devastating inter-regional wars, with the consequent widespread strife and lawlessness had been intensified by the intervention of the Yeju Oromo in the country's internal politics. Together with their kindred Wallo tribesmen they had penetrated into central Ethiopia and were established in the region by the beginning of the eighteenth century. Their leaders gradually acquired such power and influence that they rose to high posts at the imperial court at Gondar. Eventually, members of a powerful Yeju Oromo family, founded by Ali Gwangul in the 1770s, began to dominate Ethiopian political life as guardians to the puppet emperors at Gondar and governors of Bagemder with their seat of political power at Debra Tabor. Though the Yeju Oromo were Muslims, their leaders became converts to the Ethiopian Christian Orthodox faith for practical political reasons. They adopted Amharic language and customs and sometimes

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married their daughters to members of the royal imperial family. Of most significance was that they continued to draw their main power and military support from their Muslims Yeju and related Wallo Oromo tribesmen. Their last representative was Ras Ali II who, though still in a minor, nominally ruled as governor of Bagemder and as guardian to the puppet emperor Yohannes III, while his mother Empress Mennen Liban the wife of the emperor acted as regent.\(^1\)

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The concord was short-lived. Dajjach Kassa was not satisfied with the governorship of such a minor district as Qwara. He soon rebelled against Ras Ali and Mennen, invaded Dembya and even occupied Gondar for a time and collected tribute. The armies sent against him were defeated. In June 1846 an army led by Mennen herself, marched to subdue him, but was heavily defeated. Both Mennen and her husband, the reigning puppet Emperor Yohannes III, were captured. In exchange for their release, Kassa was given Dembya to govern. Turning his attention once more to the western frontier, he occupied Matamma, pushed into the Sudan and tried to capture an advance fortified Turco-Egyptian post at Dabarki. But in March 1848 his army was defeated; his soldiers being mown down by the artillery fire of the disciplined enemy troops. Those who survived were forced to flee to the highlands. This major set-back to his otherwise successful military career left its mark on his outlook in

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planning military reforms and modernization, which included the preoccupation with firearms, drill and discipline and an obsession with artillery and fortification. He subsequently succeeded in rebuilding his army, and resumed serving Ras Ali loyally until 1852 when relations between the two worsened and he rebelled again.

Within two years and in four major military victories Dajjach Kassa Haylu effectively removed the main war-lords and principal leaders who had dominated Ethiopia's political life. In the battle of Gur Amba, on 27 November 1852 Dajjach Goshu Birru of Gojjam was defeated and killed. Birru Alegaz, the governor of Lasta, and other important vassals of Ras Ali were decisively defeated at the battle of Gorgora on 12 April 1853. Ras Ali's main forces were routed at the battle of Ayshal on 29 June 1853. Ras Ali himself eluded capture, fled and took refuge among his Yeju Oromo kinsmen. He made no effort to raise any army and fight back. Finally, Dajjach Wube of Semien, the last of the major leaders of the period, was defeated and captured at the battle of Dersege on 8 February 1855. Captured with him was the Coptic Archbishop whom Wube had brought from Egypt for his own anticipated coronation as emperor.

The victorious Dajjach Kassa Haylu was not contented by merely replacing Ras Ali II as guardian to the reigning Gondari emperor. He deemed it necessary to remove the puppet occupant of the imperial throne, and crown his own person as the new imperial monarch. Thus the day after the battle of Dersege, on 9 February 1855, Dajjach Kassa Haylu was anointed and crowned Negusa Nagasat by Abuna Salama at the church of Mariam Derese with the throne-name of Tewodros I. Later in his reign, he added to his royal title "The Elect of God", regarding his rise to imperial power as the outcome of divine will.1

The policies and aspirations, which the new and ambitious emperor strove to realize, were lofty indeed. They included the restoration of the power and prestige of the imperial monarchy, the establishment of the political unity and strength of the Ethiopian state as well as the modernization of its administrative, military and religious institutions. From the very start of his reign, Emperor Tewodros took the first step towards the implementation of the concepts he envisaged for the political unification of the country. Soon after his coronation he turned his attention southwards with the intention of subduing the Wallo Oromo and Shawa. The Muslim

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1 For the background of Kassa Haylu, his early career and rise to power see Rubenson, S., op.cit., pp. 11,15-17, 25-34,35-45; idem., "Ethiopia and the Horn", pp. 65-67; Abir, M., op.cit., pp. 126-131, 138-142; Bahru Zewdw, op.cit., pp. 27-30
Wallo Oromo inhabiting parts of the plateau immediately to the north of Shawa, though dependent on the authority of the guardians of the emperors of Gondar, were virtually independent. The campaign against them, began in June 1855, was a short one. They were successfully defeated, a number of their chieftains were taken prisoners, and their naturally fortified mountainous strong-hold of Magalala was captured. But, as was the case in Ethiopian inter-regional wars of the time, their country was not pacified. A series of revolts subsequently broke out. Later on, Tewodros made three more attempts to subdue and pacify the Wallo country, in 1857, 1862 and 1864, but without success.1

From Wallo Tewodros's imperial army marched into Shawa, the southern province which had gradually developed into an independent kingdom. It remained, throughout the, Zamana Masafent an isolated and autonomous political entity unaffected by the power struggles and inter-regional wars that then engulfed the rest of Ethiopia. Its ruling dynasty, founded by Nagas Kristos (d. 1705), and claiming connections with the Solomonic imperial house was well established. Successive Shawan rulers- Asfa Wassen (d. 1808), Wassen Sagged( r. 1808-1812) and Sahle Sellassie( r. 1813-1847) had gradually conquered some of the Oromo tribes who were established in Shawa, and asserted the independence of their kingdom from direct imperial authority. The last time that Shawa paid tribute to the Gondari monarchs, was during the reign of Asfa Wassen. His successor Wassen Saggad styled himself Ras, while Sahle Sellassie independently assumed the title of Negus ("King"), thereby affirming his claims to kingship and his de facto sovereign status. Under his rule internal royal authority was consolidated, several former Shawan territories occupied by Oromo tribes up to the banks of the Chiachia river in the South were re-conquered, and foreign contacts were initiated resulting in the signing of treaties of "friendship and commerce" with Britain on 16 November 1841 and with France on 7 June1843. In general, Shawa grew into a peaceful and prosperous kingdom to the mutual benefit of rulers and subjects alike. Both developed a common interest in maintaining the independence of their kingdom. On his death in 1847, Sahle Sellassie was succeeded by his younger son Haile Malakot. By contrast he was a weak and inexperienced ruler. Nevertheless, it were the foundations laid by Sahle Sellassie that enabled the dynasty to survive and

retain the unity and independence of the kingdom and the loyalty and respect of its subjects.\textsuperscript{1}

It is said that Dajach Kassa Haylu before he was crowned emperor had sent to the king of Shawa summoning him to come to Gondar and render his homage. Forewarned of a possible invasion of their kingdom, the Shawans began making hurried defensive preparations. After crossing the Wallo-Shawan border during the rainy season of 1855, the imperial army arrived in the northern Shawan province of Geshe on 17 October. It was there that the first battle of the campaign was fought against the combined forces of the governors of the three northern Shawan provinces of Geshe, Geddam and Efrata. The fighting, which lasted the whole day, was fierce, but at the end Tewodros's army was victorious. While the three governors, realizing the futility of continuing to resist the overwhelmingly superior imperial forces, readily submitted Haile Malakot and the rest of this army were determined to resist. They withdrew to Debra Berhan, hoping that the rains might work to their advantage. Haile Malakot's army destroyed the grain provisions and burned the city before evacuating it, as the imperial army continued to push into its direction. Haile Malakot died in early December 1855, before the decisive battle was fought. At Baraket, on 19 December, the imperial army's superior armament and discipline won the day. After a short period of sporadic skirmishes, the Shawans capitulated.

After crushing an insurrection by the Oromo around Angolala, Tewodros entered the capital Ankober in late February 1856. It was there that he received the formal submission of the kingdom's generals, notables and clergy. Towards the end of the same month, he settled the issue of the administration of Shawa. He appointed Haile Mikael, another son of Sahle Sellassie as governor on his behalf with the title of Maredazmach; traditionally given by the emperors to the rulers of the kingdom before the reigns of Wassen Saggad and Sahle Sellassie. Tewodros also appointed Ato Andargatchw as Abegaz ('Frontier Governor'). Finally, the emperor left together with his army on their way to Gondar passing through Gojjam. He took with him a number of Shawan notables, including Prince Sahle Mariam, Haile Malakot's young son and heir to the throne, his mother Ejjigiehu, his uncle Ato Darge (the fourth son of Sahle

Sellassie), his tutor Ato Nadaw and Walda Tsadek, who were to remain as hostages in exile at his court. ¹

Indeed Tewodros had defeated the Shawan armies, and subdued the kingdom, though not without stiff and courageous resistance. But this did not, in any way, mean the end of Shawa's independence. During the next nine years a series of rebellions continued to break out, and the emperor had to campaign in Shawa more than once again in attempts to crush them and reestablished the authority of his appointed governors.

While Emperor Tewodros was engaged on his first campaign in Wallo and Shawa Tadla Gwalu, a member of the local ruling family in Gojjam, raised the standard of rebellion there. In March 1856, the emperor and his army crossed the Abbay on their way from Shawa into Gojjam. Little resistance was encountered. Tedla Gwalu managed to escape and withdrew with most of his troops to the safety of an inaccessible amba in southern Gojjam; a tactic often repeated by the Gojjame ruler. The emperor withdrew, and was back in Gondar by July. ²

In February 1857 Tewodros campaigned again in Wallo where his appointed governor of Magdala Dajjach Liben and another Wallo chief named Amade Beshir had rebelled. Magdala was re-captured, and a new governor was appointed there. The rebels were defeated, but their leaders were not captured. The emperor spent most of the year in Wallo trying to pacify the country.³ In November 1857, Tewodros campaigned in Gojjam for the second time, where his appointed governor had failed to pacify the province. He defeated the rebel forces, caught and executed a number of the leaders, but Tadla Gwalu once more fled.⁴

The campaign in Gojjam was followed by another one to Lasta in March 1858. The hereditary ruler of the province Wagshum Gabre Medhin had rebelled and joined forces with the Tigren rebel brothers Neguse and Tesemma. He was defeated, captured and hanged together with eight other rebel leaders in May 1858.⁵

Insurrections in Wallo flared again and led the emperor and his army there. The rebel cavalry forces of Amade Beshir were defeated on several occasions, but the leader himself always managed to escape. Soldiers of the imperial army were allowed, this

² Rubenson, S., op.cit, pp 53, 67, 68
³ Ibid., p. 75.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., pp. 75-76
time, to pillage the countryside, capture and slaughter the farmer's cattle and plunder their grain-stores, but orders were given to spare the lives of war captives. In view of the size of the armies of both sides, and the large scale of devastation famine conditions prevailed in the region. The campaign was interrupted briefly. In September 1858 the emperor departed with his army for Gondar to repel a rebel force from the capital. Then the fighting in Wallo was resumed and continued for almost a full year, until October 1859. Frustrated by the continuous rebellions of the Wallo and their stubborn resistance Tewodros turned to brutal reprisals. Hundreds of captives were mutilated; in one occasion 787 men had both hands cut off. The rebel leaders Amade Beshir continued to elude capture, but the population suffered too much.¹

In Shawa Haile Mikael continued to govern the country loyally for three years, and paid his annual tribute regularly. Then in October 1859, when the emperor was still campaigning in Wallo, Prince Sayfu the youngest son of Sable Sellassie led a series of revolts. The emperor's appointed governors were defeated more than once. Haile Mikael, who was suspected of being unable or unwilling to deal effectively with his rebellious young brother, was recalled to Magdala, removed from his post and detained. Andargatchw, most probably, met the same fate. The two were replaced by Haile Mikeal's brother-in-law AtoAboye as governor, and a man previously employed in the court of Sahle Sellassie named Bezzabebeh as Abegaz; both of them having served in the previous administration. Their efforts to quell the rebellion failed. When the rebels captured Ankober in October 1859 Emperor Tewodros, who had been sent to for help, hurriedly marched with his army to Shawa. The rebels were defeated. Ankober was re-captured, but Sayfu retreated eastwards into Oromo Territories. Leaving behind his governors in Shawa to finish the task of crushing the revolt, Tewodros turned to the north on his way to Magdala. The revolt, however, continued and ended only when Sayfu had been killed in June 1860 while trying to restore order in his province of Marabiete which had been devastated by the emperor's army on its withdrawal from Shawa.²

The short campaign in Shawa was followed by another swift one against the rebel Tigrean brothers Neguse and Tesemma, but they withdrew with their army when the

¹ Ibid., pp. 76-77  
emperor reached Adawa. Tewodros postponed continuing the campaign in Tigre and returned to Debra Tabor on his way on an expedition to Wallo where rebellion sprang up again during the rainy season of 1860. Then he was off again to fight the rebel Tigrean brothers. They were defeated, and this time the rebel brothers together with some other rebel leaders were executed near Aksum in January 1861. The next two years brought some respite for Tewodros. But soon afterwards rebellions started once again in various provinces. In Gojjam TadlaGwalu, who continued to defy the emperor's authority for more than seven years, had consolidated his position in the province and even increased the area under his control. The Wallo Oromo also rose in rebellion. Tewodros decided to deal with Gojjam first, determined to rid himself of the defiant rebel once and for all. In early 1863 Tewodros led a large army into Gojjam. The country was devastated and the rebels were severely defeated at the battle of Injabara, but once again Tadla Gwalu fled. Although the insurgent had suffered heavy losses he still remained a powerful adversary to reckon with.

After having served faithfully as one of the two imperial governors of Shawa Bezzabbeh turned against his sovereign and raised the banner of insurrection in early 1864. He arrested and detained Ato Aboye and declared himself Negus. Although there were other rebellions in Walqayt and Lasta Tewodros found enough time to march southwards towards the end of the year to deal with the revolts in Wallo and Shawa. The campaign was a failure as it did not end up in victory at the battlefield. Wallo remained unsubdued and Bezzabbeh continued in control of Shawa. A Last and equally unsuccessful attempt by the emperor to regain Shawa was made at the beginning of 1865.

Tewodros's ambitious policies to assert the political unification and modernization of Ethiopia ended in failure. The high-handed and forcible methods he employed to attain his goals degenerated into vicious and often indiscriminate acts of violence and repression. Mounting frustration and depression drove him to increasing acts of mutilation of limbs, executions and the looting and burning of homes, crops and grain.

1 Rubenson, S., op.cit, pp. 78-79.
2 Ibid., p. 79.
3 Ibid., p.79
4 Ibid., p. 80.
5 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
7 Rubenson, S., op.cit., p.81.
Most of the powerful regional nobility, the highly influential Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its clergy were alienated. Many generals, thousands from amongst the lower ranks and even ordinary soldiers of this once invincible army began deserting him. Ordinary peasants started attacking and harassing what remained of his army.2

By 1867 Ethiopia was once more, reduced to the verge of dissolution. Tewodros and what remained of his army were confined to the fortress of Magdala and its immediate surroundings. Rebels and rival contenders for power commanding for more powerful armies than his own controlled the rest of the country. Goboze Gebre Medhin, the governor of Wag and Lasta, extended his control over parts of Amhara and Tigre as well. Dajach Kassa, Mercha, a former ally first of the emperor and then of Gobaze Gebre Medhin was on his way of making himself an autonomous ruler of Tigre and an aspirant to imperial honours. Tiso Gobaze, the governor of Walqayt, controlled all the northwestern territories between the Takazze river and Lake Tana, including the imperial capital Gondar. In Gojjam Tadla Gwalu, a member of the local ruling family who repeatedly defied the emperor's authority remained an unreconciled adversary. The young Sahle Mayam had escaped from Magadala and was restored on the throne of Shawa under the name of Menilek II. In Wallo rebellion centered around two rival queens, Worqit and Mastawat acting as custodians for opposed young princes.3

Further still Tewodoros was to face the threat of an invading British force sent to liberate the Europeans, including some British envoys, whom he imprisoned and to punish him in vindication of British honour.4 Pending the outcome of the imminent encounter between the emperor and the invading British forces all the rebel magnates refrained from getting themselves involved in military confrontation with the emperor. Instead they concentrated their efforts in consolidating their positions in their respective regional basis.

By the beginning of August 1865 the young Sahle Maryam had himself proclaimed king of Shawa under the throne – name of Menilek II. From the very start of his

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2 Rubenson, S., op.cit., pp. 69-72, 81.
region he nourished dynastic ambitions and made claims to the imperial throne. He actually adopted the imperial little of Aste ("Emperor") and had the royal imperial emblem Negusa Nagast Za Ityopya ("King of Kings of Ethiopia") engraved on his seal. Equally significant was his choice of the name Menilek, as it was identical to the name of the first Ethiopian emperor, the legendary alleged son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Nevertheless, he was not the only aspirant to imperial power to make such claims. Both Gobaze Gebre Medhin, Kassa Mercha and even Kassa Haylu before them actually made explicit claims of their own to imperial legitimacy.

Immediately after his accession was secured and the loyalty of his subjects assured Menilek dealt with Bezzabbeh, the former rebel governor of Shawa who had attempted to thwart his return and restoration on the Shawan throne. After having been pardoned and reconciled with his suzerain he was arrested on charges of fomenting rebellion convicted and executed. With his elimination Menilek's restoration may be said to have been complete. Henceforth, he had almost no rival or potential opponent. His province was relatively prosperous and enjoyed larger periods of peace than the other Ethiopian regions providing him with a strong local base for future political action.

From the very beginning of his reign Menilek must have been aware that the maintenance of a large and powerful army was essential not only for securing and consolidating his newly gained autonomous position in Shawa, but also for the future realization of his imperial ambitions. Shawa could provide large numbers of cavalry but few combatants armed with modern firearms and skilled in handling them largely due to the restrictions imposed on arms imports at the ports of entry into the country. It was with the intention of overcoming this drawback that Menilek initiated foreign contacts. The dominant objective for his diplomatic correspondence with the European powers and individual traders was his need to acquire, through purchase or

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2 - Pankhurst, R., "Letter Writing And the Use of Royal and Imperial Seals in Ethiopia Prior to the Twentieth Century; JES, II, I (January, 1973), pp. 190, 192- 194.
otherwise, substantial quantities of firearms and ammunition. He is said to have made his first foreign approach towards the end of 1865 when he wrote to the French Consul at Aden asking to be supplied with cannon and muskets. In 1867, when British military action against Emperor Tewodros became certain, he sent a messenger with gifts and letters to Queen Victoria and to the British Resident at Aden. He announced his accession to the throne, requested the renewal of the amicable relations Britain previously had with his grandfather Sahle Sellassie and asked for skilled craftsmen to be sent to him. Except for a courteous reply acknowledging his accession and the dispatch of a few presents nothing positive came out of the initiative.¹

In 1867 Menilek responded favourably to a request made by the Roman Catholic Cardinal Massaia for permission to travel through Shawa on his way to rejoin the mission previously established among the Oromo of the south–west. The king's real intention was to use Massaia's services as an adviser and an intermediary for contacts with Europe. After his arrival in Shawa in early 1868 he was kept close to the court until he was expelled together with the other Roman Catholic missionaries on orders of Emperor Yohannes in June 1879².

Menilek did not, despite Massaia's advice, become involved with the British force on its way from the coast to Magdala. At the head of some 3,000 men he made a short display of force at some distance from the fortress between 30 November and 2 December 1867 before withdrawing. Shortly afterwards Wagshum Gobaze Gebre Medhin made a brief appearance with a small army in the surroundings of the fortress, but he too moved away. News that Tewodros had left Debra Tabor on his way to Magdala forced both of them to turn back.³ They even turned down Napier's offer to come and take possession of Magdala after the fortress had been stormed and burned and Tewodros had taken his own life. A Shawan envoy sent to Napier at the last moment learned, while on his way, that the British had already left for the coast after having handed over the ruined fortress to Mastawat, the Wallo rival of Menilek's ally Worqit.⁴ Later Menilek wrote to Napier declaring that he would have liked to assist the British in their campaign against Tewodros, but unfortunately he was too far away.

¹ - Marcus, H. G., op. cit., p. 28; Darkwah, Kofi, op. cit., p. 58; Caulk, R.A.; Minilik And The Diplomacy of Commerce: Prelude to An Imperial Foreign Policy," JES, XVII, 2 (November, 1984), P. 64.
² - Darkwah, Kofi, op. cit., 59-60; Caulk, R.A., op.cit., p. 64.
⁴ - Ibid., p. 32; Caulk, R.A., po.cit., 65.
away to offer his help.\footnote{1} In 1869 he wrote to Queen Victoria asking to be supplied with guns, and to the British Resident at Aden for permission to establish a Shewan trading agency there. The request for arms was ignored, but approval was granted for Menilek to have the Frenchman Césair Tian, then a resident at Aden, as his agent.\footnote{2}

Almost simultaneously with initiating foreign contacts Menilek embarked on the conquest and pacification of Wallo, the strategically vulnerable Oromo region commanding the principal entry into Shawa from the north. It was evident that once the power struggle in northern and central Ethiopia was resolved the victor would almost certainly move to invade Shawa and subdue its ruler. It was to guard against such a possibility that the conquest of Wallo was started in October 1867. It took almost nine years to complete. The towns of Warra Ilu and Enawari were built to serve as military garrisons and administrative centres. Menilek's accomplishment of the conquest at a time when Shawa's military resources were only slightly better off than those of the Wallo Oromo was largely due to the internal disunity among the Wallo and the lack of interference by outsiders in the process. Nevertheless, his hold over the region, exercised through the local representatives Abba Wattu and Muhammad Ali, was tenuous at best.\footnote{3} Menilek also managed to enlist the support of Dajach Wale whom he appointed as governor of his native Yejju region.\footnote{4}

In the meantime the British campaign against Tewodros was successfully completed. After a brief skirmish at Aroge on 10 April 1868 the British shelled and stormed Magdala. Tewodros committed suicide on Easter Monday 13 April 1868 rather than allow himself to be taken prisoner. Soon after the release of the European prisoners the fortress was looted, its guns and mortars were destroyed before it was set on fire. True to their initial declarations the British forces commenced their withdrawal to the coast on 17-18 April 1868 without attempting to set up or promote a successor to the late emperor.\footnote{5}

Of the principal contestants for imperial succession Wagshum Gobaze Gebre Medhin was in the most favourable position. After having consolidated his authority over Amhara he defeated and killed Tiso Gobaze of Walqayt who had control over Bagemder as well. He subsequently had himself crowned as Emperor Takla Giyorgis

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[3] Guèbrè Sellassie; Chronique, 1, pp. 119-120, 121-123; Cecchi, A., Da Zeila, 1, p. 267-269; Darkwah, Kofi, op. cit., pp. 87-90; Marcus, It G. op. cit., pp. 28-29, 35.
\item[4] Ibid., p. 35.
\item[5] Ibid., p. 31.
\end{itemize}}
II in mid – August 1868.¹ Both Dajach Kassa Mercha and Menilek II withheld their recognition of his accession and continued to challenge him. Towards the end of the year the new emperor crossed with his army into Talanta, bordering on Wallo, intending to subdue the Yeju rebel Faris Ali. Menilek was then in Wallo campaigning against Mastawat and her son Abba Wattu. Only the course of the river Bashilo separated their respective camps. When Menilek was asked by Takla Giyorgis to submit he readily complied. He sent his leading general Dajach Gobana at the head of a delegation with tribute to the imperial camp. An agreement seems to have been reached between the two. The Bashillo river was to be the boundary between their respective domains, and Menilek was to acknowledge Takla Giyorgis as emperor and pay him annual tribute.² In Gojjam the emperor campaigned first against Birru Goshu whom he defeated and hanged.³ Afterwards he fought his successor Tadla Gwalu who, on the approach of the emperor's army, fled and took refuge with his Oromo relatives beyond the Abbay. The emperor appointed Adal Tesemma, another member of the local Gojjami ruling family, as his governor of the province. After the departure of the imperial army the rebel Tadla Gwalu reappeared on the scene once again. He was defeated and captured by Adal Tesemma who delivered him to the emperor at Debra Tabor. Adal Tesemma was rewarded by being promoted to the highest rank of Ras and was given the emperor's paternal sister, Leqetch, in marriage.⁴

The challenge of Dajjach Kassa Mercha of Tigre remained unresolved. While Takla Giyorgis was busily engaged elsewhere Kassa Mercha continued building up his power and influence in his province. He was generously rewarded by the British force for the positive support and cooperation he afforded while it was on its way from the coast to Magdala and back. Among the gifts made to him were 6 mortars with 200 rounds of munition per piece, 6 howitzers with 50 rounds of munition for each, about 600 rifles and muskets with assorted amounts of gun powder, percussion caps and packing materials.⁵ He also managed to enlist the services of J.C. Kirkham, a Scottish adventurer who had joined the British force with unofficial status, to train his

¹ - Ibid., p. 33.
² - Ibid, 34; Zewde Gèbrè-Sellassie, op.cit., 31-32; Rubenson, S., "Ethiopia and the Hom", p. 84.
⁴ - Zewde Gebre – Sellassie, op. cit., p. 32.
⁵ - Marcus, H.g., op.cit., p. 32.
Kassa also succeeded in obtaining a new abuna, Atnathewos, from Egypt to replace the late Abuna Salama who died in imprisonment at Magdala.²

The challenge of Dajjach Kassa Mercha was finally resolved in July 1871 at the battle of Assam where Kassa's small force of 12,000 troops some of whom equipped with arms newly acquired from the British force won a decisive victory over Takla Giyorgis's larger army of some 60,000 combatants most of whom were cavalry. The emperor himself was wounded, unhorsed and captured. Most of his generals, 24,000 of his soldiers, his mother, wife and brother Birru were taken prisoners. The former emperor was eventually blinded and killed or died, while most of his captured generals and soldiers were incorporated into the ranks of the victors' army.³ Six months later, on 21 January 1872, Kassa Mercha was solemnly anointed and crowned at Aksum by the newly consecrated Abuna Atnathewas as "king of kings Yohannes IV, King of Sion of Ethiopia."⁴

It was at the beginning of his reign while he was engaged in fighting the Azebu (Raya) Oromo, who had recently raided southeaster Tigrean territories, that Emperor Yohannes received news of Turco-Egyptian occupation of the northern Ethiopian region of Bogos. He immediately returned to Adwa, but did not launch a counter offensive. Instead he dispatched some 15,000 of his troops to the northern border districts to guard against further enemy encroachments while he proceeded to attempt resolving the ensuing conflict diplomatically. He sent John Kirkham in a mission with letters addressed to the Khedive of Egypt, Queen Victoria, The President of France and the emperors of Austria, Germany and Russia complaining about the occupation of Bogos and soliciting help in resolving the issue.⁵ Even though the fate of Bogos was still undecided the emperor marched with his army into the central provinces to subdue their governors. Ras Wolde Sellassie (Worennya) of Amhara and Semien was forced to capitulate and submit without a shot being fired. Next, in January 1873, the Yejju ruler Ali Birru was defeated and killed, and in February the emperor obtained the submission and promises of allegiance from Takla Giyorgis's former vassal governors at Gondar.⁶

¹ - Ibid., P. 33.
² - Ibid., P. 34.
Yohannes then turned southwards to deal with Ras Adal Tesemma of Gojjam. In early December 1873 the imperial army crossed the Abbay into Gojjam. Little resistance was encountered as the Gojjami ruler continued to retreat southwards with his followers. Hardships caused by the long march from Debra Tabor, lack of provisions, casualties resulting from an outbreak of an epidemic and the approaching onset of the rainy season finally compelled the emperor to withdraw after having appointed Desta Tadla Gwalu as his own governor over the province. But soon afterwards Ras Adal defeated and killed the emperor's nominee in October 1874. Then he made his submission to Yohannes who confirmed him in his position as the vassal governor of Gojjam and Damot.¹

After spending Christmas at Debra Tabor, Yohannes left for Yejju in early January 1875. While he was campaigning there Abba Wattu of Wallo, who had rebelled against the king of Shawa, came and submitted to him. Menilek who was then in Wallo with his army, hurriedly sent a deputation with tribute and assurances of allegiance to the emperor.² News received that the Turco-Egyptians were advancing inland from Massawa forced the emperor to withdraw. Afterwards Menilek managed to regain control of Magelala, captured and imprisoned Abba Wattu and replaced him by Muhammed Ali as governor over Wallo.³

In the meantime the accession of Yohannes IV was an occasion for Menilek to renew his earlier initiatives for opening up foreign contacts with the aim of securing access to ports on the coast and the acquisition of arms and munition. The mission of Abba Mikael, sent to Europe in June 1872, was intended to arouse European interests in the commercial potentialities of Shawa. The envoy proceeded to Italy with letters from his sovereign addressed to the Pope, King Victor Emmanuel II and the Italian Geographical society, while the other correspondence intended for Queen Victoria, the President of France and the German Kaiser were delivered to their respective consuls at Aden. In Italy Menilek's envoy was received in audience by the king and addressed leading members of the Italian Geographical Society. Considering subsequent Italian involvement with Shawa this particular initiative does not seem to have been such a failure as it seemed at the time.⁴

¹ - Ibid., p. 45.
² - Ibid.
Having obtained no positive response from the European powers Menilek turned to Egypt. His first serious contact with the Khedive was made in February 1874. The reply for this was mistakenly handed to the emperor, and the contents were so vague that Yohannes failed to realise that it was not intended for him. Again in March and May 1875 Menilek sent two missions to Egypt headed respectively by Aleqa Birru Wolde Giyorgis and the Armenian Boghos effendi. All that Menilek offered was his friendship in return for the free transit of goods, including arms, through Zeila, and sending him artisans and a Coptic prelate. Contrary to what has sometimes been suggested, no conspiracy hostile to Yohannes was entered into between Menilek and the Egyptians as a result of those initiatives.

The only planned, though eventually aborted; offer made to Menilek at that stage to join with the Egyptians in a hostile military action against the emperor was made in late 1875. Werner Munzingher was ordered to advance inland from Tajura and occupy the small Afar sultanate of Aussa, and to deliver a gift of 500 rifles and munitions to Menilek and promise further supplies if the latter consents to move with his army northwards simultaneously with an Egyptian attack on the emperor from the north. In fact neither the proposal for coordinated action against Yohannes, nor the gift of amsever reached Shawa. Munzingher's small force of 400 men was ambushed and almost wiped out by the Afar on the morning of 14 November 1876. Munzingher and Aleqa Birrc were among those who were killed. Another gift of 500 rifles intended for Menilek was never dispatched from Zeila.

In the meantime an Egyptian force of 1,200 men commanded by Muhammad Rauf Pasha departed from Zeila and occupied Harar on II October 1875. Another much larger and well - equipped Egyptian force of 2,500 men advancing from Massawa under the command of colonel. Soren Aldolph Arendrup Pasha and Arakil Bey Nubar was attacked and defeated by Yohannes at Gundet during the night of 16/17 November 1875. Several hundred modern Remington rifles, six artillery pieces, large quantities of ammunition, considerable amounts of provisions and cash were

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5 - Ibid., p. 317
captured.\textsuperscript{1} It was only after this military setback and before orders were given for another expedition to move against the emperor that the Khedive Ismail sent a letter to Menilek informing him that a large army was being ordered to inflict due punishment on Yohannes, declaring that Egypt had no intention on occupying Ethiopia, and proposed that in case Menilek found himself with his army at Adwa the Egyptians would be happy to conclude peace with him.\textsuperscript{2} Menilek received this letter in January 1876. Uncertain of Egyptian success and aware of the grave consequences of allying himself with a foreign Muslim power against the emperor and his own countrymen he chose a cautious action. He sent envoys and a token supportive force of some hundred cavalry to the emperor while he himself, together with the greater part of his army, awaited the outcome of events in Wallo.\textsuperscript{3} The larger and better equipped Egyptian army under the command of Muhammad Ratib Pasha and General Loring, sent to avenge the defeat at Gundet, was overwhelmed on 7-9 March 1876 by Yohannes at Gura. This time the war booty is said to have consisted of some 12,000 - 13,000 Remington rifles, 16 cannon, large amounts of ammunition and supplies.\textsuperscript{4}

The military victories of 1875-1876 substantially reinforced Yohannes's military strength, but did very little to solve his dispute with the Egyptians or to silence internal dissidence. Hopes of soliciting diplomatic support from the Christian European powers against Muslim Egypt were in vain. It was only in 1884 that British pressure obliged Egypt to hand back Bogos to Yohannes, but not Massawa, in exchange for the emperor's assistance in evacuating the besieged Turco-Egyptian garrisons in the Eastern Sudan. The embargo imposed on the import of arms at Massawa was continued.\textsuperscript{5} Internally Ras Wolde Mikael, the governor of Hamasien, had rebelled and joined with the Turco-Egyptians, while Ras Wolde sellassie (Worenya), the governor of Amhara and Bagemder who had wavered on his support for the emperor was imprisoned and replaced. His son Nagash led a rebellion which


\textsuperscript{2} - Ibid., p. 325.

\textsuperscript{3} - Ibid.; Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 67.


was suppressed with the help of Ras Adal Tesemma.\textsuperscript{1} Menilek, who had never openly recognized Yohannes as his sovereign, took the opportinity of the emperor's engagements with the rebels and jointly with Muhammad Ali of Wallo invaded Bagemder in early 1877.\textsuperscript{2} It is difficult to ascertain exactly what he intended to achieve as he did not go far beyond Debra Tabor on the route to Gondar.

While on the march northwards Menilek found little local support. Moreover, his troops who had suffered many casualties during a recent military expedition against the qurage to the south of Shawa had very little inclination for a prolonged campaign away from home. Eventually he decided to return with his army to Shawa passing through Gojjam rather than following the route through Wallo that led him northwards in the first place. On the way Muhammad Ali broke ranks and retired with his army on the pretext of intending to put down an anti-Shawan insurrection that broke out in Wallo. On arrival there he made himself the lender of the revolt and later defected to join with the emperor. In the meantime a conspiracy was hatched in Shawa under the leadership of Menilek's consort Bafana with the aim of replacing Menilek by one of her sons from a previous marriage.\textsuperscript{3}

When Menilek began campaigning in Gojjam Ras Adal Tesemma withdrew with his army to the south, and later took refuge with the emperor at Debra Tabor. The Shawan soldiers, already exhausted from the long march, were also weakened by disease and desertions. They were unwilling to continue fighting with the prospect of having to face two armies in unfriendly country. Moreover, the approach of the rainy season and the hazards of escape across a flooded Abbay river finally convinced the king to terminate the campaign. On the morning of 25 May 1877 the return march to Shawa commenced. By mid-November Menilek managed to regain control in Shawa, but his hold over Wallo had collapsed.\textsuperscript{4}

It was at such a critical and unfortunate moment for Menilek that Emperor Yohannes finally decided to invade Shawa. It's ruler's autonomous status and his dissident tendencies have been worrying the emperor for so long. The scale of the 1875-1876 military victories freed Yohannes from the possibility of renewed Turco-Egyptian aggression and substantially augmented his army's armament. In late 1877

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\textsuperscript{1} - Marcus, H.G., op. cit., p. 42; Sanderson, G.N., op. Cit., p. 647. \\
\textsuperscript{2} - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique op. 137.. \\
\end{flushright}
he left Debra Tabor at the head of a large army heading for Shawa determined to subjugate its ruler more firmly and assert his own imperial hegemony. In early January 1878 the imperial army, then reinforced by the forces of Ras Adal Tesemma and Muhammad Ali, entered the northern Shawan province of Manz where it got engaged in minor clashes with the Shawan defenders. An early tentative move by Menilek to sue for a peaceful settlement was rebuffed by the discouragingly harsh terms set by the emperor. Full – scale war seemed imminent.¹

In Liche Menilek issued an awaj ("Proclamation") for general mobilisation. Fortifications were hastily constructed, and the royal treasury was transported to Fekre Gemb. At the beginning of February the king left with his army to encounter the invader, but soon turned back. A council of war decided against engaging the emperor's army in battle. It was left for the clergy on both sides to mediate for a peaceful settlement.² The emperor was not unwilling to compromise. His large and well-equipped army was already beginning to feel the effects of shortages of provisions. It consisted of about 70,000 infantry 14,000-15,000 of whom possessed modern repeating Remington rifles, besides 3,000-4,000 cavalry and large numbers of irregulars many of whom were armed with old guns of assorted models, lances, swords and spears. Joined with the emperor own army were 20,000 troops of Ras Adal Tesemma and the 4,000-5,000 cavalry force of Muhammad Ali.³ By comparison Menilek's small army of about 40,000 cavalry and infantry was poorly supplied with old firearms mostly matchlocks and percussion guns but no modern weapons.⁴ Although it had the advantage of operating on its own territory it was obviously no match for the over whelmingly superior forces of the emperor and his allies.

Soon a truce was arrived at allowing for the exchange of captives and the re-provisioning of the imperial army. Further negotiations finally resulted in an agreement on details of a formal peace settlement. According to the terms of the Liche Agreement of 20 March 1878, also known as the treaty of Wadala, Menilek was to declare his public renunciation of the imperial title and retain only the title of Negus; recognise Yohannes as the legitimate Negusa Nagast and perform a personal formal act of submission. He was to render homage and fealty to the emperor; pay him a heavy periodic tribute; offer him military assistance whenever being asked to;

¹ - Ibid., p. 53.
² - Marcus, H.g., op.cit., pp. 53-54.
³ - Ibid., pp. 55-56.
⁴ - Ibid., pp. 44, 54.
supply the imperial army with provisions while it stayed in Shawa; ensure safe passage for the emperor and his army to the monastery of Debra Libanos; and transfer Shawa's capital from Liche to Debra Berhan. In addition Menilek's domain was defined as extending to the Bashillo river in the north, the Abbay river in the west and the Awash in the south and east. The Shawan king was to renounce claims to sovereignty over Wallo, but was allowed to retain its governorship provided that he cooperated with the emperor in the building of Churches there and Christianising the predominantly Muslim local population. Other terms included the adoption of the Two Birth' doctrine by the Shawan Church and its clergy, though a year's grace was allowed before implementation to smooth the way for the change; the expulsion of the Catholic missionaries and other Europeans and to discourage their entry into Shawa. In return Menilek was to be formally recognised and crowned by Emperor Yohannes as Negus of Shawa, and to be granted the governorship of Wallo.¹

The ceremony of submission, reconciliation and coronation took place at Liche on 26 March 1878. Menilek was made to approach Yohanne's presence in the traditional humble and submissive manner. He walked towards the emperor's tent on foot, head bowed and bare to the waist, carrying a stone on his neck and prostrated himself in front of Yohannes. Shortly afterwards the sovereign and his vassal met in private discussion for a short time. Then Yohannes ceremoniously crowned Menilek, with the Ichege in attendance, as Negus of Shawa conferring imperial sanction on his kingly status.²

Two months later (May – June 1878) a religious council was convened at Boru Meda in Wallo on orders of Emperor Yohannes. Its aim was to put an end to doctrinal controversies and affirm unity of faith within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church throughout the country. The major resolutions of the council enforced uniform adherence to the official Qara Haymanat ("Two-Birth") doctrine, and the Christianisation of Muslims and pagans. Those who did not conform were to suffer repression and persecution. Christians were given two years to conform, while Muslims and pagans were allowed three and five years respectively to convert to Christianity and be baptised or face the prospects of losing their posts and land properties. Few Muslims, particularly in Wallo, complied to forced conversion. Some

conformed in name only, while many others chose to flee to neighbouring or far-away Muslim regions in the southwest or southeast. The leading Wallo chieftains Muhammad Ali and Abba Wattu were converted to Christianity and baptised. The former was renamed Mikael and was prompted to the rank of Ras, while the latter was given the name of Haile Maryam and awarded the rank of Dajazmach. In Shawa many Muslims were made to forsake their faith and convert to Christianity, while most of the pagan Oromo were forcibly converted and circumcised.¹

The 1878 crisis left Menilek personally humiliated and politically isolated. Fortunately enough both his local power base and his army together with its armaments remained undamaged. Similarly his ambitious aspirations for succession to the imperial throne and subsequent hegemony throughout the entire Ethiopian realm survived undiminished. Nevertheless, the course of events leading to the imperial invasion of Shawa and the peace settlement which followed convinced the king of the disastrous consequences of prematurely challenging Emperor Yohannes by being involved in the internal politics of northern Ethiopia. He realised that his failure to alter the balance of power to his favour was primarily due to the inferiority of his military strength compared to that of the emperor. He could not hope to make a successful bid to supreme imperial dignity unless he could muster enough military resources in manpower and weaponry at least equal to if not more superior to those available to the emperor.² So far he had been unable to obtain sufficient supplies of arms despite the several attempts he had made in that direction. At the Shawa traditional outlet of Zeila the local governor Abu Baker Ibrahim, in collaboration with the Egyptian authorities at Harer, Berbera and Tajura obstructed Shawa's foreign trade and her import of arms. As yet no alternative routes giving Menilek's trading caravans unimpeded access to the ports of Obok and Assab had been opened up.³

The French arms trader Pierre Arnowx had been in the country since 1874. Members of the Italian Geographical Society's Expedition, led by Marchese Orazio Antinori, had arrived at Liche towards the end of September 1876. However, the arms that Menilek actually received from them were disappointingly very few. Arnowx presented him with a gift of about 100 rifled carbines, some revolvers and cartridges. At the beginning of July 1876 the Frenchman left Shawa for Europe with letters

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² - Marcus, H.g., op. cit., p. 56.
³ - Ibid., pp. 44-45, 46.
addressed to the heads of the governments of Egypt, France, Britain, Italy and the Papacy. He was also entrusted with a caravan carrying goods belonging to Menilek to be sold abroad and the proceeds of the merchandise was to pay for the purchase of arms. The caravan, however, was forced to follow the route leading to Zeila rather than the one to Obok. At Zeila the goods was seized by its governor Abu Baker Ibrahim. The mission to Europe intended to facilitate obtaining arms produced no results.\(^1\) Orazio Antirori, on the other hand, was persuaded to sacrifice the weapons originally intended for the protection of members of the expedition and provide the king with a gift of 50 Remington rifles and to sell him a further 100 rifles.\(^2\) Sebastiano Martini-Bernardi, a new member who joined the expedition in Shawa, was sent by Menilek back to Italy in 1877 to obtain more arms. He returned in November 1879 bringing with him only a few hundred rifles and relevant munitions.\(^3\) Still the very presence in Shawa of the arms merchants Pierr Arnoux, soon to be followed by others including Paul Soleillet, léon Chefneux, Jules Brémond, Léon Pequignot and Phillipe Jubert together with members of the Italian geographical expedition provided Menilek with favourable channels to pursue more energetically the continuing efforts of obtaining arms.

After the 1878 peace settlement Menilek continued to distance himself as far as possible from the internal politics of northern Ethiopia. He also proceeded to deal cautiously and peacefully with Emperor Yohannes; accepting his policies and cooperating in their implementation. He assisted the emperor in the forcible Christianisation of the Muslim chiefs and peoples of Wallo and in the building of churches in their provinces. He also contributed to the forced conversion to Christianity of the Muslims of Ifat and Argoba and the pagan Oromo of Shawa compelling the male population of the latter to be circumcised. Menilek compelled the Shawan Chruch and her clergy to adopt the national "Two- Births" doctrine. And in 1879 he expelled the European Roman Catholic missionaries Cardinal Massaia, Gonzague and Taurin from Shawa on orders of the emperor, but succeeded in avoiding the expulsion of all the Europeans then in Shawa whose services he needed.\(^4\)

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Also after 1878 Menilek began to direct his main attention and efforts towards the conquest and exploitation of the rich Oromo and Sidama regions lying beyond Shawa's southern frontiers. During the early years of the king reign Wallo, on the northern Shawan frontier, was the main field for Shawan military campaigns. After 1878 with the formal recognition of his status as king of Shawa the security of the northern frontier relatively assured, and due to the favourable ease of the tension and suspicion which had previously characterised the king's relations with the emperor Menilek began to concentrate on southern conquest and exploitation of incorporated territories. It was only in this way that he could manage to amass the necessary revenues, man-power and other resources needed for the continued payment of the prescribed heavy tribute, the maintenance of a large and powerful army and for the purchase of imported expensive modern weapons for it. All of these were essentially required in preparation for making a future successful bid for the imperial throne and political hegemony when a favourable opportunity presented itself.  

Chapter II
THE STATES, PRINCIPALITIES AND PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA ON THE EVE OF THE CONQUEST

The greatest part of Southern Ethiopia may be described roughly as the country that extended from the southernmost curve of the Abbay river in the northwest and the valleys of the Awash and its main tributaries in the north and the northeast to the international boundary of Ethiopia with Kenya in the south. Its western limit corresponds to a line where the southern highlands dip gradually into the lowlands of the Ethiopian–Sudanese frontier. In the east it stretches beyond the Rift valley chain of lakes to the Ethiopian Somali border as the highlands progressively give way to arid steppe regions. Most of the region is an extension of the northern and central Ethiopian highlands which decline progressively from the centre towards the outside. It consists of mountains with isolated peaks, plains and numerous watercourses. The highlands are divided into two unequal parts by the northern extension of the depression formed by the East African Rift valley and its chain of lakes that runs from Lake Zwaï in the northeast to Lake Rudolf in the southwest. Furthermore; the highlands are criss-crossed by six major watercourses and their tributaries. In the northwest the Didessa is the longest one. The Gibe (Omo) and its major tributary the Gojeb are the largest in the southwest. In the northeast the Webi Shebelle rises in the Sidamo highlands, traverses Arussi (Arsi) country before entering Somalia. In the southeast numerous streams feed the Ganale Doria and the Dawa Parma; the two eventually converge to form the Juba river.

Despite the highlands geographical location closer to the Equator, their general elevation endows them with a temperate climate which varies with changes in altitude. The greater parts of the highlands are most suitable for agriculture; being fertile, cool and moist with variations in the amount and evenness of precipitation and the duration of the rainy season. On the other hand the lowlands and deep valleys are often hot, less fertile or virtually arid. Traditionally the Ethiopians divide their country topographically into three distinct zones, the dega (the very cold highlands above 7,000ft with an annual average temperature of about 16°C), the wayna dega (the intermediate zone with a temperate climate, adequate rainfall and rich soils, hence the
most suitable for human occupation and the pursuit of agricultural and animal husbandry), and the qolla (the unhealthy, hot and arid lowlands and deep valleys).

Similar to the north, Southern Ethiopia enjoys two annual rainy seasons, the keramt (“heavy rains”) that falls between June and September, and balg (“little rains”) generally occurring between March and May. Abundant heavy rains, fertile soils and a temperate climate led to the growth of dense forests, the very rich agricultural production and considerable cattle – herding. The southwestern regions in particular had traditionally been the richest and the major source of most, if not all, of the natural products for the external commerce of the whole Ethiopian region; ivory, civet, gold, coffee and above all slaves. By comparison the southeastern regions were densely populated, rich in cattle and agricultural production though offered very little items of exportable value except slaves.¹

The Cushitic - speaking Muslin and pagan Oromo and Sdiama², together with the small enclaves of Semitic – speaking Gurage and Harari are the main peoples who occupy the greater parts of Southern Ethiopia, and hence they are the ones with whom this study is concerned. Others who occupy the peripheral regions had been excluded, expect where reference to them is relevant to the main study. The peoples concerned are ethnically and culturally quite different from the Semitic – speaking Christian Ethiopians of the northern and central highlands with whom they shared no common historical experiences whatsoever. They had led an independent existence for centuries as the neighbours of the Christian Ethiopian kingdom, but largely beyond its direct military control and political influence. They had developed, in their different ways, their own cultural, religious and political institutions. Their political organisations ranged from communal societies and chiefdoms to states with powerful monarchs and elaborate hierarchies for the exercise of authority. It was only during the later part of the second half of the nineteenth century that their independent

existence was brought to an abrupt end by the Shawan Amhara conquest and the incorporation of their homelands within the extended borders of the modern Ethiopian state. In view of their being conquered and their territories were annexed it was not uncommon among the Shawans until recently to refer to the southern regions as **Yekin Agher** (literally, “conquered / colonised country”)\(^1\).

For a long time it was accepted that the Sidama were the original inhabitants of most parts of Southern Ethiopia before the arrival of the Oromo following their large-scale migrations and eventual occupation of considerable areas of the south in the aftermath of the disastrous Muslim **jihad** wars of the sixteenth century.\(^2\) The advent of the Oromo is said to have irreversibly altered the demographic pattern of the south by displacing or exterminating most of the former Sidama peoples of the regions they occupied, while others were subjugated and progressively assimilated. In the process several Oromo groups gradually abandoned pastoralism, took to sedentary agriculture and animal husbandry and adopted many Sidama socio-political and cultural institutions.

These assertions have been questioned. It is argued that the Oromo, too, were indigenous peoples of parts of the Southern Ethiopian highlands for the greater part of their history prior to the sixteenth century. Initially they were mixed farmers, not a pastoral people, but some of them became pastoralists only after they had moved from the highlands to lowlands regions.\(^3\)

Whatever the case might have been, the result was that most of the surviving Sidama were displaced and managed to survive only in the most inaccessible mountainous and thickly forested regions of the south. By the mid-nineteenth century

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they were represented by the powerful states of Kaffa, Janjaro and Wallamo (Walayta), while others were much reduced in population size and occupational areas. The latter included the Omotic (Wammate) Sidama, so called because of their location near the Omo river, who included among others the Konta, Kullo, Badditu, Gamo and Gofa. Also the Eastern Sidama, represented by the Sidamo, Hadiya, Kambata, Daraso, etc., met the same fate. The Semitic speaking Gurage and Harari were similarly assaulted by the Oromo, dispossessed of much of their former territories and managed to survive as isolated enclaves surrounded on almost all sides by the Oromo.¹

By the middle of the nineteenth century Southern Ethiopia consisted of a multitude of peoples with considerably varied socio-political organisation, cultures and political experiences. One category of polities included the hereditary, powerful and highly organised Sidama states of Kaffa, Janjaro and Wallamo (Walayta), and the not so highly structured small Oromo “monarchies” or states of the Gibē region. A nascent process of unification and state formation was already taking place among the Oromo of Gudru, just to the south of the Abbay, and of Leqa Naqame and Leqa Qellam in Wallage just before the respective regions were conquered by the Shawan Amhara. Elsewhere among the Omotic and the Eastern Sidama some forms of a lower level of socio-political organisation existed. Of a special category of its own was the Muslim emirate of Harar; an important centre of Islamic influence though of no real political power. Elsewhere some forms of a lower level of socio-political organisation existed, such as among the Omotic and the Eastern Sidama. Otherwise tribal divisions, communal societies and political fragmentation prevailed.

**THE WESTERN SIDAMA KINGDOMS:**

The largest, most powerful and the most highly organised of all the Sidama states was the kingdom of Kaffa, situated just to the south of the Gojeb river which separated it from the Oromo states of Jimma Abba Jifar and Gera. The course of the Umma river formed its eastern and southern boundary with Konta and Kullo, while in the south and southwest its territories extended to as far as the country of the

Ghimirra. The state, whose origin is said to go back to the fourteenth century, reached the climax of its power at the turn of the eighteenth century. By that time its overlordship, if not direct political power and control, was extended over tribute-paying vassals such as the Beneso, Nao, Maji, Konta, Kullo and even the far away Wallamo (Walayta), Tambaro, and Kambata. Perhaps the lack of a more mature political ideology and the absence of overwhelming military power precluded the transfer of wider political vantage and influence into more direct and assertive hegemony.

At the top of kingdom’s political hierarchy was a hereditary monarch, the kaffino tato (the “Kaffa king”) the highest and supreme political and spiritual authority, who resided at one or the other of the twin capitals of Bonga and Anderacha. The person of the monarch was regarded as sacred; he was not touched or allowed to touch even his own food or drink, his glance was strictly avoided, he held audience seated in seclusion behind a curtain, and others had to prostrate themselves in his presence. He was regarded as an immortal king-god whose body might die but his spirit was believed to pass into the body of his successor. Special privileges reserved for the monarch included the wearing of a particular dress and various royal insignia such as a golden arm-bracelet, a golden ring and a special helmet-shaped crown with a triple phallus of gold in front. Despite all this, however, royal authority was far from being absolute. Arbitrary royal action was limited by the deliberations and decisions of an advisory council, the mikrecho, consisting of the older representatives of the seven privileged office-holding clans. Among the court officials the katama raschio (the “commander of the royal guards”) rose to prominence and assumed greater authority and power as the chief councillor. Below the royal and privileged clans were the free commoners who enjoyed no privileges and were debared from holding office. At the bottom of the

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social stratification were the low – caste groups, the hunters, tanners, potters and blacksmiths and then the slaves.¹

For defensive purposes Kaffa, like other Sidama and Oromo states, was surrounded by wide stretches of deserted and uncultivated land, the mogga. Then at some distance there were a number of naturally and artificially constructed barricades broken by guarded gates, kellas. The kingdom had no standing army apart from the frontier garrisons and the royal guards. All the free male population were expected to turn up for military service when called upon to do so, each person providing his own weapons – spears, shields and daggers, as well as provisions. There were only a few old rifles, numbering no more than about 300 by 1897, which were said to have been brought into the kingdom during the reign of Galli Shorocho (r. 1870 – 1890).²

The peoples of Kaffa were strong adherents of traditional spirit cults. Belief in the supreme deity, yaro (the “sky- god”) had gradually diminished in significance in the course of time giving way to the spirit of eqqo whose priests were believed to possess the power of persuading the spirit to leave its usual abode in trees, bushes and streams and take up temporary residence in their own bodies. The spirit then spoke through its human host uttering prophesis. The Kaffa King himself was said to embody the spirit of doččo, the greatest of all the spirit cults and as such was considered immortal. There also existed a belief in a goddess of fertility whose rituals were performed by women.³ Some vague remnants and distorted observances of Monophysite Christianity had survived among some sections of the population. Although many Muslim traders had frequented Kaffa markets very few but foreign traders were Muslims. The activities of the Capuchin missionaries in Kaffa for a short period (1855-1861) resulted in gaining some converts to Roman Catholicism.⁴

Kaffa was the wealthiest and the most prosperous of the Sidama states. Its economy was based on agricultural produce and animal husbandry. Besides the large-


⁴- Ibid., p. 134; Orent, Amnon, op. cit., p. 279.
scale cultivation of ensat ("false banana") common to all Sidama regions, a variety of cereal crops, cotton and coffee were grown. Peasants held their lands as royal tenants paying annual taxes and forced to render prescribed labour on royal estates. The monarch, members of the royal family and elders of the noble office-holding clans possessed large landed estates worked for them by slaves. Kaffa also carried on a flourishing trade with the neighbouring Oromo states of the Giba to the north and further beyond. Slaves procured as war captives, victims of slave raiding or received as tribute from vassals predominated among the exports. They were followed in importance by ivory, musk, coffee and honey. Taxation on land and custom dues on the export and import trade provided the main sources of the royal revenue.¹

The kingdom of Wallamo (Walayta) to the east of Kaffa equally had a remote origin traditionally associated with Motalomi of medieval times. He is said to have been the founder of the kingdoms first ruling dynasty, the Walayta Malla, which ruled until the fifteenth century. It was then replaced by the "Tigrean" dynasty which was believed to have been established by a group of one hundred and fifty Tigreans led by a certain Mikalo (Michael) who had come to the region as settlers. At the top of the kingdoms hierarchy was a hereditary monarch, the kawa, whose person was regarded as sacred. His daily life and actions were strictly regulated through less rigourously than his counterpart in Kaffa, most probably because the human origin of the ruling dynasty was known. Theoretically, at least, the king’s powers were absolute; he monopolised all power over the land which he distributed among the warrior class, the goqa, in return for military service; the prerogative over the lives of his subjects and the right of enslavement of persons found guilty of grave felonies. In fact, however, the kings had always been careful to moderate their actions in order to avoid conflict with the elders of the privileged office-holding clans and rich commoners. Representatives of those clans were responsible for the maintenance of law and order, the collection and remittance of taxes and tribute and the dispensation of justice. Several Wallamo kings actually died in exile having been forced to flee or abdicate. A popular uprising in the mid-nineteenth century triggered by the excesses of a reigning monarch led to the diminution of absolute royal power and its subjection to control by an advisory council composed of regional clan representatives. Prior to that time the kingdom of

Wallamo had extended its suzerainty over the neighbouring Konta, Kullo, Gamo and Tambaro before itself finally becoming tributary, together with its former vassals, to the kingdom of Kaffa. It remained so until its conquest by the Shawan Amhara.¹

The Janjaro (Yamma) kingdom, the third western Sidama polity, was located along the western banks of the Gibe river to the northeast of Kaffa and the Oromo kingdom of Jimma Abba-Jifar. In former times the kingdom occupied a much larger territorial area the greater part of which had subsequently been incorporated by Jimma. The bitter conflict between the two states continued until both of them were finally conquered and their territories annexed by the Shawans.² In its highdays the kingdom was a centralised hereditary monarchy organised on hierarchial basis analogous to that which existed in Kaffa. The ruling dynasty, the mawa, claiming north Ethiopian origin was said to have replaced a former indigenous one, the halman gamma. Succession to royal office was hereditary within the royal clan, mawa, but it was not necessarily in the primogeniture line. The death of a monarch and the accession of his successor were occasions of much ritual ceremonials accompanied by human sacrifices.³

The monarch, the amno, who was believed to possess the attributes of divinity, stood at the top of the political and administrative structure of the state. In contrast to the case of Kaffa, the king among the Yamma represented both the highest political and spiritual authority; being regarded also as the chief priest of the traditional spirit cults. Below the king and directly responsible to him were the court officials who were always drawn from amongst members of the royal clan. Chief among them was

the angher heraschio who held an eminent position similar to that of the katama raschio in Kaffa. Besides them, the elders of the principal Yamma clans provided the occupants of the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy and participated in deciding the succession to the throne.¹

Agriculture, the herding of a few numbers of livestock trade and crafts provided the basis of the kingdom’s economy. Royal revenues were derived from taxes levied from all landowners and heads of families, dues on livestock as well as on the agricultural produce of royal estates worked by slave labour.²

The Yamma lived in relative isolation from their neighbours, and were almost constantly in continued fear of being attacked. For this reason nearly the whole kingdom, and even individual homesteads, were surrounded by carefully defended ditches and palisades.³

THE EASTERN SIDAMA:

The Eastern Sidama, with the exception of the Sidamo, Darasa and Konso, were also organised into hereditary autonomous states which varied in territorial and population size. The small state of Qabiena was located in the northern most region inhabited by the eastern Sidama which abuts on the territories of the half-Oromo tribes of Waliso and Soddo and on those of the Christian Ulbarage Gurage. Its inhabitants who were ethnically mixed with the neighbouring Gurage were staunch


³- Ibid., pp. 138, 143.
adherents to Islam. They were often called the Hadiya Wambe by their neighbours; Wambe being the name of an early celebrated ruler of the region. The small state of Qabiena was recently founded by Omar Baxa, a Muslim adventurer from Caha who took for himself the Islamic politico-religious title of imam. His designated successor around 1878 was his leading warrior Hassan Injamo, the son of one of Omar’s principal followers. Two other very small northern Hadiya Sidama groups were the Libido of the Māraqo region, between Lake Zuai and upper Bilate river, and the Masmas living a little further towards the Omo or the Gibē river. They represented remnants of a Semitic-speaking population, probably of Gurage origin, who had been largely assimilated into the Cushitic-speaking Hadiya cluster.¹

Further to the south were the independent hereditary states of the Hadiya Tufte (Gudiella), the Kambata and the Tambaro. The course of the Bilate river separated them from the Arussi (Arsi) Oromo. The small state of the Hadiya Tufte occupied the region between the Gibe in the west, Qabiena in the north and the territories of the Tambaro in the South. In the state succession to kingship was hereditary in the primogeniture line within the royal clan. The ruler had the royal title of adila; most probably derived from the Arabic adil meaning “just”. Their last two rulers before the incorporation of their state by Menilek were Ango and his son and successor Ada. The royal clan was said to have attained royal status because its members were the most valourous. Directly below the king in the socio-political order were the nobility; consisting of the elders of the major Hadiya clans each of which was governed by a chief who was an elder member of a major clan, and was assisted by a special royal representative.²

The Kambata, the most southern of the eastern Sidama group and bordering on the territories of the Ometo, formed a small hereditary state whose ruler also had the title of adila. They claimed for their royal dynasty, the oyeto, a Gondari origin and close affinities with their counterparts among the Hadiya Tufte. The genealogies of their rulers were traced back to Hämälmal, the alleged founder of the ruling dynasty who was said to have had eleven successors up to the time of the Shawan Amhara

1 Ibid., p. 142.
conquest in 1891. His remembered descendants, in order of succession, were Agato, Wako, Oyato, Dagohia and Dilbato who was still reigning in 1891.\footnote{Cerulli, Enrico, “I Sidama Orientale,” pp. 599-600, 644-645-646; Gaslini, A. die, op. cit., p. 983; Beckingham and Huntingford, op. cit., p. lxv; Braukämper, Ulric, op. cit., pp. 35-36.}

The Tambaro, bordering on the Wallamo, also organised themselves in a small state whose ruler was more of an elected chief than a hereditary sovereign. They traced their origin back to Mola and his seven sons from whom the seven Tambaro clans were said to be descended. Hence they prefer being called the Lamalemola, “literally, the descendants of Mola.”\footnote{Cerulli, Enrico, “I Sidama Orientale,” pp. 646, 676; Braukämper, Ulrich, op. cit., pp. 36-37.}

The Sidamo (singular Sidancho) occupied the region extending from the northeastern shores of Lake Margerita in the south up to the upper valleys of the two principal tributaries of the Webi Shebelli, the Webi Sidamo and Mana, in the north. The Bilate river to the west and the Bali highlands to the east formed the boundaries of their territories. The Sidamo were not organised into a centralised state on the eve of the Shawan Amhara conquest. Their traditions indicate that once in the distant past all the Sidamo were ruled by kings who were subsequently deposed because of the tyrannical nature of their rule. The Sidamo were made up of a cluster of thirteen localised clans. Each clan claimed descent from a common ancestor and occupied a defined territorial region to which it gave its own name. Equally each clan was governed by its own chief, the moti, who combined in his own person the twin functions of peace-keeper and senior religious functionary who performed sacrifices and was believed to possess the powers of conferring blessing and casting evil spells. He was assisted by a number of subordinates among whom the woma, (“the leader”), and the clan elders, the chimesa, constituted an advisory council, the songo.

Existing side by side with the above mentioned political arrangement was on age-set institution, the luwa, which was most probably borrowed from the neighbouring Oromo. This was a system in which all the male members of a clan were jointly initiated into an age-group every seven years. Members of the age-group elected their own leader – priest, the gadan (plural gadana) who functioned as both peace-keeper and high priest. Members of each age-group shared common obligations and duties of participating in the conduct of clan and inter-clan affairs. Frequent inter-clan rivalries and conflicts and the constant fear of the domination of one particular
clan over the others may help to explain the failure of the Sidamo in developing a centralised political organisation.¹

Equally without a centralised state structure were the small tribes of Darasa and Alaba living to the south west of the Sidamo. They were agriculturalists and cattle herders. Though basically Sidama the Darasa in particular had been considerably influenced by their neighbours the Jamjam (Guji) Oromo from whom they borrowed, among other aspects of their culture, the age-grading system similar to the Sidamo.²

The Konso inhabited the narrow highland range contained between the Gomida plain and Lake Shamo in the north and the Sagan river which separated them from the Borana Oromo in the south. To the east of them were the Burji who lived on the Amaro mountains, while to the west was the Waito valley through which the river of the same name flows into Lake Stephanie. The Konso are generally considered as an amalgam, both ethnically and culturally, drawn from amongst the neighbouring Jamjam (Guji) and the Borana Oromo. This is attested to not only by Konso traditions but also by linguistic affinities and other close cultural similarities such as the possession of an age-grading system and analogous religious beliefs and rituals. What distinguished the Konso from their Oromo neighbours and from the other Sidama in general was their remarkable and distinct way of living in densely populated and heavily defended walled settlements located on the tops of hills. Outside the settlements were the fields where they tilled the soil and herded their cattle. Similarly remarkable was their culture of terrace farming, highly skilled wood carving and the widespread use of stone in the building of dwellings, town walls, field enclosures, defensive constructions and dams.³

In a separate category were the Omotic (Wamate) Sidama who inhabited the regions in the vicinity of the Omo river all along its middle course from near its junction with the Gojeb in the west to the south eastern basins of Lake Margherita and Ciamo-Ruspoli. Their northern representatives were the Konta (Warata), while the southern ones were the Badditu. In between were to be found the other equally small

groups such as the Kullo, Boroda, Basketo, Zala, Gama, Gofa, etc… The two small states of Gamo and Gofa were typical examples of the political organisation then current among the Omotic Sidama.

**THE OROMO:-**

The Oromo were once culturally homogeneous mixed farmers sharing common political, social and religious beliefs and institutions. By the time they settled in the regions they had occupied they became divided into a number of independent tribes or groups of tribes, each of which was governed by its own gada system and owed no allegiance to any outside authority. Their widespread geographical dispersion, the variety of the ecological environments of their new habitats and contacts with alien peoples and cultures inevitably led to significant socio-political transformations among many of their tribal groups. With the notable exception of the islamised monarchical Oromo of the Gibe region and those living in the vicinity of the walled town of Harar the greater part of the Oromo retained a considerable degree of political and cultural uniformity. Most of them continued to lead a pastoral life accompanied sometimes by farming, and adhered to their traditional socio-political organisation and religious beliefs and rituals. What singularly distinguished them apart was their preservation of the traditional gada-system for the organisation and conduct of tribal affairs.¹

The gade-system, often labelled “egalitarian and republican,” involved the division of all the male members of a tribe into age-groups arranged in five grades; each grade lasting for a period of eight years. All the males initiated together constituted a distinct group, the gada. This group then passed collectively from one grade to the next every eight years. Each gada when it reached the fifth grade, luba, excersised communal governing authority over the whole tribe for a period of eight years. From amongst members of the luba were elected the representative officials who acted in its name. The most important of them were the abba boku (“Father of the Sceptar”), sometimes also called the abba gada (“Father of the Gada”), and the abba dula (“Father of War”). The abba boku held the highest rank as the paramount chief who presided over tribal assemblies and proclaimed the decisions arrived at. The abba dula was the leader of the warriors of the tribes in times of war and was responsible for executing decisions reached at tribal meetings.

Matters concerning war and peace with neighbours, settlements of inter-tribal
disputes, judicial punishments for criminal offences, etc… were decided during the
public assemblies chaired by the abba boku. General opinion usually rallied behind
such decisions since no solitary group within the tribe could be formed outside the
gada. Thus, by drawing membership from all sections of the tribe, ranking them in
groups according to seniority and assigning to each group specific communal
functions and obligations the gade-system served as a unifying force.
At the end of the eight year period the acting governing group, the luba, and its
elected officials resigned all authority and were then replaced by the succeeding new
luba. Officials and members of the retired group serve as respected elders and
advisers to the newly installed luba. A person’s initiation in the first gada occurred
when one’s father had retired after having passed through all the five grades of the
gada system. In this way the system did not only provide the basic structure of tribal
life and government but it also regulated every phase of a member’s life as he
progressed from childhood, through youth, being a warrior, a ruler and finally a
respected elder.1

The elected officials of the gade system were assisted by hereditary religious
leaders, the kallu, who possessed powerful religious and moral influence but held no
position in the gada system and hence had no political or executive authority. The
kallu anointed and blessed the elected gada officials on taking office and performed
the major sacrificial ceremonies. The abba muda (“Father of anointing”) who resided
at Wallabo in Arussi country was considered as the greatest Oromo traditional
religious dignitary; believed to be the direct descendant of the mythical ancestor of all
the Oromo. Periodic pilgrimage from all the Oromo tribes was made to the abba muda
to honour him and receive his blessing and anointing. Afterwards the pilgrims, jila,
became qualified to undertake ritual functions in their own home regions.2

pp. 205-212; Huntingford, G.W.B., op. cit., pp. 41-55, Asmaron Legesse, “Class Systems Based on
Society (New York, 1973); Triulzi, A., “The Gudru Oromo and Their Neighbours in the Two
Generation before the Battle of Embabo,” JES, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January, 1975), pp. 50-53; Gadas
Melbaa, Oromia: A Brief Introduction (Fin Fine and Zerlingingo, n.d.), pp. 9-16, Mohammed Hassen,
op. cit., pp. 9-17
2- Knutsson, K.E., Authority And Change: A Study of The Kallu Institution Among The Macha Galla of
Ethiopia (Götenborg, 1967); Mohammad Hassen, op. cit., pp. 7-9.
In the territories the Oromo occupied they became divided into several tribes or confederation of tribes. The Tulama, often called the Shawan Oromo, settled on large parts of the Shawan plateau, except for its northeastern and southwestern regions. In the direction of the south they extended beyond the Awash river, while in the north they reached into territories extending across the Wančit river. They were politically fragmented into a number of small tribes, including among others the Abitchu, Gombitchu, Abu, Ada, Darra, Galan, Gulale, Salale, Oborra, Tumuga, Jidda, etc… Most of them had been much influenced by the Shawan Amhara close to whom they settled. Apart from some converts to Orthodox Christianity or to Islam most of them retained their traditional social and cultural traits; especially their socio-political institution of the gada system and strong attachment to their indigenous religious beliefs and practices.1

The northern Macha branch of the western Oromo occupied the region to the east of the Didessa and south of the Abbay rivers, the latter separated them from Gojjam. They extended eastwards from the mouth of the Muger river to Qabiena, and included the tribes of Gudru, Harro, Liban – Kutai, Ammuru, Jimma – Rare, Jimma – Tibe, Calya, etc …2 Further to the west of them were the Wallagga group who inhabited the region along the banks of the Didessa and extended all along the valleys of the Baro and Dabus rivers towards the Ethio-Sudanese border. They included, among others, the tribes of Illu, Nole Sibu, Leqa Sayo, Leqa Qellam, Leqa Saya and Leqa Neqamte.3

The most clearly defined Macha group, however, were those of the Gibe region in the southwest, to the south of the Wallagga group and north of the Gojeb river, which separated them from the Sidama kingdom of Kaffa in the south. They were the ones who formed the five small Oromo kingdoms of Jimma Abba-Jifar (Jimma Kaka), Gomma, Gumma, Gera and Limmu Enarea at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The formation of these states had been the result of a long process of slow internal changes with the Oromo societies of the region that included the transformation from nomadism to settled agricultural life, occupational and social differentiation and stratification and the progressive disintegration of the tradition gada-system leading to the strengthening of the actual power and influence of the war

leader, the *abba dula*. Such individuals eventually possessed major sources of wealth in land and cattle and commanded large followings and clients. They became powerful enough to undermine the elected authorities of the gada system whom they either came to terms with or forcibly removed. Hence, they provided the sole political and military leadership needed for state formation. The borrowing of state organizational models from former or neighbouring Sidama states, and the conversion of rulers and their households to Islam besides the wide diffusion of the religion among their subjects may have helped in speeding the consolidation of the process of state building.¹

The organisation of the Gibe kingdoms was very much alike. Kingship was of the hereditary despotic type with succession in the primogeniture line; the eldest male issue from a free and legally – wed wife, usually the elder one, succeeded his father. The king, *moti*, held the supreme administrative, military and judicial authority within his domain. Theoretically, at least, he had unlimited jurisdiction over the lives, property and labour of his subjects. It was his prerogative to fix or alter the boundaries of the administrative districts, *koro*, into which his kingdom was divided; to appoint, transfer or dismiss the officials charged with their administration, *abba koro*, and their subordinates, *abba ganda*. As the highest judicial authority the king personally dealt with the important legal cases and appeals; minor issues were dispensed of in his name by provincial governors. To the monarch were reserved such matters as the conduct of foreign affairs involving the declaration of war, the conclusion of peace, alliances with neighbouring rulers, jurisdiction over foreign traders, prisoners of war as well as patronage over “low-caste” or “paria” groups. Some members of the royal family, notably the designated successor, the *donačcio*, and the king’s first wife, the *ghennefa*, did help in the conduct of state affairs, but they constituted no formal check whatsoever on the exercise of absolute royal power.²


The most important of the officials attached to the royal court was the abba mizan who combined the functions of chief treasurer, supervisor of foreign merchants and markets as well as super intendant of the royal estates, stores and workshops. Others included the royal messengers, lemi, who acted as envoys and ambassadors to the neighbouring rulers. Custom officials, daggo or dagno, inspected those entering or leaving the kingdom.1

For military purposes each kingdom was surrounded by multiple lines of natural and artificially constructed defences. First, there was the mogga, a belt of uncultivated, uninhabited no-man’s land surrounding the kingdom which was usually infested with bandits and run-away slaves, ketto. Then, there followed the proper defences constituted by natural impediments of thick forests, mountains rivers, etc…reinforced when necessary by ditches and palisades. At specially selected locations the defences were broken by a number of gates, kella, each of which was guarded by a cavalry unit commanded by an abba kella whose main duties included the control of authorised entry and exit of individuals and maintaining general surveillance. In case of an approaching danger an alarm was transmitted by sounding a number of suspended hollowed tree-trunks, bideru, placed at some intervals from each other. Small standing armies and a few bodyguards of Amhara and Tigre mercenary matchlocks men were maintained. In times of war all the free able-bodied men were called for military service. The combatants provided their own horses, if they had any, their own weapons consisting of shields, swords, spears and daggers as well as provisions.2

Economically the exceptional fertility of the Gibe region allowed for the cultivation of cereals, coffee and cotton as well as for the herding of livestock. Land and cattle ownership together with participation in and control of local and long-distance commerce provided the basis for the prosperity of the states, their rulers, court official and traders. The regions principal markets, usually located at the capitals of the states, were the junctions where a network of local trade routes that crisscrossed the surrounding countries converged. Local Oromo traders, afkala, travelled all the year round along those routes collecting the highly priced exportable commodities of slaves, ivory, gold, civet – musk, hides and honey before funelling them into the Gibe markets. There they were exchanged with the Muslim northern Ethiopian, Shawan.

1- Abir, M., The Era of the Princes, p. 84.
2 - Ibid., pp. 81-82
Wallo and Harari long-distance caravan merchants, jabarti, for imported cotton cloth, beads, glass, metal wares, iron and copper sheets and above all salt. The latter item was extracted from the Taltal salt mines in northern Afar country, and was used for consumption, and in the form of salt bars, amole, as a medium of exchange. Afterwards the jabarti merchants departed with their goods on their way back to the north. They followed the principal route that started from Jiren in Jimma, passed through Sakka in Limmu to Assandabu in Gudru. From there the route continued, across the Abby, to Basso in southern Gojjam, Derita in Bagemder and to Gondar. There it branched into two directions; westwards to Metemma / Gallabat on the frontier with the Sudan and eastwards via Adwa to Massawa on the Red Sea coast. A minor route, which was to gain considerable importance in the years to come, led from Sakka northwards through Soddo and Qabiena to the Shawan markets of Aliu Amba, Rogge and Abdul Rasul. From there the route continued passing through Harar to end at the northern Somila parts of Zeila and Berbera, or it passed through the territories of the Afar sultanate of Aussa to terminate at the port of Tajura.

In religious terms Islam appears to have made its way into the Gibe region and was already gaining converts well before the states were founded at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Afterwards Muslim north Ethiopian and Harari jabarti traders, and the ‘ulama who accompanied or followed them continued coming into the region more frequently. They became the main propagators of the new faith. In comparison Muslim northern Sudanese jalaba traders seem to have contributed very little to the spread of Islam in the region prior to the second half of the nineteenth century.1

It is remarkable that the ethnic, linguistic and religious homogeneity of the Oromo of the Gibe, their similar social and political institutions, agricultural practices and commercial contacts had not been effective enough to promote political unity among their states. Inter-state rivalries for political prominence and disputes over land and the control of commerce were the usual sources of conflict and disunity, though their disruptive effects were often tempered by political marriages, alliances and the exchange of envoys and gifts.2

The establishment of centralised polities was not solely confined to the Oromo of the Gibe region. Later tendencies and efforts towards political centralisation and state formation were taking place among the Leqa Neqamte and the Leqa Qellam in

2 - Ibid., p. 197.
Wallagga and among the Gudru Oromo. The emergence of the centralised polity of
the Leqa Neqamte was equally closely associated with the rise to political and
military prominence of an individual autocrat who successfully undermined, gradually
eclipsed and replaced the traditional gada leaders. Bakare Godana (d. 1868), after
having been elected as the abba dula of one of the lineage groups of the Leqa Oromo
began to challenge the power and authority of the elected contemporary abba baku
Fido Bakkissa. With the aid of his large forces of warriors Bakare repeatedly defeated
his adversary in battles finally forcing him to concede his loss and flee the country.
Afterwards Bakare proceeded to assert his personal authority and extend his control
through success in warfare over the chiefs of the territories between the Wama and the
Didessa rivers. He established his residence and administrative centre at Wacha,
already an important gada political and spiritual locality. After his death his son and
successor Moroda continued the policy of conquest and consolidation still further by
the extending the conquered territories beyond the Didessa river. He moved his
residence to Neqamte, at a short distance from Wacha, which became his political and
military centre. Enlargement of conquered lands brought with it the benefits of
securing increased human and material resources as well as more wealth derived from
the ownership of land, the levying of tribute, and the collection of custom duties on
cross-border trade.1

Likewise, to the southwest of the Leqa Neqamte beyond the Birbir river, a
similar process led to the break down of the gada system institution and the rise to
power of a number of strong and autocratic warlords. One of them was to Joté Tulu,
an alleged adopted son of a chief of one the Leqa clans of Ghidame a locality in the
region around Dembidollo. Having already distinguished himself as a renowned
warrior with a large following he set about defeating his rivals and conquering their
regions. In this way he eventually created the emergent state of Leqa Qellam.2

Similar processes of centralisation of political power and state building was
taking place among the northern Macha Oromo of Gudru and neighbouring Lagamara
just to the south of the Abbay river. The father of Gama Moras was originally a
Christian immigrant who came to Gudru from Gojjam and was adopted by one of the

1- Abebe Ambatchew and others, “Field Trip to Nîkamate,” UCAAR, No. 6 (1957), pp. 9-11; Terrefe
pp. 150-153.
2- Terrefe Woldetsadik , op. cit., p. 74; Bartels, Lambert, op. cit., p. 146.
local leading Borana nobility. With the help of the inherited large fortune which his father had made from trade Gama Moras made himself the actual ruler of Assandabo, the region’s principal market place on the caravan trade route leading from the rich southwest across the Abbay to Gojjam and beyond. He made good use of his accumulated wealth in converting it in the ownership of land, cattle and slaves. He also used his wealth for winning over friends and supporters and for acquiring firearms and enlisting the services of a number of northern Ethiopian mercenary gunmen. With the aid of his wealth and military power he fought and subjugated the chiefs of the seven Gudru clans making himself the warlord and antonymous ruler of Gudru. However, after his death in 1872 the leaders of the Gudru clans challenged the political authority of his successive sons, Goshu and Galata. The ensuing conflict provided the Gojjami with the opportunity to intervene and eventually gained control over Gudru. Abba Gallet, also of immigrant Gojjami origin, attempted initiating a similar move towards political centralisation in adjacent Lagamara, but his political authority had not been substantially established by the time of his death.1

Elsewhere in Oromo land to the south of the Abbay competition over land and cattle ownership, the economic benefits resulting from the control of long-distance trade and warfare for political predominance gradually undermined the traditional gada institution before it had been reduced to a mere shadowy semblance. New wealthy and ambitious individuals came to the forefront, replaced the elected gada officials and began to exercise their newly acquired personal political and military powers. These included Abise Gabra in Horro, Tesso Qanno in Amurru, Qadida Wannabe in Jimma – Rare, Sori Gala among the Jimma Gannati and Wayyesa Galaye in Genda-Barat. And Oba Manni in Ammaya and Sullo.2

THE EASTERN OROMO:-

A number of the Eastern Oromo tribes, commonly referred to as the Harari Oromo, occupied the highland regions of Chercher and Gara Mulata extending up to and including the uplands all around the walled-town of Harar. They comprised six small tribal groups which were the Ittu, Ania, Ala, Nole, Jarso and Babile. Their territories bordered on those of the Afar (Danakil) in the north, the Somali in the east

1- Lewis, H.S., op. cit., pp. 139-143; idem, Jimma Abba Jifar, pp. 31-33; Triulzi, A., “The Gudru Oromo...,” 58-59; Mohammed Hassen, op. cit., pp. 89-90, 94-95.
and Arussi (Arsi) Oromo in the west and south. Over a long period of time those of them who lived in close proximity to the town of Harar abandoned pastoralism, became sedentary agriculturalists, participated in local trade and embraced Islam. They were collectively known as qottu (“cultivater”). The peoples concerned however, prefer calling themselves islama (“muslim”) and sometimes Oromo but never Galla. Others who lived further away and remained cattle-herders were called prontuma. They continued to recognise the authority of their elected gada office holders. The Qottu’s pursuit of sedentary life and conversion to Islam led to the breakdown of their traditional gada institutions. Political authority gradually became concentrated in the hands of lineage group leaders and their subordinates whose authority was confirmed by being appointed as damin (“chief of a tribe”) and garad (“village chief”) respectively.1

Further to the south, southwest and west settled the large confederation of Oromo tribes collectively known as the Arussi (Arsi). Their region extended all along the valleys of the Webi Shebelli and the highlands to the east of the Rift valley and its chain of lakes to the territories of the Borana Oromo in the south; roughly the region which formerly constituted the medieval Muslim state of Bali. While each tribe maintained its independence, the territorial grouping was based on district rather than on clan affiliations. Most of the Arussi Oromo retained their pastoral way of life and much of their traditional culture. The possession of cattle was much valued. For an individual to possess 5,000 head of cattle was not uncommon. Horses, too, were much valued; everyone owned a horse, and some had two or more. Proximity to the Muslim Somali and Harari as well as the effects of the religious teachings of the followers of the reputed preacher Shaykh Hussein led to some conversion to Islam among the Arussi. Wakabo in Arussi country was the residence of the abba muda (“father of anointing”) to whom adherents of traditional Oromo religion from all over Oromo land go on pilgrimage. Also in Arussi country, located at a few miles to the north of Moyale, was the tomb of Shaykh Hussein the holy place to which Muslim Oromo performed the pilgrimage.2

The nomadic Borana, the southern most of the Oromo tribal groups, were spread all along the dry savanna lowlands of south eastern Ethiopia and extended

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some way into neighbouring Somalia and northern Kenya. They remained the most conservative of all the Oromo, retaining both their gada institution and their indigenous religious beliefs and practices. Their predominantly pastoral economy was based on the herding of cattle, though they also kept some goats, sheep and a few camels. The Borana distinguished between the true of senior tribes the Gona and Sabu on the one hand, and the junior tribes of Gaba, Sakuye and Gari. Though culturally similar to the true Borana in many ways, the junior or client tribes grazed their livestock separately and were not allowed to intermarry with the true Borana. Also they were often exeluded from participation in the socio-political and ritual functions of the gada system.¹

To the northwest of the Borana, on the lowlands of the eastern shores of Lake Margherita and on parts of the highlands further to the east, lived the Jamjam (Guji). They consisted of a confederation of four tribes; the Alabdu, Uraga, Mati and Hoku. The northern tribe of Alabdu was considered inferior far having been ethnically mixed with and culturally influenced by the neighbouring non-Oromo Darasa. Differences in altitude had led to variation in their cattle based economy. In the highland regions, where some cultivation of barley and ensete edulis (“false banana”) was practised, a more settled way of life prevailed. Similar to the Borana, the Guji preserved their gads institution and their traditional religious beliefs and rituals.²

THE HARARI AND THE GURAGE:-

The Muslim Semitic-speaking Harari once occupied more extensive territories as part of the medieval Muslim state of Adal with the town of Harar ass its metropolitan centre. Politically weakened by the internal disputes and militarily exhausted by the jihad wars of the sixteenth century the Harari became an easy prey for the invading Oromo who battered and harassed them relentlessly. As a result they were constantly pushed back and managed to survive only as an isolated people confined within the stone-walled town of Harar and its immediate environs, while the Oromo occupied the regions all arround them. Nevertheless Harar survived and continued its precarious existence as the capital of an emirate of the same name. The emirs and the town’s people succeeded in maintaining nominal authority over the

²- Ibid., pp. 30-32, 141-146-147
surrounding Oromo through a blend of religious influence, diplomacy, political marriages and land grants.

Commerce and agriculture were of equal significance as the main sources of Harar’s economy. The town was an important entrepot of commerce linking the interior markets of Shawa, Aussa, parts of Arussi, Gurageland and the Ogaden with the ports of Zeila, Berbera and Tajura. The principal exports included slaves, ivory, civet, gum, ostrich feathers, hides, coffee, safflower, wax and honey. The main imports were textiles, beads, rice, sugar, dates, paper, lead and copper. Various fruits and vegetables, coffee, safflower and qat were grown on irrigated orchards and gardens in the vicinity of the town. With its many mosques, several tombs of venerated Muslim awliya and its reputed learned 'ulama Harar remained the most important and respected centre of Islamic learning and peaceful proselytisation. Weakened and considerably troubled by internal strife and intrigues the emirate of Harar was occupied by the Turco-Egyptian forces in 1875. Its emir Muhammad b. Ali b. Abdal al-Shakur was deposed and subsequently killed. The occupation lasted for a decade during which the town’s population increased, its commerce flourished and its religious influence greatly renewed. The Egyptians finally withdrew after handing over the government of the emirate to Abdullahi, the son of the last emir on 20 May 1885.1

The Gurage peoples inhabited the semi-mountainous region around Lake Zvai. Their neighbours were the Soddo and the Libido in the north and the northwest respectively, the small state of Qabiena in the west, the Arussi in the east and the Kambata and Sidamo in the south. Though basically of Sidama origin, they had been substantially influenced by successive waves of Semitic-speaking immigrants in the distant past. The Gurage were said to have once been ruled by a dynasty of north Ethiopian ancestry which was overthrown by the Shawan monarch Sahle Sellassie (r. 1813-1847). On the eve of the Shawan Amhara conquest, however, Gurage society was politically fragmented and lacked cultural homogeneity. The Northern Gurage, the Aymalllel (Kestane) were Monophysite Christians who considered themselves a separate people proud of their north Ethiopian ancestry and Christian heritage. The Eastern Gurage who included the tribes of Selti, Walani and Urbarage were Muslims,

being affected by Islamic religious influences emanating from the Harar region. The Western Gurage, the most numerous group, consisted of the largest tribe of Caha and the smaller ones of Aklil, Mecher, Gyeto, Gumar, Ennamor and Eza; collectively known as the säbäät bet gurage (‘seven houses of Gurage’).¹

Each Gurage tribe was made up of a number of patrilineal clans, each of which with its own chief. The authority of a particularly powerful clan chief seldom extended beyond members of his own clan. Although several tribes or clans sometimes cooperated with each other against a common enemy they were almost constantly plagued by mutual dissensions and hostilities. The great numbers of Gurage sold into slavery were the results of recurrent inter-tribal wars as well as the consequences of attacks, raids and kidnapping made upon them by hostile neighbours. There is some evidence, however, to suggest that the Western Gurage, under Caha leadership were in the process of establishing some sort of a loosely-knit politico – religious centralisation in the period just preceding the Shawan Amhara conquest of their region. Caha predominance was most probably due to the strategic location of its territories astride the important trade routes, its seniority at the Ya-Goka (‘tribal court’) and its custody of the shrines and the ritual representatives of the main Gurage deities of waq, boza and damamwit.

The Gurage were sedentary agriculturalists living in small densely populated village communities distinguished by the extensive cultivation of ensete edulis, (“false banana”), which constituted their staple food crop. They also grew a variety of other crops including barely, peas, horsebeans as well as coffee and tobacco; cattle, sheep, fowls, horses, and mules were kept.²

OTHER PERIPHERAL GROUPS:-

All along the peripheries of the southern Ethiopian plateau lived several tribal groups of diverse ethnic origin and culture some of whose territories were incorporated within the enlarged Ethiopian empire – state during the last stages of the Shawan Amhara conquest. The included the Afar, Somali, and the negroid Berta and Nioltic tribes of the south western borderlands.

²- idem., The Gurage, pp. 50-83, 97-98, 109-111; idem., The central Ethiopians, pp. 5-7, 16, 34-35.
The Muslim southern Afar (Danakil) nomads of the Aussa sultanate occupied the inhospitable lowlying desert regions extending from the foot-hills of the Shawan plateau to the port of Tajira on the Red Sea coast. Their pastoral economy which was centered on the herding of camels, goats, and few sheep was the primary source of livelihood. It was supplemented by some cultivation along the narrow valleys of the Awash river which traverses the sultanate and by revenues derived from their control the transmit trade route that linked the principal Shawan markets with Tajura and the salt mines located just to the south of that port. Inspite of the barren nature of their country and the ferocity of its peoples the sultanate was deemed important for the Shawans whose rulers maintained friendly relations with the Afar sultans.1

The Muslim Somali tribes whose territories came under Shawan rule included the Batire and the Abaskul living to the east and southeast of Harar respectively, the Yabarre of the Jigjiga region and the tribal groups of the Ogaden district. Pastoralism supplemented by hunting was the main occupation of the tribesmen, though some cultivation was practised where favourable conditions allowed. They shared with the rest of their kinsmen a very strong sense of national identity firmly based on common ethnic ancestry, common language and culture as well as shared staunch adherence to Islam. It was due to the passage of the trade routes from Shawa to Zeila and Berbera through their territories that they became a target for Shawan annexation.

Along the Ethio-Sudanese border in the southwest lived the negroid tribes collectively known to the Ethiopians as shangalla (“slaves”). Notable among them was the Berta who occupied the undulating plateau region lying between the Sudanese border in the west, the Abbay river in the east and the lega Qellan Oromo country in the south. They were organised into three small Muslim sheikhdoms of Aqolda (Asoso), Bela-Shanqul (Beni Shangul) and Khomosha. Their indigenous Berta inhabitants were ruled over and subjected to servdom by a small aristocracy of mixed Beta and Muslim Arabic-speaking northern Sudanese jalaba ancestry, the Watawit, who had replaced a former dynasty of Funj origin. It was due to their reputation as being rich sources of gold and slaves that the Berta Sheikhdoms were subjected to successive Funj, Turco-Egyptian, Mahdist overrule before being conquered by the Shawan Amhara.

The Nilotic Anuak (Yambo), led by their village headmen, had an economy based on a combination of agriculture, hunting and gathering. Their neighbours, the pastoral Nuer developed a special socio-political and spiritual culture based on cattle possession. Further to the south were to be found the equally stateless Koma and Mao. And along the southern border with Kenya, to the south of Kaffa, were the various small negroid tribes of the Gimira group.¹

Scattered amongst nearly all the societies of southern Ethiopia were found a number of small submerged low caste or paria minorities. They were believed to have been representatives of remnants of pre-Sidama inhabitants. They were generally despised by the peoples among they lived because of their supposed low descent and of their being the practitioners of certain manuel occupations that were considered ignoble. They were often the blackssmiths tanners and potters.

CHAPTER III
THE GENESIS OF THE CONQUEST: ITS NATURE MOTIVATIONS AND METHODS

The conquest of the Oromo and Sidama regions of Southern Ethiopia during the last decades of the nineteenth century was successfully undertaken during the reign of Menilek II while he was still king of Shawa (r. 1865-1889), nominally a vassal of Emperor Yohannes IV (r. 1872-1889), and later while he reigned as emperor (r. 1889-1913) of a considerably enlarged Ethiopian empire-state. The incorporation of the newly conquered southern territories, including the Oromo and Sidama regions, nearly tripled the extent of the historical Christian Ethiopian state and more than doubled the number of its inhabitants. As a relentlessly sustained and noteworthy accomplishment the conquest ranks as an episode with no parallel in the nineteenth – century history of Sub – Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, its nature, the driving motivations behind it and the methods through which it was carried out are issues that have still to be adequately explained.

(I) The Nature of the Conquest:-

The military conquest and annexation of the Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions has often been portrayed as an Ethiopian or often more precisely as an Amhara conquest. Consequently, its results are said to have been the extension of Ethiopian / Amhara rule and the imposition of Ethiopian / Amhara political dominance and cultural influence over the newly subjugated alien Muslim and pagan peoples of the south.¹

Acceptance of such generalised assertions fails to distinguish between the Shawans, who actually initiated and undertook the conquest and the creation of the enlarged Ethiopian polity as it emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century, and the hitherto politically and culturally dominant northern Ethiopians / Amhara of the central highlands whose vassals the Shawans has nominally been throughout the period of the conquest prior to 1889.² The problem is further compounded when the

¹ - Levine, D.N., Wax And Gold, pp. 1-3, 4; idem., Greater Ethiopia, pp. 84-86, 90- 91, 156-159; Markakis, John, op.cit., pp. 21, 22, 23, 24, 105; Muhammed Hassen, The Oromo Of Ethiopia, pp. 197. 198, 199.
descriptive labels “Amhara” and “Shawan” are variably used in one and the same source to describe Menilek’s expansionism.¹

A reappraisal of the cultural inter - relations and ethnic mixture that occurred between the Amhara and Oromo groups who had settled within the borders of Shawa suggests that the process of interaction and acculturation between the two ethnic groups has progressed so far that by the beginning of the nineteenth century a distinct communal Shawan identity actually developed.² While outside observers usually distinguish and differentiate between whom they refer to as “Shawan Amhara” and “Shawan Oromo” the northern Ethiopians of the core regions do not. Both the northern Amhara and the Tigre designate the two categories collectively as Shawans. They often regard the Shawans as political upstarts and even exclude them from the ranks of the true Amhara, designating them as “half-Oromo”.³

Furthermore, it has been pointed out that Nagassie Kristos, the alleged founder of Shawa’s royal dynasty was neither of Amhara ancestry nor was he an Amhara political appointee, but was in fact a successful and renowned Oromo war – leader who rose to power through his skills and achievements in warfare. Afterwards he styled his rule on Amhara patterns.⁴ His successors together with their royal, civil and military nobility have been anxious to stress their connections with the northern Amhara largely for reasons of political expediency. The connection served to confer on them a justified identification with the political and cultural “Axumite” heritage of the historical Christian Ethiopian state. This in its turn bestowed on their royal dynasty legitimised claims to the Solomonic imperial throne,⁵ no matter that such claims has been challenged by the northern Amhara and the Tigre.⁶ Another consideration to be taken note of is that the Shawan campaigns of conquest were, in fact, conducted in alliance and cooperation with the various Oromo leadership and tribesmen of the Tuloma, Wollo. Wallagga and Jimma Abba Jifar. All of them fought for the cause and in the interests of Menilek as a Shawan monarch, his royal dynasty and his ruling nobility. As a result they subsequently gained considerably more from

²- Salole, Gerry, op.cit., pp. 20-21.
³- Levine, Wax And Gold, p. 47
⁴- Darkwás, Kafi, op.cit., p. 6, n.12; Salale, Gerry, op.cit., p. 20
⁵- Ibid., p. 21.
⁶- Levine, D.N., Wax And Gold, p. 389, n.24
the results of the conquests than did the northern Ethiopian Amhara and Tigre peoples.  

The northern Ethiopians, northern Amhara and Tigre alike, neither participated in the conquest nor did they benefit from its results. The few northerners who fought for the Shawans during the early campaigns were the experienced riflemen and gunners drawn from all over northern Ethiopia. They had individually and voluntarily enlisted in Menilek’s service and formed the special gondari royal regiment. Moreover, both the emperors and the northern provincial magnates were kept almost continuously preoccupied with internal squabbles for power or fighting in defence of Ethiopia’s borders against foreign Turco-Egyptian, Italian and Mahdist encroachments. Indeed, they seen to have been more or less inattentive to the impending threat that Shawan southern expansionism might pose to themselves until it was too late.

In the meantime, the Shawans asserted their control over the Oromo of the Gibe and Wallagga between 1882 and 1886. Their conquest of the Ittu and Arussi (Arsi) Oromo was completed in 1885 and 1886 respectively. In January 1887 the conquest of the town of Harar and the small Oromo groups living in its immediate surrounding fallowed. By then Shawan control was extended over vast territories that exceeded in extent the domains of the northern Christian Ethiopian state. And Menilek had become the most powerful regional heavy weight politically and militarily. His personal prestige, too, was unmatched.

When Emperor Yohannes IV died unexpectedly fighting the Mahdists at the battle of Metamma / Gallabal in March 1889 Menilek immediately proclaimed himself emperor. The Tigre, led by Ras Mangasha and Ras Alulua, made an unsuccessful attempt to stop him. In the end, being gravely weakened by the effects of the war against the Mahdists, they submitted and reluctantly accepted his imperial suzerainty. Negus Takla Haymanot of Gojjam, already defeated by Menilek in 1882 and effectively removed for good from the contest for southern expansionism, was virtually powerless to challenge the Shawan king’s accession. The success with which Menilek’s pretensions to imperial sovereignty were asserted was in fact an actual

1- Greenfield, R., op.cit., pp. 97-98; Salole, Gerry, op.cit., p. 21; Muhammed Hassen, The Oromo of Ethiopia, pp. 198-200.
3- Salole, Gerry, op.cit., p. 21.
Shawan “conquest” of the rest of the Christian Ethiopian state.¹ Menilek’s kingdom of Shawa, in effect, became Menilek’s Ethiopian empire.² It was this new and greater empire which was passed in inheritance to his successive Shawan successors; his grandson Lij Iyasu (r. 1913-1916), his daughter Zawditu (r. 1916-1930), and the greater grandson of Sahle Sellassie Tafari Makonnen who assumed power first as regent to Zawditue and later as emperor under the royal name of Haile Sellassie I (r. 1930-1974).³

“The Shawanness” of the newly extended polity created by Menilek was visibly illustrated by the fact that the Shawans and their Oromo assimilated collaborators almost exclusively monopolised the high and influential posts at the centre and in the provincial military and civil administration of the newly incorporated conquered territories. Both were also the main recipients of the wealth generated by the exploitation of the conquered Oromo and Sidama regions. Other Ethiopians from the core northern regions were generally excluded from sharing in such rewards.⁴ Northern Ethiopian communities who resided at Addis Ababa at the turn of the century were considered by the Shawans as outsiders rather than fellow citizens. Cases involving their members were tried by their own representatives like other foreign residents, and were not tried at the local courts.⁵ Moreover, Shawan appointees stationed in the northern regions encountered much resentment and animosity from the northern Amhara, Tigre and Gojjami nobility and ordinary peoples who considered them as representatives of the Shawan ruling dynasty which usurped their imperial inheritance.⁶ The Tigre in particular felt deeply hurt and betrayed by Menilek for allowing the Italians to retain possession of the Eritrean highlands even after they had been decisively defeated at Adwa in 1896.⁷

¹ - Salole, Gerry, op.cit., p. 21.
³ - Salole, Gerry, op.cit., p. 21.
⁴ - Salole, Gerry, op.cit., p. 21.
⁵ - Ibid., pp. 21-22, citing Gebre Heywat Baykadan’s Mengistenna Ya Hesh Astadar (“Government and Administration of the People”).
⁶ - Levine, D.N., Wax And Gold, pp. 45, 47; Salole, Gerry, op.cit., 21.
⁷ -Greenfield, R., op.cit., p. 117; Markakis, John, op.cit., p. 48 and Salole, Gerry, op.cit., p. 22, both citing Gebre Heywat Baykadan’s Minilek na Etiopya (“Menilek and Ethiopia”).
(ii) Capacity and Motivation for the Conquest:-

That the Shawans could have possessed sufficient capacity to initiate and pursue with success the substantial military conquest and annexation of the Oromo and Sidama inhabited southern regions is not difficult to explain. It is to be noted that Ethiopian political and military power has always been extended along the highland plateau in the direction of the south. Shawa, geographically located at the southernmost extremity of the Christian Ethiopian state, naturally served as the forward base for the southern extensions of Ethiopian political and military power and the gateway for the spread of its cultural influences in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.1 Equally it was the Ethiopian province which suffered the most from the devastating effects of the Muslim jihad wars of the sixteenth century and rapid migrations of the Oromo which followed in the seventeenth century. Then after Ethiopian power and influence has been rolled back and contained within regions lying to the north of the Abay and Awash rivers Shawa, once more, resumed its strategic and political significance as the defensive base on which a centralised Ethiopian polity eventually developed.2

Political centralisation apparently made it possible for the early Shawan rulers to maintain the command of effective political power and the ability to enlist and use relatively impressive military power. Consequently, they became increasingly powerful enough not only to defend their territories and subjects from further Oromo incursions but also to take the offensive against them. Furthermore, the relative geographical isolation of Shawa from the northern and central Ethiopian provinces, and probably the deliberate policy of her rulers to distance themselves as far as possible from the destructive inter-regional wars of the Zamana Masafent provided them with a relatively strong and economically prosperous local base of power.3 In contrast to other Ethiopian provinces Shawa had, by the end of Sahle Sellassie's reign, gradually developed into a relatively peaceful, prosperous and politically autonomous principality. Its wealth was mainly derived from the export of slaves through caravan

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trade – routes leading across the Afar lowlands to Tajura and Coffe via Harar and Somali territories to the ports of Zeila and Berbra on the Gulf of Aden.¹ Eventually, the course of internal consolidation and the gradual southern extension of territories begun by the early Shawan rulers were to reach their fruitful climax during the reign of Menilek II.

The political divisions, cultural differences, mutual hostilities and military weakness of the southern societies made them vulnerable to Shawan aggression. The rich natural, commercial and human resources of their regions drew covetous Shawan attraction and expansionist ambitions. At the same time the constant feuds and inter-tribal wars as well as the almost ceaseless rivalries that prevailed among them prohibited them possibility of their uniting in any effective defensive action against their Shawan adversaries.² The greater unity of the Shawans and the large armies they could put in the field of battle gave them the military advantage. Access to and the use of firearms by the Shawans, however, assumed decisive roles only after the mid-1880’s. It was only from then onwards that their armies become increasingly equipped with imported more efficient modern European weapons. The maintainance of relations with European powers and private arms traders and the opening of independent routes to ports on the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden secured for the Shawans unimpeded flow of traffic in the much sought-after firearms and munitions. The possession and deployment of such arms made Shawan military victories more easier and their control over the conquered subjects more firmly established.

To some extent, moreover, the traditional Ethiopian epic the Kebra Nagast (“Glory of the Kings”)³ provided the necessary encouragement and ideological legitimisation for the Christian Ethiopian conquest and subjection of alien, non-Semitic, non-Christian peoples. For the Shawans the Oromo, who happened to live just across their southern borders were the logical target. They formed the greater part of the inhabitants of the south, large numbers of them were converts to Islam while the rest were heathens. In addition they were held historically responsible for the

² - Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., pp. 9, 25, 97-98.
³ A fourteenth century Ge'ez translation of an early Coptic Tesxt containing a mixed composition of Old Testament, Jewish, Christian and Arabic legend and literature.
occupation of territories that were formerly integral parts of the medieval Ethiopian state.  

In an assessment of the motivating factors behind the Shawa conquest and incorporation of the Oromo and Sidama regions in the late nineteenth century one can identify three main, though inter-connected, political, economic and military factors. Although the three were intimately related to each other they have been singled out below and treated at some length separately for the sake of convenience.

Any attempt to explain the driving forces behind the conquest should assign a primary role to Menilek’s personal ambitious aspirations, backed by his ruling nobility, for accession to the Solomonic imperial throne and subsequent hegemony over the whole of the Ethiopian state. His early attempts to realise his objectives through altering the politico-military balance of power in the contest with the more powerful northern regional magnates to his own advantage were a dismal failure. The crisis of 1876-1878 culminated with his forced submission to Emperor Yohannes and his acceptance of the imposed terms of the Liche Agreement. After 1878 Menilek was obliged to pursue a twin future policy. On the one hand he was to maintain cordial relations with the emperor concur with his policies and cooperate in implementing them. Of singular importance was the stipulated condition of his continued annual delivery of a heavy tribute to the emperor. On the other hand he was to refrain, as far as possible, from meddling in the internal politics of northern Ethiopia. Thus with his path to supreme imperial power through the north being blocked Menilek was obliged to turn his attention and energies towards the “open” south. The alternative strategy was aimed at securing the possible ways and means through which his cherished objectives could be attained.

The conquest and exploitation of the lucrative commercial potentialities besides the substantially rich natural economic and human resources of the Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions must have seemed as the sought after solution. It was only by doing so that Menilek could manage to build up his military power through increased recruitment in the ranks of his armies and the purchase for them of sufficient quantities of expensive imported European firearms and ammunitions. The resultant military might was an essential preparation for a winning future bid for imperial sovereignty and dominance. At the same time Menilek could avoid being

bankrupted and his financial resources ruined by securing access to source of material 
supplies and revenues to meet the requirements for the heavy annual tribute he had to 
deliver to the emperor. The Oromo and Sidama regions, more particularly those of the 
southwest, has historically been the rich sources of supply for Ethiopia’s highly 
valued exportable commodities of foreign commerce; gold, ivory, civet musk, coffee, 
honey and above all slaves of both sexes. The rulers of northern Ethiopia; whose own 
regions produced no comparable trade goods, derived a great part of their revenues 
from the taxes and tolls imposed on the passage of the transit trade from the south 
across their territories on its way to the sea ports. During the early years of Menilek’s 
reign Shawa’s share of the trade was modest. The bulk of it flowed northwards 
through Lagamara and Gudru to Basso in southern Gojjam and then via Gondar and 
Adwa to Massawa. The seizure and control of as much as possible of the rich sources 
of supply for the trade goods and the redirection of the routes through which it was 
funnelled through Shawan territories must have been among the cardinal motivating 
factors for the conquest.1 

As the southern borders of Shawa were progressively extended through 
campaigns of conquest and her share of the transit commerce increased so did the 
wealth of Menilek. Substantial booty in the form of captured cattle, ivory, horses, war 
prisoners, young men and women was gradually replaced in significance by the 
revenues derived from commerce and the regularly delivered tribute. While the sale of 
civet musk, coffee, hides, ostrich feathers, honey and other products was open for all, 
a royal monopoly was exercised on transactions in gold and ivory. Also the indirect 
proceeds and taxes received from trading in slaves were preserved for the king. 
Tribute, on the other hand, was handed over by the governors of the conquered 
territories and the tributary autonomous local rulers. Much of it was initially paid in 
gold, ivory, civet musk, slaves and other local products. By 1881, however, an 
estimated 70,000 thalers worth of tribute was paid in cash. Other sources of royal 
revenues were the occasional gifts made to the monarch by various military 
commanders and provincial governors. 

Finally and most importantly was the quest for drawing the maximum possible 
benefits from the direct exploitation of the appropriated conquered lands and the 
labour of its population once they were occupied. Traditionally this was accomplished

1 -Marcus, H.G. op. cit., p. 140; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., pp. 96, 100, 104.
through the systematic application of the gabber-neftenya system. Large parts of the best fertile lands were reserved for the crown as royal estates. They were intended to provide provisions for the royal court and its various palaces and to maintain cows, horses and other animals belonging to the monarch. Members of the royal family and court nobility were also awarded sizeable landholdings for providing provisions for their households. Other lands were allotted in lieu of salary or services rendered to the multitude of unpaid administrative and military personnel who were stationed in the conquered territories; military commanders / governors, subordinate officers, officials and their numerous soldier-settler followers. Other recipients of land grants were the church and its clergy who were established in the newly annexed regions and the indigenous intermediary functionaries, balabbats. All such landholders, neftenya, were granted land not on the basis of size, but rather according to the number of the client peasant farmers, gabbars, who settled and worked on it. The neftenyas were charged with the supervision of the gabbars settled on their lands, collecting and forwarding part of the tribute and taxes paid by them. In addition they were entitled to receive a variety of onerous services owed by the gabbars. The gabbar was obliged to pay a part of his produce, usually a quarter or a third, as tribute, taxes on his livestock, customary dues of meat, honey and butter, and offer the neftenya gifts on occasions of religious festivals, his marriage or birth of a son. In addition he was to offer his unpaid labour in helping the neftenya cultivate his own farm, grind and transport his grain, help in building his house, granary and fences, look after his animals, provide fire-wood and fodder etc … and act as his porter and messenger. In this way the Shawan conquerors managed to provide for the upkeep of the hierarchy of administrative appointees and the armies of occupation stationed at strategically located military bases, katamas, in the conquered regions.

The steady flow of revenues in kind and hard cash made Menilek wealthy enough to be able to purchase increasing quantities of better quality imported modern weapons and relevant ammunition. At the same time he could well afford to continue the delivery of substantially rich tribute to the emperor. Firearms and their accessories were to be become the largest and most valued items of import that flowed into Shawa from the coast. Their flow had been slow during the 1870’s and early 1880’s. It was started by Menilek entrusting some European arms dealers with royal caravans loaded with ivory, civet musk, coffee and other merchandise to be sold abroad and the proceeds used to buy arms for him. For example, in 1876 the Frenchman Pievve
Arnoux was put in charge of a royal caravan consisting of 165 camels carrying 2,100 kilograms of ivory, 6,900 kilograms of coffee, 1,500 kilograms of civet, 1,950 hides, 12 kilograms of musk and other local products. The total value of the trade goods was estimated at about 200,000 francs.\(^1\) A similar assignment was entrusted to L.A. Bremond in 1882 when he was sent to the coast with a caravan carrying ivory and musk. The proceeds of the sale of the cargo, expected to fetch some 40,000 – 50,000 francs, in addition to 60,000 thalers in cash given by Menilek, were to pay for the purchase of arms.\(^2\) He returned to Shawa in mid-1883 with a consignment of 6,000 rifles.\(^3\) The same procedure was repeated with Labatut in September 1885 and Léon Chefneux in February 1886.\(^4\)

In December 1877 Sebastino Martini Bernardi, a newly arrived member of the Italian expedition, was given 7,708 thalers and sent back to Italy to buy arms for the king.\(^5\) Later towards the end of April 1883 Pietro Antonelli, another member of the Italian expedition delivered to Menilek the 2,000 Remington rifles for which he had previously contracted in 1881 to supply.\(^6\) Then in November 1884 he signed a new private contract with Menilek for the supply of 50,000 new Remington rifles with 200 rounds of ammunition a piece over a ten years period.\(^7\)

The flow of the imported arms increased steadily after the establishment of the Italians and the French at Assab and Obock in 1883-1884 respectively and the opening of trade routes linking them to Shawa. From then onwards the Italian government, through Pietro Antonelli as the official emissary, and individual French arms traffickers became the major suppliers of arms to Menilek. The king paid for his purchase partly in local merchandise, but mostly in thalers. It was estimated that by 1889, when he became emperor, Menilek had at his disposal at least 60,000 rifles of all sorts, one million rounds of ammunition, one million percussion caps, and many barrels of gunpowder.\(^8\)

Besides the required despatch of tribute to the emperor, royal revenues were needed to meet the demands for the upkeep of the rank and file of the royal regiment

\(^1\) Marcus, H.G., op.cit., p. 44; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 174.
\(^2\) Marcus, H.G., op.cit., p. 60.
\(^3\) Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 204.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 176.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Giglio, C. Etiopia – Mar Rosso, 1, p. 154; Marcus, H.G., op.cit., pp. 68,70.
\(^8\) Ibid., pp. 201 – 205.
stationed at and around the court, the large number of peoples employed at the many royal household establishments, and the enormous royal feasts given a special religious occasions when about 10,000-13,000 peoples were usually fed far four days at a time. Menilek is said to have confided to a member of his trusted entourage that:

“Kassa (Emperor Yohannes IV) beat Takla Giyorgis with cannon; I have fought him with Thalers (Maria Theresa dollars), with Tej (honey-wine), and with brundo (raw meat) and Iam confident of defeating him.”

In conformity with one of the main terms of the 1878 Liche Agreement Menilek unfailingly continued the regular remittance of impressive tribute to Emperor Yohannes. For instance, as early as May 1878, when negotiations for the peace settlement were still going on, Menilek is said to have dispatched to the imperial camp an advance rich tribute consisting of 10,000 cows, 1,000 horses, 1,000 mules, large numbers of slaves of both sexes and various provisions. Later in the same month he provided the emperor with numerous cows, enormous quantities of honey, tej, araki (native wine) and valuable gifts which included several mules harnessed in gold, a number of double-barrelled rifles and two coats of arm said to have been gifted to him by members of the Italian expedition and Khedive Ismail. Several months later when the king presented the emperor with a further impressive tribute Yohannes is reported to have said: “Only today am I … Emperor.”

In December 1880 Menilek is said to have paid Emperor Yohannes 50,000 thalers in cash, 600 mules and horses with tacks trimmed in silver and gold, and first quality shammamas (tobes) worth about 80,000 thalers. And in May 1881 the tribute he sent to the emperor consisted of 10,000 thalers in cash, 30,000 duallas of grain, 10,000 cows, 2,000 measures of flour, and 400 urns of butter; the last four items estimated at about 50,000 thalers. On another occasion, in January 1886, the lavish tribute he presented to the emperor was valued at 2,000,000 lire.

2 - Cecchi, A., Da Zeila, 1, pp. 440-442.
Another contributing factor that impelled the conquest, especially during its last stages, was Menilek’s positive response to the advancing thrust of British, Italian and French imperialism. Signs of such reaction many have been apparent as early as 1887 when fears about a possible Italian advance on Harar after the Porro massacre moved Menilek to proceed with the conquest and incorporation of the town and its immediate surroundings. The response was continued after he became emperor. In April 1891 he sent a letter to the major European powers in which he defined the historical extent of the boundaries of Ethiopia. These happened to include large areas already claimed, though not occupied, by the British, the Italians and the French already established in their coastal protectorates. Menilek’s claims were largely ignored, most probably because the prevalent official opinion in Europe was that Ethiopia was already on its way of becoming an Italian protectorate. No protests were made or actions were taken when some of Menilek’s army units began infiltrating the Ogaden region already claimed, but not occupied, by Britain.

After the 1896 victory at Adwa the policy of encroaching into the surrounding lowland regions was intensified. Between 1896 and 1900 an increasing number of military units were sent into the peripheral lowland regions surrounding the southern highlands in all directions. In the south-east the greatest parts of the Ogaden region were claimed by 1898. In the south Menilek’s forces had reached the shores of Lake Rudolf in 1898 and conquered Borana Oromo territories in 1899. In the south-west his forces reached the Akobo river in the plains of the Southern Sudan. The economically unattractive, sparsely-occupied, arid, hot or humid lowlands were not targeted for their value. Menilek’s main preoccupation and real objective in securing control over them was to maintain them as “protective buffer Zones” to ward off aggressive European intrusion into the already occupied rich Oromo and Sidama inhabited highlands in the interior.¹

In this connection Menilek has sometimes been described as a participant with the Europeans in the partition and colonisation of Sub-Saharan Africa during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

“(He) participated in the scramble for Africa, his rivals were the European Colonial powers, he

reached boundary agreements with the Europeans similarly as they had reached with each other, and conquered peoples that were of a different ethnic and religious composition, and who were considered culturally and racially inferior.  

For the politically conscious Oromo and Somali activists and sympathisers for their cause the common colonial experience has resulted in the homelands of their kinsmen being forcefully conquered and their defenceless peoples being oppressively governed. This, too, was the view of the former governments of the Somali Republic. Admittedly parallels and similarities between the two particular episodes do exist, but this does not make them identical. Neither the initial considerations that motivated them nor were the circumstances surrounding the different phases of their development the same.

It has sometimes been suggested that among the motives for the conquest of the Oromo and Sidama southern regions were Menilek’s aspirations to regain provinces that once were “rightfully belonging to the domain of the Solomonic throne”, but were “lost” after the Muslim jihad wars of the sixteenth century and the Oromo migrations that followed. Indeed this is the usual explanation which is rather than justification provided by chroniclers and traditional Ethiopian historians for what they refer to as the “reconquest” and “reoccupation” of the south.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that hunger for land in the core northern provinces, aggravated by the disastrous effects of the 1889-1892 Great Famine “stimulated the tendency towards expansionism.” It is true that the effects of these occurrences stimulated the late migration of the Tigre and northern Amhara into the newly conquered southern regions rather than having had an initial motivating role in the actual process of conquest.

4- Markakis, John, op.cit., p. 23; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., pp. 96, 100.
(iii) **Methods of the Conquest**:—

In Shawa of the beginnings of the mid-nineteenth century, as elsewhere in Christian Ethiopia, there were no professional standing armies. Such a development occurred only gradually over the following years. Every able-bodied male subject of the monarch was originally a peasant working on the land, but was expected to enlist as a soldier whenever being asked to do so. In times when the country was threatened by outside aggression or when a military campaign into enemy territories was planed the monarch, as the commander— in—chief, issued orders for all the able male adults among his subjects to present themselves already prepared for military service. It has been estimated by Antonelli that Menilek could mobilise a maximum of 196,000 troops by the late 1887. Total mobilisation, however, was practically impossible, for it meant the evacuation of most of the soldiers from the newly incorporated conquered territories. He could actually assemble a force of about 34,000 combatants immediately, including soldiers of the royal regiment who would be armed with good quality rifles. A total of up to 100,000 men at arms could properly be assembled in cases of emergency, nearly half of whom would be in possession of firearms. The remaining 96,000 troops would be left for garrison duties in the conquered regions.

Two major annual military campaigns of conquest, Zemechas, were usually conducted by the Shawans, after the “big rains”, keremt, which occur between June and September, and the “little rains”, balg, that fall in March or April; after the heavy farming duties were already completed. Each Zemecha sent into enemy territories usually lasted for from two to three or four months, returning in some cases with no less than 60,000 – 100,000 heads of cattle and thousands of slaves as war booty. In this way the military campaigns of conquest were “indispensable for the economic life of the country”. From the king downwards to his generals, their officers, the soldiers and even the ordinary poor subjects drew substantial direct or indirect rewards from the results of a campaign. On the other hand, hurried punitive expeditions of shorter duration, gesgassas, were often undertaken during emergencies and for specific

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objectives; to punish a rebellious tribe that with held the usual payment of tribute or to pillage the territories of an independent tribe that attacked another who happened to be tributary or friendly to the Shawans. It usually lasted for about a fortnight, or at most for a month or a month and a half. It brought back rich booty in captured slaves and livestock.1

Sometimes a gesgassa could have been part of a Zemacha, when some of the soldiers left their encampment in enemy territory for two, three or five days to pillage the surrounding countryside before returning to their camp with captured cattle, slaves and provisions. On occasions when Menilek travelled with a large part of his army to meet with the emperor at Debra Tabor in Bagemder or at Boru Meda in Wallo the soldiers travelling with him described their journey as Zemacha.2

Once a zemacha or a gesgassa was decided upon mobilisation commenced about a month or a month and a half before its departure. A royal proclamation, awaj, was issued at least a fortnight and a half ahead of the departure indicating the specific date and place for the assembly of the troops. This was announced in public by an officer, meslène, of the royal spokesman, afa-negus (“month of the king”), through the slow and solemn strokes of the huge royal war-drums, nagarits, for forty five times at regular intervals of an hour or an hour and a half.3 The royal proclamation issued for the 1886 campaign against the Arussi (Arsi) Oromo was as follows:-

“Eat well and feed your horses and your mules to become fat, prepare flour, red pepper, salt and other provisions, and let all be found here at Entotto on the day of Abbo, after the eighth of Easter. Whoever does not heed my words will be punished with the confiscation of all his goods.”4

The king himself often marched, surrounded by his royal bodyguards, at the head of several military campaigns of conquest. In such cases he led the royal troops in person. Most of the other expeditions, however, were undertaken under the command of his leading generals and their officers. In such instances a part of the royal troops was allotted for the commanding general for the duration of the

campaign. They provided the core for his less experienced soldiers to bolster their morals and increase their fire-power. In the absence of the monarch they were led by their own commander, the turk pasha. In 1887 he was Dajach Makuria.¹

Provisions for the monarch, his royal troops, the generals and their subordinate officers were provided in advance. They were carried on donkeys led by some of their soldier aides. Additional provisions were expected to be provided by local governors, shums, and tributary rulers as the army passed through their territories. The soldiers brought with them their own traditional weapons (lances, spears and shields), and their own provisions (dried meat, roasted grain, flour, red pepper and salt). In addition they carried the firearms that were distributed to them by their commanding officers.²

On the fixed day for departure the disordered rush of officers, soldiers, retainers, wives and slaves carrying the soldiers provisions accompanied by priests carrying wooden alters, crosses and other sacred objects moved along the road like “a torrential stream”. All followed the king or the commanding governor without knowing the exact destination of the expedition which was kept a secret. While the priests chanted hymns and blessed the soldiers, elderly onlookers and young girls sang and applauded them as they passed by. While the army was still within Shawan or friendly territories the local shum or tributary ruler provided additional provisions and carriers. They were also expected to ensure that the road was easily passable for the army. From time to time new combatants joined the ranks of the army, bringing with them their own weapons and provisions for the duration of the campaign. Of special note were the large groups of adventurous warriors, fanno, who joined the army en-route, armed with lances, spears and shields, but carried no provisions. They were expected to live solely on what they could pillage on the field.³

Some order prevailed when the army was encamped. Only the king, the high ranking officers of his royal bodyguard or the commanding general and his senior officers slept in tents. The royal tents were located at the centre, surrounded by those belonging to the other commanders each of whom was assigned a place according to his rank and status. Some of the rank and file of subordinates had huts of straw

²- Antonelli, P., “zemeccia”, fol. 29; Sambon, L., op.cit., p. 9; Marcus, H.G., op.cit., p. 65; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 188.
temporally constructed for them. The rest of the soldiers and their followers either sought shelter as best as they could or slept in the open air.\(^1\)

The Fetha Nagast ("Law of the Kings")\(^2\) provided the traditional guiding regulations for the methods to be followed in the process of the conquest of alien peoples. These read as follows:-

"When you reach a city or a land to fight against its inhabitants, offer them terms of peace. If they accept you and open their gates, the men who are there shall become subjects and shall give you tribute, but if they refuse the terms of peace and offer battle, go forward to assault and oppress them, since the Lord your God will make you master of them."\(^3\)

Therefore, in case the local ruler of an invaded region chose to submit before the beginning of hostilities he was usually offered the chance to do so. He often came forward carrying a stone on his neck and knelt in front of the king or the commander of the campaign signalling his humility and peaceful submission. He was normally allowed to retain his position as an autonomous tributary ruler of his people provided that he continued to acknowledge Shawan overlordship and delivered the prescribed annual tribute. His territory and his people were spared the mass killings, emasculations, general devastation, the capture of livestock and the enslavement of women, young girls and boys that were the fate of others who opted for resistance and were ruthlessly subjugated.\(^4\)

On the entry of the invading army into hostile enemy territories the fanno broke away and moved one or two days in advance of the main army. They functioned as scouts and advance patrols; destabilising the enemy, killing any of them they encountered, plundered the countryside and burned villages. Those who were captured during the preliminary skirmishes were interrogated about the whereabouts of the enemy fighters, where were the cattle concealed and where grain and other valuable belongings were hidden. Those who did not cooperate were killed on the spot as a warning to the other captives. Those who cooperated satisfactorily and

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1- Antonelli, P., "zemeccia", fol. 32; Sambon, L., op.cit., p. 10; Marcus, H.G. op.cit., p. 66.
2- A compilation of traditional Ethiopian law, apparently a translation in Ge'ez of an Egyptian Coptic text, which appeared in the fifteenth century.
3- Quoted by Joh Markakis, op.cit., p. 104 and note 1 on the same page citing the English translation of the original Ge'ez manuscript prepared by Paulos Tzadua for the Law Faculty Haile Sellassie University, p. 50.
4- Markakis, John, op.cit., pp. 104-105.
provided valuable intelligence were given a horse and new clothes similar to those worn by the Shawan soldiers and employed as spies and guides.¹

The main force continued its march with increased speed while the nagarits were sounded continuously. The country on all sides of the army’s path became deserted and desolate as the local inhabitants fled with their movable belongings seeking safe refuge. Along the way the monarch or the commander of the campaign kept watching the surroundings through his field glasses to ascertain, if possible, where enemy soldiers had fled or their cattle was concealed.²

Before sunset an elevated part of the countryside was selected as a place to stop for the night. The royal tents were hurriedly fetched and put up. Then thousands of other smaller tents belonging to the accompanying commanders sprang up immediately. Others among the lower ranks had small huts of straw constructed for them or spent the night on the open air. The royal tent, usually made of red silk, was pitched at the centre of encampment facing the direction along which the army would be heading next morning. Nearby were the tents of the royal favourites and bodyguards. Tents belonging to the other commanders were put up arround them in an ordered manner according to rank and status.³

Early the next day, just before dawn, extraordinary movements and general commotion commenced as the camp was pulled down. At the sounds of the nagarits all noisy movements were halted. The army then prepared to regroup and advance to take up an assault position. At the centre was the monarch, as commander-in-chief, surrounded by his young favourites, balamwals, and his royal bodyguards. Overall field command was entrusted to a ras; or if a ras was actually in command of a campaign directions on the field were made the responsibility of a dajazmach. The advance units were placed under the command of a fitawrari (“major-general”). Command of the right wing was given to a qagnazmach (“brigadier-general”); while the left wing was commanded by a grazmach (“brigadier-general”). The rear guard and the reserves were placed under the command of a meridazmach (“colonel”). The gondari royal regiment was usually commanded by the king personally, but in his absence it was led by its own commander, the turk pasha. Other field – officers were the balambaras (“lieutenant-general”); the shalaqa (“commander of 1,000 men”); the

²- Sambon, L., op.cit., p. 45.
shambal ("leader of 500 men"); the mato ("leader of 100 men"); and the hamsa ("head of 50 men").

The signal for the army to attack was given by the solemn strokes of the nagarits. All the components of the army, headed by the fitawrari and his advance units, rushed to attack en mass amid the continued sounds of the nagarits and the shouts of war cries; irrespective of military hierarchical order or status. This was especially so as their enemy adversaries were not armed with firearms and the prospects of rich booty and trophies was irresistible. In Antonelli’s words, “one sees thirty or forty thousand men all running in one direction … soldiers no longer thinking about their generals, nor … of the king {who} in these moments is a simple soldier … It is a flood of men following a giddy course.”

During the actual battle, thor, which continued for about some eight or ten hours, the Shawans mounted two or three frontal attacks on their enemies. On each attack several groups of cavalry and infantry engaged the enemy, retreated and returned to fight again in confusion. Riflemen kept on firing their rifles at some distance from each other as they moved forward. Others fought in direct face to face combat. Taking advantage of their superior-fire power and their larger numbers the Shawans often overwhelmed their adversaries. Each attack resulted in substantial numbers of the enemy being killed or emasculated and left to die on the battlefield. Large numbers of cattle, young women and children were rounded up and driven to the camp. Captured able-bodied males and the elderly were summarily executed. Whole villages were looted before being burned and reduced to ashes. At the end of the day fighting was stopped as the camp was beginning to fill up with captured war-booty.

Ruthless killings, emasculations and unwarranted severe devastations were usually inflicted on the enemy when the invaders’ initial offer of peaceful submission was turned down, or when the enemy’s stubborn resistance took a heavy toll of Shawan soldiers. Fighting was terminated only when the surviving local rulers finally decided to submit. The most ferocious and the bloodiest of all the zemachas was the one sent against the Arussi (Arsi) Oromo in May 1886 after which the unfortunate

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tribesmen were cowed into submission.¹ The defeated local rulers presented themselves at the camp, and performed the traditional act of formal submission. Each of them approached the king or whoever commanded the campaign carrying a rock on his neck before kneeling at his feet as a sign of humility and vassalage. Once this was over an awai was issued prohibiting further hostile acts and devastation for the vanquished authorities and their people had become Menilek’s subject. The commander of the campaign appointed one of the accompanying military functionaries, with some soldiers and settlers, to remain behind and administer the land on behalf of the negus of Shawa.²

After victory celebrations and feastings were completed, the camp was pulled down and the army started to return home. In addition to the usually disordered procession of commanders, officers, soldiers, their retinue and followers numerous slaves of both sexes were added. They walked on the sides carrying loads of war-booty and spoils on their bare backs and heads. Thousand heads of livestock were shepherded alongside them. On reaching safe Shawan territory the booty was sorted and divided, with the monarch’s share amounting to a half or two – thirds of the total. The rest was divided among the soldiers who were disbanded and returned to their villages. The king, his royal bodyguards and the accompanying commanders and officers proceeded on the road leading to the capital. Their triumphant re-entry was made amid festive celebrations and joyful parades. After being feasted by the king, usually in turns, the royal bodyguards were disbanded to resume their duties around the royal households, while accompanying commanders and officers returned to their respective provinces.³

³- Antonelli, P., “zemeccia”, fols. 43-44; Sambon, L., op.cit., p. 64; Marcus, H.G. op.cit., p. 68.
CHAPTER IV

The EARLY PHASE OF SHAWAN CONQUEST TO 1882

For most of the early years of his reign, between his coronation as negus of Shawa in August 1865 and the conclusion of the Liche peace agreement of 20 March 1878 with Emperor Yohannes IV, Menilek seems to have been too much preoccupied with his kingdom’s most pressing immediate domestic problems. Among the urgent tasks demanding his attentive consideration had been the maintenance of his own position as the sovereign monarch of Shawa. In addition he had to protect the independence of his kingdom from any foreseeable threat from either the imperial centre or any one of the major contestants for imperial succession and hegemony in northern Ethiopia. Therefore, guaranteeing the security of Shawa’s strategically important though highly vulnerable northern frontier, which was inhabited by the Wallo Oromo, assumed the highest priority. 1

The situation on the open southern borders of the kingdom, however, was different, Shawan military offensive against the small and fractious Tuloma / “Shawan” Oromo groups on the southern border regions dates back to the times of Amha Iyasus in the third decade of the eighteenth century. Afterwards successive Shawan rulers, especially Sahle Sellassie (r. 1813-1847), adopted a subtle combination of diplomatic peaceful persuasion, inducements of political marriages, alliances and the use of physical force in dealing with their Oromo neighbours in the south. By so doing they succeeded in obtaining the submission of some of the Oromo groups, their acknowledgment of Shawan overlordship and their own tributary vassal status. The accomplishments of the various Shawan rulers varied considerably, for some of them were more successful than others in attaining their objectives.2

Menilek’s grandfather Sahle Sellassie has been credited with subduing the Abitchu, Gombitchu and Karayu Oromo up to the course of the Awash river in the south. His armies are said to have raided and collected tribute from as far as the

1. Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., pp. 54-55, 56.
regions of the Borena Oromo, across the Abbay in the southwest, and the Soddo Oromo beyond the Awash to Aimelell in northern Gurageland. Those gains are said to have led Sahle Sellassie to style himself with the royal title of “negus of Shawa, Yifat, the Galla {Oromo} people and Gurate.”¹ His successor Haile Malakot (r. 1847-1856) is reported to have been able to suppress the rebellion of several tributary Oromo groups beyond the Awash river who raided into Shawa territories. Apparently no new gains were made at the expense of the Oromo during his short reign.² In 1858 Bezzabbeh, the governor of Shawa on behalf of Emperor Tewodros, is said to have extended Shawa’s influence southwards as far as Gurageland, and had demanded tribute from Oromo tribes on the borders of Limmu – Ennarya who most probably were allies or tributaries of Abba Bagibo.³

On their arrival in Shawa in September 1876 Cecchi and Chiarini were told that the kingdom under the new rule of Menilek was reasonably calm, but the Oromo on its southern borders has always been prone to be rebellious and keen on preserving their independence. They often rebelled, infiltrated and raided Shawa regions. The king’s generals have been forced, on several occasions, to hasten to punish the insurgents, safeguard the integrity of the borders and re-establish respect for Shawa authority.⁴ They were also told that Gobana has recently been promoted to the rank of dajazmach as a reward for his valuable contribution in the suppression of a series of Oromo rebellions.⁵

By the beginning of our period, therefore, some sort of a general pattern concerning Shawa-Oromo relationships on the swaying open southern borders seem to have already been well established. Some Oromo tribal groups appear to have been peacefully or forcibly subdued, while others alternated between continued submissions or opted for rebellion and the maintenance of their autonomy. Shawa frontier-governors sing abegaz, with some Shawa soldier-settlers were stationed at selected strategically located garrison villages, katamas. They were entrusted with the duties of overseeing the continued Shawa hold over the subject peoples in the region, collecting and forwarding tribute, and protecting the passage of commercial caravans.

² Abir, M., op.cit., p. 178; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 36.
³ Muhammed Hassen, op.cit., p. 194.
⁴ Cecchi, A., Da Zeila, 1, pp. 267-268.
⁵ Ibid., p. 268.
etc … They were also charged with undertaking military campaigns for future conquest on their own initiative or when being ordered to do so.¹

For Menilek’s purposes as well as far his future plans the conquest and incorporation of the petty politically divided and mutually hostile Tuloma / “Shawan” Oromo tribal groups was a preliminary objective. Only after their subjection have been completed would his armies be able to reach up to the rich Macha Oromo regions lying further southwards in the direction of the Gibe states. Although such considerations were of basic importance for the future realisation of his imperial pretensions Menilek did not appear to have pressed on with their becoming realised soon after his coming to power. Preoccupation with the conquest of the strategically important Wallo region, between 1868 and 1876, was a major distraction.² The ill-fated attempt to influence the internal struggle for imperial succession which broke out in the north on the death of Emperor Tewodros was another.³ Moreover, the puzzling prolonged campaign of 1876-1877 through Wallo to Bagemder, the invasion and pillaging of Gojjam before returning to Shawa has been a fruitless waste of precious time and resources.⁴

Though the necessary attention and military resources for sustained southern-oriented conquest and territorial acquisition were not forthcoming prior to 1878 the Shawans had neither been idle on their southern borders, nor did they turn a blind eye on developments alongside them. They continued to conduct not only defensive actions but mostly offensive military campaigns, often in alliance with some Oromo groups, against other neighbouring kinsmen in the south. In so doing the Shawans appear to have had the advantages of strong leadership, the ability to deploy greater numbers of combatants on the battlefield and better tactics. In contrast the structural political weakness and disunity as well as the almost constant hostilities and struggles for power precluded the possibilities of the Oromo and Sidama societies to unite together in a common front in the face of a common enemy. An even more serious handicap for the two societies had been the failure of their leaders and their subjects to adapt themselves to the use of firearms. No doubt much of that failure could be ascribed to two factors. Firstly, the whole of southern Ethiopia was largely landlocked

³- Ibid., p. 73; Marcus, H.G. op.cit., pp. 33-35.
⁴- Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 76; Marcus, H.G. op.cit., p. 42.
from access to foreign sources of firearms supplies. Secondly, the rulers of northern Ethiopia had successfully adopted a strategic and monopolistic policy which prohibited the traffic of firearms to the south. Still, a large part of the failure rests on the traditional disdain and reluctance of the Oromo, in particular, to use firearms.¹

From time to time military excursions were sent to neighbouring Oromo countries to subject independent tribal groups, suppress rebellions, punish non-payment of tribute and stop raiding into Shawan territories. Beside the restoration of Shawan control and prestige those short campaigns, gesgassa, assured the Shawans substantial booty and tribute. From an early period since he came to power Menilek seems to have been convinced of the need to maintain connections and alliances with many of the leaders of the Tulama Oromo of Shawa if he hoped to govern Shawa effectively and ensure the expansion of her southern borders. This seems to have been the probable reason why the young king came to depend increasingly on Gobana Dacci, then a young soldier at the Shawan royal court. It was mostly under the influence and leadership of Gobana that several of the Tulama Oromo leaders joined in an alliance with the Shawan king to assist in his plans for southern territorial conquest. Indeed the Oromo alliance formed the basis for the combined armies, composed mostly of Oromo cavalry, which Gobana led personally; the ones that had been credited for the greater part of the southern conquests made before 1889. To borrow Richard Greenfield’s remark Gobana “was the architect of the Shawan Galla {Oromo} Confederation which sought to unite all these {Tulama} groups and which Menilek used to further extend the areas under his control.”²

Gobana is said to have been born in Shawa about 1817 or 1821 of Tulama Abitchu parentage. His wife is reported to have been the sister or the daughter of Birru Nagawi, a leader of the Salale Oromo who had been killed while fighting against the Chabo Oromo.³ According to Muhammed Hassen, however, he was born to “a princely Christian Oromo family.”⁴

Gobana appears to have started his career as a young soldier at the courts of Sahle Sellassie, Haile Malakot and Bezzabbeh before he attracted Menilek’s attention and joined his service soon after 1865. Exactly how and when did that happen or what were the circumstances in which he so favourably impressed the young king

¹ - Darkwash, Kofi, op.cit., pp. 97-98; Muhammed Hassen, op.cit., p. 197.
² - Greenfield, R., op.cit., p. 97.
³ - Ibid.
⁴ - Muhammed Hassen, op.cit., p. 198.
with his military talent and promising future is difficult to ascertain. What has been agreed upon, however, is that his rapid rise to power and prominence has been quite unprecedented for an Oromo; being successively promoted to the ranks of abegaz, dajac-agafari and dajazmach before 1878, and then ras in that year.\(^1\) A contemporary description of his two residences in Abitchu country located at Gimbisi, a little to the south of Liche and Angolala, and at Aman a short distance south of the Beresa stream had been given by Cecchi. Both were built on high hill tops surrounded by very deep slopes an almost all sides, more or less naturally fortified fortresses strong enough to withstand Oromo attacks.\(^2\) He has been portrayed differently as Menilek’s “ablest general and the greatest empire-builder”, though for most of the Oromo he has been a traitor who “betrayed his own people”.\(^3\)

The only available source material concerning the early Shawan military excursions and campaigns against the Tuloma Oromo groups is probably still the brief oral information collected by Enrico Cerulli and Richard Greenfield. What follows in the three paragraphs below, therefore, is no more than a modest reconstruction of those verbal testimonies, admitted that outstanding problems of detail, dating and chronological sequence have not been solved.

Biratu Golé, the leader of the Metta Oromo in the regions to the south of Mount Wachacha, is reported to have been the first to join the newly formed Oromo alliance under the auspices of Gobana Dacci. After having agreed with the latter he still sought and got Menilek’s royal assurances that the Oromo allies would not be badly treated.\(^4\) Gobana himself is said to have led four expeditions against the Abitchu Oromo. In the first campaign he fought and defeated Tufa Botora, a leader of some Abitchu clans. He followed his victory by building a fortified residence, katama, at Fallé.\(^5\) Afterwards he led two unsuccessful excursions against Tufa Oba, the leader of other Abitchu clans. Each time his armies raided enemy territories returning with rich booty. At last while Gobana was preparing for a third expedition to fight him the

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5. Ibid.
Oromo leader and his fellow tribesmen were saved by the intervention of Menilek’s tutor Nadaw who managed to secure their peaceful submission to the king. Not with standing Tufa Oba’s submission Gobana proceeded with the construction of two katamas in his lands at Gimbisi and Aman. Similar to the one at Fallé they were located on flat hill tops with steep slopes on almost all sides and the approaches to them were reinforced by artificially made baricades.¹

The conquest of the Salale Oromo is reported by Cerulli to have been the result of a six months long campaign led jointly by Darge and Gobana. Soleillet, who travelled through Salale country in mid – 1882, makes no mention of a role for Gobana in the conquest. He was told that the old Salale leader Djara – Gada, considering Darge’s victory over his countrymen as a revenge for their murder of his eldest son Djillo, willingly gave the country to him.² The small territory of the Golle Oromo, a little to the north of Salale, is said to have been subjected by Fitawrari Laye, a subordinate officer of Darge.³ Enrico Cerulli mentions a rebellion by the Oborra Oromo which is said to had continued for almost a whole year before it was put down by Darge and Makonnen.⁴

The Gulale Oromo are said to have resolutely stood by the decision taken at the meeting of their gada elders to resist a Shawan army which was on its way to attack them under the command of Walde Baysem. They fought and defeated the Shawans. Enrico Cerulli gives the text of one of their songs, which they usually sang during the butta festivals, in which they recall their victory over Walde’s force. Later their leader Tufamuna, who refused to join Gobana's Oromo alliance, was defeated and killed in battle by the confederate partners, the Abitchu and the Metta.⁵ Afterwards the Oromo confederation became increasingly powerful to take up and defeat the Abu of Mount Zikwala and the Jillé Oromo near Lake Zway.⁶ Advancing further towards the southwest they defeated and killed the leader of the Ambo Oromo in battle.⁷

¹- Cerulli, E., op. cit., p. 73.
² Ibid., p. 72; Soleillet, Paul, Voyages en Ethiopic (Rouen, 1886), p. 144
³ Ibid., p. 291.
⁴ Cerulli, E., op. cit., pp. 96, 97.
⁵ - Cerulli, E., op.cit., pp. 70, 141 ; Greenfield, R., op.cit., p. 98.
⁶ - Ibid.
⁷ - Ibid.
Thus while Menilek was still preoccupied with safeguarding the security of Shawa's northern frontiers his generals gradually brought several of the Tolama neighbouring Oromo groups under Shawan control. Correspondingly the kingdom's southern borders had increasingly been pushed further southwards in the direction of the Awash river. With the opening of Shawa to the outside world and as the advent of more Europeans in the country increased historical documentary source materials became more readily available. In turn this allows for a more accurate and trustworthy account of the Shawan conquest of the Oromo and Sidama region.

Pierre Arnoux, the adventurous French arms trader and traveller, was told on arrival at Liche in November 1874 that Menilek's cousin Dajach Mashasha Sayfu Sellassie was absent on a military expedition fighting some unidentified Oromo tribes in the neighbourhood of the Awash river.\(^1\) Nothing more has been mentioned about the excursion of the royal prince by the time of the departure of Arnoux for the coast in mid-May 1875.

During Arnoux's absence Menilek personally led two separated campaigns in 1875 and 1876 to the south. They were conducted against the Gurage people of Lakes Zway and Shala region. The main motives behind them are said to have been the king's desire to recover some valuable Christian treasures, dating back to medieval times, that were reportedly been kept for safety in the islands of Lake Zway, and to secure access to the sources of supply for the much sought after Gurage slaves.\(^2\)

The first campaign, conducted during May-June 1875, appears to have resulted in the establishment of some kind of Shawan authority over some northern Gurage tribal groups, though not including the Chaha. Most probably they were the inhabitants of the provinces of Aimellel, Muhur, Abso, Ghedelei and Esgiā.\(^3\) In a letter addressed to Arnoux on 23 June 1875 Menilek boastfully claimed that his army had actually conquered the country and he had established five nagarits (literally "drums"), i.e. administrative districts. The king then enumerated them as Qabiena, Maru, Walliso, Ammaya and Ambo in Meta (Mecha), and Agamja in Soddo.\(^4\) Furthermore, it is said that Menilek had initially appointed Dajach Germamé to govern the country on his behalf, but when the latter turned down the royal offer the

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\(^2\) - Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 99.
\(^3\) - Ibid., n. 138 on p. 102.
\(^4\) - M. & D. NAF Afrique 62 / 10222 Menilek's letter to Pierre Arnoux dated 23.7.1875; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., 99
king divided the country into five administrative districts. Soon after Menilek's departure with his army Omar Baxa, a Muslim adventurer of Caha Gurage origin ousted Menilek's representative at the district of Qabiena and continued to govern the region as an independent ruler.\(^1\) In early 1976, realising that his small province was threatened by increased Shawan military advance, Omar Baxa went to Shawa with a tribute of civet musk to Menilek and offered to become his tributary.\(^2\) The Soddo Oromo, Qabiena's northern neighbours, appear to have submitted to the Shawans most probably at near the same time.

When the first members of the Italian Geographical Society’s Expedition led by Orazio Antinori met Menilek at Liche they found that the king has already been preparing for a planned military campaign to be launched in the direction of the south. A large army was assembled, after having been summoned by a royal proclamation. Early on the morning of 15 October 1876 the king left marching at the head of his army towards the south. Two weeks later the Shawans camped in the country of the Gumar Gurage. Far away and all around the camp were scattered groups of local peoples shepherding their cattle. Menilek's chronicler Gabre Sellassie state that the day on which the camp was set up happened to have been an occasion for a religious holiday during which soldiers were traditionally forbidden to leave their camp to fight the enemy. Disregarding such restrictions large numbers of the irregular soldiers, warari, left the camp and commenced raiding the surrounding countryside. Menilek is said to have become engulfed with grave misgivings as he watched the fires lit on the encircling hills while the marauding warari attackers continued to plunder at the distance.

This time the Shawans appear to have encountered considerable resistance and suffered substantial losses. Gabre Sellassie writes that many of Menilek's soldiers and officers never returned to the camp, presumably being killed. He continues to comment that Menilek was so saddened by the death of his Christian soldiers that he permitted everybody to enslave the prisoners they had captured.\(^3\) The disastrous outcome of the campaign has been confirmed by Cecchi who describes it as being "unfortunate" and estimates that the Shawan army's losses at about a third of the

\(^1\) - Greenfield, R., op.cit., p. 99.
\(^3\) - Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, 1, pp. 124-125.
number of its soldiers.¹ On its way back home the army continued its forced marching all day until sunset to avoid further losses. Though no new gains were made the campaign brought back substantial booty in captured cattle and slaves.²

Dajach Gobana Daci is said to have campaigned with success during 1868 and 1878 among the Gulale, Yaha, Metta and the Chabo Oromo bordering on the Gurage. Hapte Giyorgis and Balcha Safe are said to have been captured during one of those campaigns in the region of Agamja.³ By 1875 most of the "Shawan" / Tuloma Oromo tribes appear to have been forced into submission and the payment of tribute, most probably with the exception of the Karayu in the southeast.⁴ Nevertheless, occasional rebellions and insurrections were frequent and much more fighting was still to be undertaken before Shawan hold over conquered regions could be substantiated. Shawan armies seem to have also penetrated into regions immediately southwards beyond the Awash, and further south westwards into the northern and north eastern approaches of the Gibe kingdoms. Jimma Abba Jifar (Jimma Kaka), the richest and most powerful of the Gibe states, became particularly menaced by Menilek's armies which had campaigned up to Soddo, Gurage and Qabiena close to its borders.⁵ It has been claimed that all the Liban Oromo in the region between the Muger river and the headwaters of the Awash were conquered by that time. As a result Shawan western borders were brought closer to the eastern frontiers of Gudru.⁶ In fact in the same letter referred to as a source for the above mentioned statement Massaia makes the generalized assertion that all the Liban Oromo including the Kutay up to Čallia paid tribute to Menilek.⁷ In another text of the letter bearing the same date, however, the Cardinal states that Menilek's armies had raided and plundered up to near the Gibe, and had subjected part of Gurage to the southeast of Jimma Abba Jifar (Jimma Kaka), but in all those campaigns the Shawans had "pillé mais n'organise rein".⁸

From what has been outlined above a general pattern of the Shawan military conquests accomplished so far may be observed. The Shawans appear to have been

¹ - Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, 1, pp. 124-125, n. 2 on p, 125; Cecchi, A., *Da Zeila*, 1, p. 271; Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 102.
² - Darkwah,Kofi, op.cit., p. 102.
⁶ - Darkwah, Kofi, op.cit., p. 98, n. 121. citing letter of Massaia, 15.2.1876.
⁸ - Ibid.
quite successful in most of the campaigns which they conducted among several of the Oromo and Gurage tribal groups. Substantial war booty, mostly captured cattle and slaves of both sexes, had been plundered. Submissions and promised payment of tribute were obtained. Nevertheless, such developments had not been accompanied by a parallel occupation of conquered territories. The construction and manning of well-defended garrison compounds, katamas, and the establishment of minimum administrative structures were lacking in nearly all the conquered regions. The existence of only a few ones has been reported not far away from the southern surroundings of the royal residences of Liche, Entoto, Qundi and Debra Berhan.¹

In such circumstances the control of the Shawans over most of their newly subdued tributaries appears to have been tenuous if not existent sometimes. Rebellion and the withholding of the payment of tribute were frequent occurrences. Correspondingly the Shawans responded with destructive military reprisals in order to punish the rebels and to restore Shawan authority and prestige.

Though the agreement of 1878 had settled the relationship between Yohannes and Menilek to the favour of the emperor it offered significant gains for the king of Shawa. In the first place it secured his internal position as the recognized legitimate negus of his kingdom. Secondly, his control over the recently conquered strategically significant Wallo region and the subordination of its local rulers to his political authority were affirmed. Hence, he had very little to fear from the emperor. His relations with Yohannes were destined to continue unharmed as long as he did not interfere in the internal politics of northern Ethiopia and proceeded with the regular delivery of pleasing tribute to his imperial sovereign.² He began, therefore, to devote most of his energies and military capabilities towards southern expansionism. Simultaneously, he took more sustained measures to increase his revenues in exportable merchandise and in cash. It was only in that way could he hope to keep the emperor reasonably satisfied with the substantially rich tribute regularly paid to him, and at the same time manage to continue supplying his armies with expensively purchased modern weaponry. By so doing he would be better prepared for an eventual challenge for imperial succession.³

¹ - For a description of Gobana’s residences at Gimbisi and Aman in Abitchu Oromo country see Cecchi, A., Da Zeila, 1, pp. 282-283, 284, 288.
Before negotiations for the peace agreement of 20 March 1878 had been finalized people in Liche were talking about a forthcoming military excursion, gesgassa, to be led by the king or one of his generals into neighbouring Oromo regions. It was generally believed that the purpose behind it had been to procure what was needed for the payment of tribute to the emperor. On 10 March, while on his way from Qundi to Let Marefia, Cecchi was informed that Azaj Walda Tsadik had left to join Menilek who was then campaigning with his army in Abitchu country. The Abitchu Oromo were said to have rebelled and killed some 600 Shawan soldiers at Finfini. A week later, when he was travelling from Let Marefia to Liche, he met groups of Shawan soldiers returning from the king's camp. The war booty plundered during the campaign appears to have formed the greater part of the tribute delivered to the imperial camp for contributing towards the upkeep of the emperor's army and the accompanying troops of Ras Adal Tesemma of Gojjam and Muhammad Ali of Wollo while they camped on Shawan soil.

On 26 March 1878, six days after Menilek's formal submission to Emperor Yohannes Cecchi, together with Chiarini and Orazio Antinori, encountered Dajach Gobana and Menilek's cousin Dajach Mashasha Sayfu. They were commanding some 4 to 5 thousand cavalry and between 6 to 7 thousand infantry some of whom were armed with rifles while others carried lances. All of them were busily engaged in the construction of a round-shaped compound, katama, with a wide opening facing the direction along which the generals intend to lead their armies.

Cecchi and Chiarini were told that the authority of Dajach Mashasha over the Oromo on the plain of the Awash had not been firmly established. The young prince admitted that the situation among the Oromo of the region was far from being calm and stable, so that in times of an emergency he or some of his officers would have to march at the head of thousands of their troops up to the Awash to restore peace and order. He intended to stay with his soldiers for a while to maintain order among the turbulent Oromo tribesmen. Further southwards they came across groups of some

1 - Cecchi, A., Da Zeila, 1, p. 436
2 - Ibid., pp. 437-438.
3 - Ibid., p. 496.
4 - Ibid., p. 506.
5 - Ibid., p. 507.
5,000 Shawan soldiers under the command of Qaqnazmach Worku and Semmu Negus engaged in fighting some 2,000 Abu cavalry. They were informed that Dajach Mashasha had once returned from one of his excursion among the Abu Oromo with a booty consisting of 7,000 head of cattle and about 3,000 to 4,000 war captives. Cecchi comments "Ecco in qual modo ai confini del regno si obbediva agli ordini che Menelik areva dato a proteggersi." After his coronation as negus of Shawa on 26 March 1878 Menilek promoted his uncle Dajach Darge and his leading General Dajach Gobana to the highest military rank of ras. Ras Gobana was left acting as regent in Liche while the king left to meet the emperor in Bagemder and attend the council of Boru Meda. Ras Darge, on the other hand, was entrusted with the conquest of the Muslim Darra Oromo occupying parts of the precipitous plateau on the northwestern borders of Shawa with Gojjam and Wallo. The Darra led by their warrior leader Hassan Wadaj, had rigorously resisted two separate moves to subjugate them. The first attempt is said to have been made by Dajach Mashasha Sayfu, while the other was undertaken by Muhammad Ali, on order from Emperor Yohannes, while he was on his way back to Wallo after having participated in the 1878 imperial invasion of Shawa. Soon afterwards Hassan Wadaj died a natural death in 1874, after having slaughtered his war horse, kurara, vowing "after me no one will ride kurara". The Darra continued to be ruled by a council of their elders which included Hassan's widow. It was Ras Darge who successfully accomplished the conquest of the Darra in 1878 while Menilek was with the emperor in Bagemder.

Though the relatively modest southern penetration and widespread raiding by Menilek's armies had not been accompanied by a corresponding extension of Shawan rule and authority a gradual shift towards concentration on southern oriented conquest began to take place after 1878. Already by 1876, when the conquest of Wallo was almost completed, Menilek could start committing more of his troops for campaigning on the southern front. By that time, too, his armies had begun advancing towards the rich Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe in the southwest. One direction was by moving from Entoto in a south western route through northern Macha regions commanding the principal northern gateway to the region. The other was for Shawan armies to

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1 - Ibid.
2 - Ibid.
3 - Cerulli, E., op. cit., pp. 22-23.
4 - Soleillet, P., Voyages en Éthiopie (Rouen, 1886), pp. 291-292.
continue campaigning and extending the range of their authority through Soddo, Qabiena, Botor and Badifolla to the north eastern frontiers of Jimma Abba Jifar, then the richest and most powerful of the five Oromo states of the Gibe region.

Once Menilek took the decision to extend the range of Shawan expansive wars of conquest to Oromo lands to the south of the Abbay river he knew quite well that he was taking the risk of bringing about an eventual conflict with the rulers of Gojjam. The geographical location of Gojjam on the northern banks of the Abbay gave its rulers the advantageous control over the principal gateway for the highly valued commerce of the rich Gibe region and Kaffa in the southwest. Ras Adal Tesamma's predecessors, descendants of Oromo settlers in Gojjam, had been campaigning and raiding into the adjacent Oromo highlands beyond the Abbay for almost two generations or more. 1 His great grandfather Dajach Zawde, who had been married to a daughter of one of the leaders of the Ammuru Oromo from beyond the river, is said to have been a reputed governor of Damot who made a reputation for himself by raiding Oromo regions to the south of his territory. 2 His son and successor Goshu Zawde (d. 1852) has been credited with extending his authority over the eastern parts of Gojjam within the bend of the river, and conducting military excursions against neighbouring Oromo groups in the south. 3

The Gudru and some sections of the Jimma Raré are said to have maintained peaceful relations with the Gojjame across the river, where as the Kutay (Genda Barat), Liban and the Horro to the east of the Gudar river continued to raid both their Oromo neighbours in the south and the Gojjame in the north. Dajach Goshu Zawde is reported to have retaliated by campaigning vigorously against them; his soldiers often returned with captured cattle and war prisoners. 4 Nevertheless, none of those military activities appear to have resulted in the extension of Gojjame authority or presence in the highland region to the south of the Abbay. 5

In 1872 Ras Adal Tesamma took the opportunity of the struggle for power which occurred in Gudru following the death of Gama Moras to intervene. After

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2 - Ibid.

3 - Ibid., pp. 66-67.


5 - Caulk, R.A., op. cit., 68.
settling the succession dispute to his own advantage by securing the overthrow of Gama Moras's family and the appointment of a client ruler over the Gudru Ras Adal established a garrisoned post, **katama**, in Gudru. It was the first of its kind ever maintained by the Gojjame in the southern highlands.\(^1\) From there Ras Adal sought to extend his authority and influence further among the surrounding Oromo. With the help of a few matchlockmen Fitawrari Yemar Goshu, the commander of the **katama** in Gudru, succeeded in holding Horro cavalry attacks at bay for a time. After the Horro leader Abiše Garba was deposed and his brother Fandalala was appointed in his place as a leader the Horro became tributary to Gojjam.\(^2\) Fitawrari Yemar got married to a daughter of the deposed leader as a token for strengthening Gojjame alliance with the Horro.\(^3\)

By 1878 Gojjame authority does not seem to have extended beyond Gudru and parts of Horro, Lagamara and Jimma Raré. The situation had not changed much by the time of Ras Adal's coronation as **negus** of Gojjam and Kaffa under the new royal name of Takla Haymanot in January 1881.\(^4\)

The penetration of Shawan raiding campaigns westward of Entoto into the direction of the Oromo regions below the Abbay seem to have started round about 1876 at least.\(^5\) The targeted area appears to have been Lagamara, situated to the south of Gudru, between the Abbay and the headwaters of the Gibe.\(^6\) Menilek's generals advancing on this front made slow progress. Preoccupation with conducting punitive military excursions against several recalcitrant Oromo groups on the banks of the Awash seem to have been responsible for much of the delay.\(^7\) Menilek's armies are said to have been held at bay for some time by the Kutay (Genda Barat). At least they succeeded in getting through to the eastern part of the country where a local client governor was appointed. The rest of Kutay fell in Gojjame hands.\(^8\) It was only after the rainy season of 1878 that a Shawan expedition under the command of Ras Gobana

\(^3\) Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 67.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 68.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 66.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 71 , n 26.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 67 n 9.
Daci and Dajach Mashasha Sayfu manage to reach Lagamara in October – November 1878.¹

The expedition is said to have left Entoto and Finfini towards the middle of October. On reaching the approaches of Lagamara, however, a detachment which broke away from the main army under the command of Dajach Mashasha Sayfu made a direct thrust into the region. The people fled in all directions with their cattle and few movable belongings as the Shawans appeared in the distance. Several hundreds of them took refuge at the compound of the Roman Catholic mission and its surroundings. The Shawan soldiers advancing in battle formation attacked the assembled crowds. The encounter had been ferocious and bloody as victims were slaughtered in the hundreds. Few managed to flee, while the young survivors were rounded up and taken prisoners. Cattle and valued movable belongings were plundered. Even the mission's building were raided and destroyed. The indigenous clergy, teachers and several of their new converts were captured, and their private properties were confiscated. Later in Shawa, in deference to the pleas of Cardinal Massaia, they were released and their belongings were restored to them.²

There is no evidence of either Shawan campaigns beyond Lagamara or of Gojjame advances southwards from Gudru with the accompanying payment of tribute being made by the time Cecchi was set free in 1880. Mounting panic, however, began to spread among the Oromo of the Gibe states as alarming news reached them about alternating movements of Shawan and Gojjame armies in the outskirts of their region. In early June 1879 a Gojjame army was said to have been camping in Lagamara. Later in the same month it was reported that the Gojjame had reached Leqa.³

There were rumoured reports that the Shawan general Ras Gobana and the Gojjame general Ras Daraso would soon be marching southwards.⁴ It was generally believed that Ras Adal and Menilek were intending to invade the small Oromo states of the Gibe to secure the release of the imprisoned Cecchi and to punish his captors. In June

³ - Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 68.
1879 news began circulating that the Gojjame were planning to advance from their base in Gudru to join with a Shawan army near Ambo, to the south of Mount Dandi, for an expedition to Jimma Abba Jifar and Limmu – Enarya.¹ Later in the same month it was heard that the young king of Jimma had sent tribute to Menilek.² This has been confirmed by Orazio Antinori who reported the arrival in September 1879 of five men from Jimma Abba Jifar (Jimma Kaka) carrying tribute from the young king of that country to Menilek.³

At the beginning of 1880 it was said that Ras Gobana, who had left Shawa with a large army, had come through Qabiena on his way towards Limmu – Ennaya. By February he was reported to be among the Oromo of Tadalle, just to the east of the Gibe river from Jimma Abba Jifar, preparing to attack Jimma's tributary clients the Botor.⁴ In July 1880 a messenger sent by Ras Adal Tesamma arrived in Gera. He was carrying letters addressed to the queen mother of that country and to the rulers of other neighbouring states informing them that he was not going to send an army to exact tribute from them if they released Cecchi from imprisonment. The Gojjame ruler threatened to close all trade routes and markets for merchants of their countries in case they refused to comply.⁵ After envoys of the rulers of the adjacent Oromo states met with the queen mother of Gera, for the third time, she complied and Cecchi was set free.⁶

After having been liberated Cecchi left Gera in the middle of August 1880 heading northwards in the direction of the Abby. Passing through Sopso he learned that Garbe Jello, the leader of the Leqa Bello who had detained Chiarini the previous year, had become a tribute – paying vassal of the Gojjame.⁷ As he continued on his way Cecchi was unaware of any Gojjame presence or detectable signs of their influence until he reached Embabo and met with Fitawrari Yemar Goshu. The Gojjame subjection of the small Oromo groups in the neighbourhood of Gudru close to the Abbay did not seem to have been accomplished by then or they had regained

¹ - Ibid., n. 27 on page 71 referring to a letter of Cecchi printed in BSGI (1881), p. 702.
² - Ibid., n. 28 on page 71 citing Cecchi, A., Da Zeila, 11, p. 704 quoting Chiarini.
⁵ - Cecchi, A., Da Zeilla, 11, pp. 545-546, 548-549; Caulk, op. cit., p. 68.
⁶ - Cecchi, A., Da Zeilla, 1, p. 549.
⁷ - Ibid., pp. 554-555; Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 68.
their autonomy. As late as October 1880 Fitawrari Yemar was obliged to conduct a punitive excursion against Qadida of the Jimma – Raré. While Cecchi was a guest of Yemar at Embabo it was reported that Danagla Rufo, a Gudru leader whom the Gojjame had supported in 1872, had joined a party of rebellious Gudru notables. The expedition which Yemar Goshu led, and which Cecchi joined, was most probably a raid conducted against the rebel Horro leader Abiše Garba.

The southern extension of Shawan control and influence away from Entoto had similarly been limited by the end of 1880. Gustavo Bianchi, travelling in February – March 1880, found that wide stretches of uncultivated land on both banks of the Chia Chia river, at a distance of a day's journey to the south of Debra Berhan, were considered to have been the southern borders of Shawa a few years before. The Oromo inhabiting the regions south of Debra Berhan and Entoto up to the river were peacefully governed by Ras Gobana. The Abitchu, Gombitchu, Bacio, Abu and Metta Oromo, living between the Chia Chia and the Awash river in the south, often rebelled whenever Gobana was away from Entoto or Gimbisi with his army, so that his return usually signalled the renewal of punitive retaliation and the plundering of cattle. South of the Awash the local Soddo chiefs, shums, Dagaga, Tore and Oba as well as Omar Baxa the ruler of Qabiena and Ato Dori the leader of Aimallel Gurage were loyal tributaries of the king of Shawa.

At the time of Bianchi’s journey all the Oromo on the western banks of the Awash were generally alarmed by the customary collection of tribute due before the celebrations of Ethiopian Easter in the early days of May. All along his route in Bacio and Abu territories Bianchi saw gloomy remains of abandoned villages reduced to heaps of burnt ashes. Only well defended larger groups of dwellings managed to survive being devastated by Gobana's soldiers. Gobana had crossed the Awash and camped among the Abatu Oromo while he was campaigning against the Bacio and the Soddo. Everywhere along his route Bianchi saw people hurriedly fleeing in all directions.

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1 - Ibid.
2 - Triulzi, A., op. cit., p. 62.
3 - Ibid., p. 62; Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 69.
4 - Triulzi, A., op. cit., p. 60; Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 68.
7 Ibid., p. 245.
8 - Ibid., p. 246.
directions away from the reach of Gobana's soldiers. At the end the Italian traveller realised that Ras Gobana had given up his intended campaign towards Jimma Abba Jifar and Gera. On 25 March 1880 Gobana's 20,000 strong army pulled down its camp and started its return march to Entoto.

Continuing on his way towards Gojjam Bianchi arrived at Fiche, the katama of Menilek's paterna uncle Ras Darge in Salale country. He was advised against travelling across Kutay territories, but was given an escort which led him through Jaraso lands towards Gojjam. Ras Darge frankly admitted that he had nothing in his hands to extend Shawan dominions from Entoto up to Kaffa as Menilek would have liked. On 26 April 1880 Bianchi crossed the Abbay into Gojjam.

On 30 June 1880 Antinori reported from Shawa that Ras Gobana had returned from a military expedition which he claimed had led him across the Awash to the banks of the Gibe river. Finding the river unfordable and infested with crocodiles his army turned back and withdrew towards Shawa. Mashasha Worke, who had accompanied the general on the campaign, informed Antinori that Gobana had intended to invade the Oromo kingdoms of Jimma Abba Jifar, Limmu – Ennareya and Gera. He added that representative of the rulers of Jimma Abba Jifar had appeared on the opposite bank of the river to negotiate with Gobana.

Though the Shawans and the Gojjame had been campaigning into Oromo lands for long there had been no determined limits to the extent of their respective spheres of influence beyond the boundaries of their dominions by the end of 1880. Claims and counterclaims had been hotly contested by both sides. On his part Emperor Yohannes did not appear to have been necessarily worried about the consequences of the on going competition between his two vassals for territorial expansion in the south. On the contrary he appears to have been more favourably inclined to support the growing ambitions of the Gojjame ruler. His main intention appears to have been to distance his mutually hostile vassals still further from each other so as to prevent their allying themselves against him. The emperor's decision to

1 - Ibid., pp. 340, 393, 404, 406.
2 - Ibid., 409-410, 420-421.
3 - Ibid., pp. 433, 434, 435.
4 - Ibid., pp. 443-444.
6 - Ibid., pp. 74-75, 79.
7 - Ibid., p. 75.
support Takla Haymanot could not have been made to counterbalance the increasing power of Menilek as has sometimes been asserted. Obviously the king of Shawa had not become so powerful by the beginning of 1881 to make it difficult for Yohannes to overwhelm him.2

At a ceremonious occasion held at Sameran, near Debra Tabar in Bagemder, Emperor Yohannes crowned Ras Adal Tesamma as Takla Haymanot negus of Gojjam and Kaffa on 20 January 1881.3 Most of the emperor's main tributary vassals, including Menilek, were present. They were accompanied by some of their generals and court dignitaries. The addition of Kaffa, the name of the still unconquered rich and powerful Sidama kingdom, had been a symbolic gesture to encouraging the newly crowned Negus Takla Haymanot to push forward with his campaigns southward. This seems to be in line with a reported gift made to him by the emperor of some 8,000 rifles.4

Once the coronation ceremonies were over Menilek travelled to Warra Ilu in southern Wallo where he intended to spend the rainy season. Meanwhile it was learned in Shawa that royal orders from him were received by his regent to prepare for an year – long expedition to be conducted in the direction of the south.5 This may have been Menilek's immediate response to the new title and status awarded to his rival by the emperor. Rumours were also heard that Yohannes would personally campaign southward from Gojjam. Caulk has argued at length that the expedition for which preparations were asked to be made was the one that Ras Gobana commanded towards the end of May 1881, and not 1880 as has been mistakenly dated by Ato Asme Giyorgis. Accordingly, it had been the first Shawan campaign to penetrate across the Gibe river resulting in rending the rulers of the five small Oromo kingdoms tributaries to Shawa. Gobana's appearance in the Gibe states is said to have caused much alarm among the neighbouring Leqa. It was feared that the Liban and Nonno Oromo to the north of Jimma Abba Jifar may have submitted to the Shawans as well.6

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2 - Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 75-76.
5 - Caulk, R. A., p. 73, n. 35 on the same page citing Ferdinand's diary, entries for 3 and 18 March 1881.
6 - Ibid., p. 73.
The contemporary Gojjame chronicle compiled by Alaqa Takla Iyasus is said to mention that the Gojjame expedition sent to the south had resulted in the defeat of thirty-two local Oromo rulers, all of whom were said to have paid tribute to Gojjam. The chronicler's account claims that the Gojjame general Ras Daraso had marched through Gudru, Ammuru and Horro on his way to invade the Nonno, besides the kingdoms of Jimma Abba Jifar, Gera and Guma. He then turned and began marching towards Kaffa when he was met by the Shawan army led by Ras Gobana.\(^1\) The chronicler's basic drawback as Caulk observes is that his account makes no specific indication of place names and dates for the episodes it mentions. This, no doubt, makes attempts to determine the details and chronological sequence of Gojjame penetration into the Gibe region almost impossible.\(^2\)

According to Caulk the Gojjame chronicler's claims about the achievements of Ras Daraso may have been the result of two or more campaigns occurring at separate intervals between the coronation of Takla Haymanot in January 1881 and January 1882 when the Shawan general Ras Gobana interrupted Daraso's almost unopposed campaigning up to the Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe.\(^3\) His reconstruction of the Gojjame advance suggests earlier campaigning which resulted in the extension of Gojjame control over the neighbouring Oromo groups surrounding Gudru by the end of the rainy season of 1881. Ras Daraso's latest expedition, in which Gojjame allies from Gudru, Horro and Kutay (Genda Barat) participated, had penetrated into the small Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe.\(^4\) While he was on his way Daraso was met by envoys of Moroda Bakare of the Leqa Naqamte with tribute declaring his submission.\(^5\) On his arrival in the Gibe region all the rulers of the Oromo states submitted and paid tribute. Only the king of Guma, who chose to oppose the invading Gojjame army, was killed. Afterwards Ras Daraso continued on his way towards Kaffa when he was overtaken by Ras Gobana.\(^6\)

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1. Ibid., p. 76, n. 48 on the same page citing Takla Iyasus, "Gojjam Chronicle" folio 88.
2. Ibid., p. 76.
4. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
News about the presence of Ras Daraso in the Gibe region reached Shawa in early December 1881. After further information, supposedly about Gojjame victory in Guma and the death of her king, was revealed to Menilek a war council was held at Entoto. Afterwards Ras Gobana was ordered to depart immediately on an expedition to fight those who were considered intruders into Shawan sphere of influence. Ras Gobana's army abandoned its camp at Finfini at dawn on 14 December, and began its march towards the Gibe.¹ On 7 January 1882, a day after Ethiopian Christmas, king Menilek himself left on a fifteen day gesgassa into the country of the Arussi (Arsi) Oromo in the southeast.² Before his return, however, a letter had arrived in Shawa from Gobana indicating that the Gojjame army had fled after his troops had intercepted its baggage train, gwaz. It added that the Gojjame were obliged to surrender the ivory, cattle, civet and war captives they had collected as booty and tribute which Gobana claimed had been taken from regions that were already tributaries to Menilek.³ The Gojjame chronicler Alaqa Takla Iyasus asserts that the booty was left by Ras Daraso in Limmu when he had marched towards Kaffa. When he returned back he was informed that Ras Gobana had confiscated his booty. The chronicler adds that Daraso was willing to fight, but after Gobana had invoked the emperor's name the ivory and other goods were left in the custody of a group of northern merchants on behalf of Emperor Yohannes.⁴

Menilek was crossing the Awash with his army on the return from the short excursion against the Arussi Oromo when he heard the news about what had happened when the Gojjame army of Ras Daraso had been intercepted by Ras Gobana in the Gibe region and was forced to withdraw. On 26 January 1882 Menilek was back at Entoto.⁵ Whether Ras Daraso had promised not to interfere any more in what Gobana had claimed to be Shawan sphere of influence or even agreed not to recross the Abbay river in future is uncertain – What appears more probable was that the two generals might have agreed to refer the dispute for their respective masters and the emperor and wait for further instructions.⁶

¹ Caulk, R. A., op. cit., pp. 77-78.
² - Ibid., p. 78.
³ - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, pp. 171, 173; Caulk, R. A., op. cit., p. 78.
⁴ - Ibid., note 52 on page 78 citing Alaqa Takla Iyasus, unpublished Amharic history of the kings of Gojjam, MS 254, IES, folio 88.
⁵ Caulk, R. A., op. cit., p. 78.
⁶ Ibid.
In the meantime Ras Gobana continued to strengthen Shawan presence in the Gibe valley by obtaining the submission of all the kings of the small Oromo kingdoms and their payment of tribute.\(^1\) Afterwards he led his army across the Gojeb river into the Sidama kingdom of Kaffa. The Kaffa king and his councillors hesitated for a while. Finally they sent their tribute.\(^2\) When Negus Takla Haymanot learned about the circumstances of his general's collision with Gobana's Shawan army and how the former had been forced to withdraw he became enraged. He wrote to the emperor complaining that king Menilek had taken away the land given to him and the tribute that was rightfully collected. Yohannes answered counselling restrain and ordered his two tributaries not to fight each other, but to submit their dispute for his arbitration. He warned that whoever became the aggressor would be punished.

While reporting his successful accomplishments Ras Gobana informed king Menilek that Ras Daraso's army had been reinforced from Gojjam and was again on the move towards the Gibe. On 3 February 1882 further news reached Shawa that Negus Takla Haymanot himself had crossed the Abbay on his way to support his general, which was not true.\(^3\) Nevertheless, the fate of the rich kingdoms of the Gibe and the surrounding regions was at stake. The possibility that Ras Gobana's army might clash once again with a Gojjame army compelled Menilek to set off immediately marching for the Gibe. It had become necessarily urgent for Menilek to strengthen Gobana and to consolidate his successful achievements.\(^4\)

Since the beginnings of 1882, when the arrival of the Gojjame in the Oromo states of the Gibe became known, Menilek had become more determined than ever before to incorporate within his dominions the greater part of the Oromo countries to the east, south and west of Shawa as well as the Sidama kingdom of Kaffa, notwithstanding that Takla Haymanot had been crowned as negus of Kaffa by the emperor. At the same time he appears to have been prepared to accept Gojjame control over some small Oromo districts more closer to the Abbay.\(^5\)

Becoming apprehensive of the probable consequences of the reported involvement of Negus Takla Haymanot, and possibly intending to prevent the out break of war with the Gojjame Menilek left Entoto with his army crossing the Awash

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1 - Ibid., p. 80.
2 - Ibid., pp. 80-81.
3 - Ibid., p. 81.
4 - Ibid.
5 - Ibid., p. 79.
on 22 March 1882.¹ Marching westward he joined with Ras Gobana's army, which had recrossed the Gibe on 29 March, round the southern slopes of Mount Tulu Dimtu. The two armies continued marching towards the Gibe which they crossed on 2 April to set up their camp at Sayo. During the march the Shawan soldiers raided the Oromo inhabitants of the region through which they passed. The king had some of the plundered goods restored and the captured prisoners released. Further plundering was strictly forbidden.² On 5 April Garbe Jello of the Leqa Billo Oromo, a former Gojjame tributary vassal, submitted and paid his tribute. On 12 April queen Mastawat of Wallo arrived at the head of contingents of Wallo cavalry. Emissaries from Moroda Bakare, the leader of the Leqa Naqamte, and from Danno Béra of the Jimma–Raré came to the camp to declare the submission of their masters and paid the tribute. Continuing to march south westwards the Shawan army came to the highland region beyond the Aleltu river on 14 April where a nearby katama of Ras Daraso was burned. Then the army descended into the lowlands and crossed the Didesa river.³

Marching almost continuously in the direction of the south–west the Shawan army arrived at Bunno Sači on the bank of the Sésé river where it camped. On 21 April smoke was seen arising from the fires set by Daraso's troops camping on the other side of the river.⁴ On 23 April Fitawrari Yemar Goshu came to the camp to meet Menilek. After an animated discussion with Menilek, Fitawrari Yemar Goshu left carrying a letter from the king to Ras Daraso. In the letter Menilek reprimanded the Gojjame general for coming back with fresh support after having pledged under oath not to do so. He demanded that the Gojjame army withdraw beyond the Abbay while he and Takla Haymanot should proceed to present their respective case to the emperor.⁵ Three days later the envoys of Daraso came back with his consent to withdraw his army unless his sovereign should personally come and assume command.⁶

Afterwards the two armies continued to march northwards separated from each other by the course of the Sésé river. They recrossed the Didesa and passed through Leqa before crossing the Gibe river to arrive at the southern edges of the

¹ - Caulk, R. A., p. 81 The itinerary of Menilek's army mentioned above had been based on an unsigned Amharic MS, Bibliothequ Nationale, Paris, Collection Antoine d'Abbadie, No. 254.
² - Ibid.
³ - Ibid.
⁴ - Ibid., pp. 81-82.
⁵ - Ibid., p. 82.
⁶ - Ibid.
Čommim swamp. Qadida Wanable leader of the Jimma-Raré, another former Gojjame tributary, came to submit and pay tribute to Menilek. On the king's orders the Shawan soldiers raided the local Oromo people in retaliation for their leader Fandalala having deliberately guided units of Menilek's army through parts of the Čommim swamp causing unnecessary delay, hardships and the loss of many pack animals.¹

On 28 May emissaries of Negus Takla Haymanot arrived at Menilek's camp. They announced his arrival and his challenge for the Shawan king to fight. A brief exchange of messages between the two kings was ended without resolving their dispute. Two days later, after Fandalala had submitted to Menilek and paid his tribute, the Shawan army passed through the Čommim swamp into Gudru. Soon afterwards the Gojjame army commanded by Negus Takla Haymanot arrived to the north of the Shawans.²

On the morning of June 1882 the armies of Menilek and Takla Haymanot were deployed in battle formation facing each other at the plain of Embabo Meda in Gudru. The battle commenced at about 10 a.m. with cannon fire by the Gojjame artillery. It did little damage, though it ran down and slackened Ras Gobana's attacking Oromo cavalry. Then when firing for the third time the gun carriages broke down and became inoperable. Riflemen of both armies advanced to fire their weapons. Many soldiers fled. The Wallo horsemen swept on the Gojjame lines, while Ras Gobana's cavalry regrouped and attacked the enemy army at the rear capturing its camp and surrounding its combatants. Greatly outnumbered the Gojjame fought vigorously. Even after Negus Takla Haymanot was wounded and captured, two hours after the battle began, the Gojjame generals and part of their troops continued to fight throughout the afternoon. When their centre collapsed and many were killed or wounded the Gojjame generals finally submitted with all their weapons.³

Shawan losses were estimated at about 963 being killed, 1,648 were wounded and 539 horses. About one fifth of the Gojjame troops, 929 men, were reported to have been killed, 1,738 were wounded and the rest were either taken prisoners or had escaped. Six cannon, about 3,700 rifles of assorted types and the whole baggage train

¹ - Ibid., pp. 82-82.
² - Ibid., p. 83.
of the enemy army fell into Shawan hands.\textsuperscript{1} The ordinary prisoners were conducted by Ras Gobana's soldiers towards the Abbay after having been disarmed and released. Those who had been wounded were left to recover in the custody of Qadida Wannabe just to the south of Embabo.\textsuperscript{2} Menilek himself marched triumphantly towards Shawa taking with him his royal captives Negus Takla Haymanot and his two sons, a number of Gojjame generals and high ranking notables. Three weeks later Menilek's army and the captives reached Entoto.\textsuperscript{3}

It had been a long and difficult campaign that ended in a costly victory. Nevertheless it substantially improved Menilek's position and prestige. Obviously he seems to have been too much pleased with himself when he wrote to the European powers on 20 July 1882:-

"A long and hard campaign of seven months … had just permitted me to subject and render tributary the kings of Limmu, Gomma, Guma and the … king of Kaffa."

In the same letter he announced his victory over Negus Takla Haymanot and made much of the contribution of the Oromo cavalry to his success asserting:-

"Victory was assured us at last by the impetuosity and bravery of our Galla cavalry which braved firearm and cannon with spears alone to divide the enemy army in half and put it completely to route."\textsuperscript{4}

In a short note addressed to the French Roman Catholic missionary in Harar Mgr. Taurin de Cahagne Menilek wrote:

"The king of Gojjam challenged me to battle

I marched against him. I took his crown, and took all his lands."\textsuperscript{5}

On hearing new of the battle of Embabo Emperor Yohannes hurriedly left Debra Tabor for Wallo in spite of the difficulties and discomfort of campaigning during the rainy season. He seems to have been determined to intervene decisively in the conflict between his two mutually hostile vassals. On his way southwards he

\textsuperscript{1} - Marcus, H. G., op. cit., p. 70, n. 1 on the same page citing Asme Giyorgis, "Ya – Galla Tarikh", II, folio 102; Caulk, R. A., op. cit., p. 83.
\textsuperscript{2} - Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 83.
\textsuperscript{3} - Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4} - ASMAI 1 / 4-27 Menilek to Umberto 1, 20.7.1882; M. & D., NAF Afrique 62 / 10222 Menilek to the President of France, 20.7.1882; Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p. 84.
\textsuperscript{5} - Ibid., n. 73 on page 84, citing M. & D., NAF Afrique 62 / 10222 Menilek to Turin de Chagne, n. p., n.d.
release Menilek's cousin and rival Dajach Mashasha Sayfu from imprisonment. When he arrived in southern Wollo he set up his camp at Warra Ilu near to the northern borders of Shawa on 18 July.¹

Having been summoned by Emperor Yohannes Menilek left Entoto in the Middle of August on his way to the emperor's camp at Warra Ilu in the company of his distinguished royal captives, his two sons and several of his generals besides a small escort. They were welcomed with honours on arrival and remained with the emperor until February 1883.² Yohannes was seriously intending to maintain his imperial sovereignty, and restore the relative balance of power that had been established in 1878. At the same time he sought to limit the king of Shawa's ambitious pretentious and activities.³ Accordingly a new peace settlement, which included a dynastic marriage arrangement, was concluded between Yohannes and Menilek.

Among the basic features of the 1882 settlement was the emperor's recognition of Menilek's recent military victory and his conquests in the rich south western Oromo regions and Kaffa, while retaining his sovereign control over him. Negus Takla Haymanot, his captured sons and generals were released. The royal title of negus of Kaffa was awarded to Menilek, reducing the Gojjame ruler's title to negus of Gojjam. The two vassals were penalised for fighting each other without the consent of the emperor. The governorship of Agawmeder, which had been withdrawn from Takla Haymanot, was given to the emperor's most reliable general Rass Alula. Menilek was stripped of the strategically significant Wollo region. Most of the southern and eastern parts of Wollo were awarded to Ras Mikael. Northern Wollo was handed over to Yohannes's twelve years old son Ras Areya Sellassie as dowry for his marriage to Menilek's six year old natural daughter Zawditu. The emperor maintained his control over the region through the appointment of the trusted Dajach Mangasha Ateqem and Dajach Walde as regents for the young couple. They were eventually married later in October 1882. Ras Areya Sellassie was recognized by Menilek as the legitimate successor of Emperor Yohannes to the imperial throne on condition that if he died without issue he himself would become the lawful imperial successor.⁴ Most of the cannon and firearms, which had been confiscated from the Gojjame army at the

¹ - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 183; Caulk, R. A., op. cit., p. 85.
² - Ibid.
³ - Ibid. Darkwah, Kofi, op. cit., p. 86.
⁴ - Caulk, R.A., op. cit., pp. 85, 86-87; Marcus, H.G. op. cit., p. 71 Menilek’s chronicler Gabra Sellasse passes over the details of the settlement concentrating on the marriage of Ras Areya Sellassie and Zawditu.
battle of Embabo, were returned to Negus Takla Haymanot. Some Ethiopian sources, however, claim that older models and defective rifles had been substituted for most of the captured weapons.¹

Thus Menilek came out of the 1882 crisis with his political and military position strengthened and his prestige and influence greatly reinforced, despite the serious loss of Wollo. In a further move intended to prescribe the ambitious activities of king Menilek the emperor persuaded him to marry Taitu Betul of the ruling Yejju Oromo family in 1883. Yohannes hoped that her presence at the royal court of Shawa might help in consolidating the position of sympathisers with the emperor and northern influence in general.²

The Macha Oromo to the south of the Abbay regarded the Shawan and Gojjame conflict as a duel between two rival intruders in which they had no reason to participate, and out of which they would inevitably suffer. Whoever emerged the winner would almost certainly become their new alien dominant rulers. Therefore, most of their local rulers remained neutral, while only a few defected to side with the Shawans at Embabo.³

The most outstanding and long lasting outcome of the events of 1882, however, had been the formal recognition which Menilek obtained for the Shawan control over the richest regions of the Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe and Kaffa, and the exclusion of Negus Takla Haymanot from further competition for expansion in the south. Henceforth the whole of the southern Oromo and Sidama countries became open to almost unhindered and imminent Shawan conquest and annexation.⁴ Though for some time after 1882 most of the highly lucrative transit commerce of the southwest continued to flow northward through Gojjam an increased volume of the trade was later steadily diverted through Shawa en route to the coastal ports.⁵

By 1884-1885 the opening of the caravan trade routes linking the ports of Assab, Obock and the whole bay of Tajura to Shawa was completed. The consequent redirection of most of the rich trade of the southwest through Shawa to the coast brought about highly significant advantages for Menilek's expansionist drive. His economic resources became substantially enhanced and diversified. Increased

¹ - Caulk, R.A., op. cit., p.85; Terrefe Woldtsadik, op.cit., p.79 and note 48 on the same page.
² Marcus, H.G., op.cit., p. 71
⁵ - Ibid.
revenues were derived from the spoils of the southern campaigns of conquest, tribute paid by vassal local rulers or collected by Shawan governors form conquered peoples, royal monopolies excersised on the commercial exchange in gold and ivory and taxation levied on the trade in slaves, civet musk, coffee, gum and other products. Consequently the ability of Menilek to equipp his ever enlarged armies with the purchase of the best types of imported rifles and cartridges became appreciably expanded.¹ It followed that the pace of southern conquest was made progressively rapid and more successful as a result during the forthcoming years.

CHAPTER V
THE MIDDLE PHASE OF SHAWAN
CONQUESTS 1883 – 1888

By the end of 1882 the political power and personal prestige of Menilek were considerably strengthened, despite his forced acceptance of the intervention of the emperor in the internal affairs of Shawa and the equally compelled surrender of direct control over Wallo. He was obliged to submit to the wishes of Yohannes by divorcing his former consort Baffana and marrying the Yejhn Oromo princess Taitu Betul. The marriage, conceived by the emperor as a step further towards increasing the influence of the elements that sympathised with imperial policies at the Shawan royal court, was held in April 1883.\(^1\) On Menilek’s part the political gains made as a result of the new settlement of 1882 were worth the sacrifices rendered. His recent military victory at the battle of Embabo and the conquest of the rich Oromo Kingdoms of the Gibe and the submission of Kaffa were recognised by Emperor Yohannes. In addition, his leading general Ras Gobana was appointed as his governor over the recently subdued kingdoms of Limmu-Ennarea, Gomma, Gumma and Gera.\(^2\) Jimma Abba Jifar, however, was allowed to retain its autonomy under its local ruler in view of his voluntary peaceful submission and recognition of his tributary status under Shawan overlordship.\(^3\)

The submission of the powerful Sidama kingdom of Kaffa in 1882 was only nominal and very brief. The Shawan army led by Ras Gobana and Dajjach Mashasha Workie, which penetrated into Kaffa passing through Jimma Abba Jifar, stayed for only a week in the country. It withdrew after Gobana received some “rich” gifts sent to him by the Kaffa king Galli Sherocho. There is no evidence that any more tribute was sent to Shawa or acknowledgment of any form of Shawan authority was made by the king of Kaffa until the kingdom was finally conquered in 1897. Nevertheless, Menilek continued to regard Kaffa as tributary to Shawa, styling himself in his official correspondence as “Negus of Shawa, by God’s Blessing, of Kaffa and all the Galla lands.”\(^4\) The Frenchman Paul Soleillet, who was traveling with authorisation of

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\(^1\) Marcus, op.cit., pp. 71-72; Darkwah,op.cit.,pp. 79-80; Sanderson, op.cit, pp. 649-650
\(^2\) Soleillet, P., *Voyages en Éthiopie*, pp. 115, 143
\(^3\) Darwah, op.cit.,p.100; Sanderson, op.cit., p.650
\(^4\) - Bieber, F.J. *Kaffa Ein Altkuschisches königtum in Inner-Afrika*, 1, (Munster and Wein, 1920), pp. 92-93
Menilek, was allowed to go up to Bonga in Kaffa but not beyond it during his short stay in the country between 12-24 December 1882.\(^1\) Afterwards both Leopoldo Traversi and Jules Borelli were refused entry into the kingdom in 1887 and their presents were returned to them although they were travelling as friends of the king of Shawa.\(^2\) Actually Menilek himself is reported by Borelli as having told him when he was still in Shawa; “you can go to any territory under my control except Kaffa which has refused to pay me tribute.”\(^3\)

After 1882 Menilek continued his conquest of the southern Oromo regions in order to ensure the supply of plundered war booty in cattle and slaves and in tribute exacted from subjected rulers and their people. Revenues from these sources were needed for the continued dispatch of periodic tribute to the emperor and for the upkeep of the royal court and soldiery, and above all for the purchase of firearms and munitions. Simultaneously, he continued to maintain the goodwill of the emperor through abiding with his policies and persistingly providing him with pleasingly rich tribute. Nevertheless, the progress of the conquest was slow and sometimes difficult at the beginning. The Arussi (Arsi) Oromo, in particular, maintained a vigorous and determined resistance to repeated Shawan military campaigns conducted between 1882 and 1886. In addition Menilek was faced with serious financial problems arising from the shortage of hard cash in Maria. Theresa Dollars in his possession. And largely due to the Egyptian blockade imposed on the import of arms to Shawa and the extortions of Abu Bakr at Zeila comparatively small quantities of arms and ammunition were received by Menilek up to 1885.\(^4\)

Payments for the arms were often made at high prices and in cash making it sometimes difficult for Menilek to pay for the arms already delivered to him. Also the regular dispatch of the costly imperial tribute constituted an added heavy burden on his limited resources. Moreover, very little effective efforts were made so far to exploit the substantial potentials of the recently conquered rich Oromo regions in the south and southwest. There is no record of any revenues reaching Menilek from the conquered regions apart from the substantial gifts made to him by Ras Gobana at the marriage of his daughter Zawditu to the emperor’s son Ras Areya Sellassie in

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\(^1\) Sollellet, P., *Voyages en Éthiopie*, pp. 184, 185, 187, 188, 191, 209
\(^3\) Borelli, J., *Ethiopie meridionale*, p. 260
October 1882 and by Sultan Abba Jifar II of Jimma on the occasion of his wedding to Taitu in April 1883. 1

In the meantime favourable circumstances in the mid-1880s enabled Menilek to put an end to the relative isolation of Shawa. The enforced withdrawal of the Egyptians from Harar and the ports of the Red Sea and the Somali coast, the acquisition of Assab by the Italians in June 1884 and the Obock – Tajura region by France in 1884-1885 led to the opening of alternative secure caravan trade routes linking the coastal ports with Shawa. The practicability of the Shawa – Obock route was demonstrated by Brémond and Soleillet in 1882. After having concluded a satisfactory agreement with the Afar sultan Muhammad Anfari of Aussa Pietro Antonelli travelled the Assab – Shawa route in April 1883 when he delivered to the king of Shawa the 2,000 Remington rifles and munitions already contracted for in March 1881. Both the Italians and the French were willingly inclined to provide Menilek with the modern weapons he needed and was prepared to pay for. Henceforth, Italo-French commercial competition at the Shawan court ensured Menilek an almost constant flow of weapon supplies at relatively lower costs.

The Italians mainly through Pietro Antonelli, both in his personal capacity and later after 1882 in his role as the official representative of the Italian government at Menilek’s court, were his major arms suppliers. A second significant source was provided by the private French arms traders, the most important of whom were Soleillet, Chefneux, Brémond, Labatut and Savoure. Though Soleillet and Labatut died in 1886 the others continued their commercial activities well into the 1890s. A third source from which Menilek obtained appreciable supplies of firearms were the customary “gifts” given to him by the many European travelers who visited Shawa during his long reign. Between 1875 and March 1888 Menilek had obtained, according to Darkwah’s well-documented brief survey, a total of 21,726 rifles, 11,692 guns of various types, 1,569,000 cartridges, 972,000 percussion caps, 6 cannon and 10 pistols. 2
On 23 January 1889 Antonelli arrived at Addis Ababa with 4,700 Remington rifles and 220,000 cartridges for Menilek, beside 268 rifles and 3,000 cartridges as personal

1 - Soleillet, P., Voyages en Éthiopie, p. 97; Marcus, op. cit., p. 72; Darkwah, op. cit., p. 134
2 - Darkwah, op. cit., pp. 199-205 and the references given there.
gifts to the king, Ras Darge, Ras Gobana, Dajach Makonnen, Azaj Walda Tsadek and two other dignitaries.¹

Consequently, it was from 1885 onwards that the Shawan armies were becoming progressively more formidable in manpower and better armament, so that the pace and range of the conquests were gradually increased. At the end of October 1888 Antonelli estimated that the king of Shawa had “at least 50,000 men equipped with European firearms of all kinds and a good stock of ammunition and accessories”.² By the time he became emperor in 1889 Menilek was favourably positioned that he could bargain and choose the most modern weapons at considerably reasonable prices.³

Among the notable Shawan conquests, apart from the subjection of the Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe, was that of the Arussi (Arsi) who were the largest single Oromo group. The military campaigns undertaken for their conquest which were begun at the beginning of 1882 were continued up to 1887. The regions they inhabited, comprising parts of the lowlands of the Right Valley and the highlands further to the east, were not very rich in themselves compared to the Oromo lands of the Gibe in the southwest. Nevertheless, the conquest of Arussi country was expected to provide the Shawans with substantial immediate war-booty in cattle and slaves. More than that it would secure for Menilek control over the important southeastern trade route that led from Gurage country through Arussi territories to the commercial centre of Harar. It would also facilitate the realisation of Menilek’s plans for the conquest of the trading and strategically significant walled – town of Harar and its surroundings to forestall its occupation by one of the European powers already established at parts of the coast. Above all the successful subjection of the Arussi would be a step forward towards the more rewarding conquest further afield.⁴

The first Shawan military campaign conducted against the Arussi Oromo, which was referred to in the previous chapter, was begun at the beginning of 1882 and lasted for three weeks. It appears to had been primarily intended to obtain the maximum possible booty which would help in increasing the king’s revenues.

¹ - Ibid., p. 202 and note 74 citing ASMI 36/5-48 Telegramma (Antonelli) to Governor of Assab, Rome, 29.9.1888; Antonelli, “Nota dei doni per S.M. Menelik 11, Re di Scioa,” same date. Also Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 256 and note 13.
Leaving his uncle Ras Darge Sahle Sellassie in charge of Shawa during his absence, Menilek left Entotto on 12 January 1882 with a large army heading for Arussi country. After crossing the Awash river, the army marched first through the territories of the already subdued Soddo Oromo before entering the country of the Maraqo Gurage along the northern shores of Lake Zwei. On the basis of oral testimonies, Ulrich Braukämper claims that the Maraqo Gurage who attempted to resist the advancing army were defeated. Many of them were killed, including their leader Lačebo Ağaço, and others were captured and taken to Shawa as slaves. Then after leaving the baggage-train at Tebbo, a little distance to the south of Dabo-Godja, the army continued marching all night. The next day the Shawan soldiers unexpectedly attacked the isolated and unsuspecting Arussi groups. The helpless Oromo were unable to offer any resistance to the invaders. Villages and grainaries were sacked and burnt. Large numbers of the Arussi were killed or enslaved and substantial numbers of cattle were captured. Afterwards the army withdrew and camped near the Awash. Those who were in charge of the captured cattle were ordered to join the baggage-train and return to Shawa. The next day the rest of the army left its camp and continued marching in the direction of Mount Chilalo while the soldiers began setting fires, sacking and plundering all along their way. Gabre Sellassie writes; “it is impossible to count the number of the cattle that was captured and those of the Galla who were killed that day.”

Soon news of the Shawan aggression became widespread and the Arussi Oromo began preparing to resist the invaders. Thus while the Shawan army was resting at Qedida, the Arussi warriors, “who were as numerous as the sands of the sea”, stage a surprising night attack on its camp killing large numbers of the Shawan soldiers before swiftly withdrawing and dispersing in all directions. After regrouping, the Shawans pursued the Arussi Oromo all the way to the summit of Mount Chilalao. Most of those they encountered on the way were killed and substantial numbers of cattle were rounded up and taken away. The total number of the captured cattle that

1. Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, I.p.171; Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op.cit.,p.89
4. Guèbrè Sellasse, Chronique, 1, p. 172
was brought back to Shawa is given by the chronicler as 65,712.\(^1\) On the other hand the enumeration by Gabre Sellassie of the names of some of the Shawan officers who were killed in action during the fighting indicates that the army had suffered heavy casualties. In the words of Lincoln de Castro the campaign was a “disgraziata spedizione.”\(^2\)

Afterwards the king decided to terminate the campaign and return back to Shawa. The justification given by the chronicler is that Menilek was worried for not having heard from Ras Gobana who had left with a large army towards the Oromo kingdoms of the Gibe and Kaffa.\(^3\) The prospect of the defeat of Gobana at the hands of the rival Gojjame would have been a serious blow to his politico-military ambitions or even his ultimate destiny. On the other hand the success of his leading general in defeating the rival Gojjame in his absence would have raised even more serious consequences. The resistance put up by the Arussi Oromo, however, can not be ruled out as an important factor in determining the decision to end the campaign. Nevertheless, while the Shawan army was on its way back to Shawa the Arussi fighters continued to attack and harass its rearguard until it left their country.\(^4\)

The campaign of 1882 was only the first of a series of other almost annual military expeditions that were conducted against the Arussi Oromo until the conquest of their country was completed in 1886. After returning to Shawa Menilek began to reconsider the tactics to be adopted against the Arussi in large measure because of their resistance to his army. According to what seems to have been a new strategy two notable northern Arussi clan chiefs, Suffa Kusso and Damu Ussu, were invited by the king to Entotto. They were made to watch a military parade and a display of firearms in an attempt to impress and intimidate them. Later an offer was made to them and to all the other Arussi clan chiefs to be allowed local autonomy in ruling their own people and to be awarded Shawan titles in exchange for agreeing to submit to Menilek, pay him tribute and acknowledge his suzerainty. On their return home their advice to accept the terms offered for making their submission was rejected by the other clan chiefs and elders at their gada general assembly. Instead, an alternative

\(^1\) Ibid.,
\(^3\) Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, 1, p. 173
\(^4\) Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, 1 p. 173; Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., p. 100
decision calling for unity and solidarity in resisting the Shawan invaders was agreed upon\(^1\).

The second military campaign undertaken against the Arussi Oromo, which was also led personally by Menilek, began in December 1883. The details concerning this excursion, about which the chronicler is silent, are based on oral information. From the very beginning of their entry into Arussiland the Shawan troops were met with a stubborn resistance from Arussi fighters led by the warrior named Gosa Dilamo. But in spite of heavy losses and several setbacks the Shawans continued their destructive devastation of Arussi highlands before they arrived at Qadida where they camped for a few days. In the meantime levies from several Arussi clans were mobilised under the leadership of several warriors, including Lenieso Diga, with the intention of encircling and eventually eliminating their Shawan adversaries. The Arussi fighters encountered the Shawan army at a short distance to the south of the Awash. During the battle which followed, and which lasted for several hours, the Arussi Oromo gained their first military victory. The Shawans were practically defeated. Menilek himself is said to have managed to escape only because of the speed of his war-horse. According to informants the pursuing Arussi fighters were obliged to turn back because one of their leaders, Jatené Bultum, was wounded by shots fired at him by the Shawan soldiers. Nevertheless the victory assumed a special important symbolic significance because the Arussi warriors succeeded in capturing the Shawan army’s royal war-drums, nagarits. Later on the Arussi celebrated this victory at Burqunte where the continuation of the resistance was solemnly affirmed.\(^2\)

A third expedition was conducted against the Arussi Oromo again under the personal command of Menilek, during March-April 1884. This time the Shawan army returned after only a few weeks in Arussi country. At one time during the excursion the Arussi fighters made an unexpected night attack on the encampment of the Shawan army at Haro Hamomota. Many of the Shawan soldiers and camp followers were killed or injured. The herd of cattle which the Shawans had previously plundered was scattered.\(^3\) The outcome of the campaign, which is based on oral testimonies, is confirmed by the account of Henry Audon who was in Shawa at the time. He writes:

\(^{1}\) - Ibid., pp. 92-93
\(^{2}\) - Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., p. 100
\(^{3}\) - Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., pp. 100-101
“Two or three of his {Menilek’s} generals lost their camp materials and half their soldiers. They had to fight their way in retreat abandoning to the Arussi the booty that was captured at the beginning of the expedition.”

Up to November 1885, even though all the previous efforts to force the Arussi Oromo into submission had failed, Menilek did not give up continuing his military offensive against them. And in spite of some sporadic and occasional success, particularly as far as booty was concerned, practically no positive results were achieved. The prolongation of the war for the conquest of the Arussi Oromo was basically due to the fact that the Shawan Amhara did not possess an obvious overpowering military advantage at the time. The Arussi, on the other hand, suffered from several disadvantages though they had the edge in their numerical superiority over the Shawans. They were fighting with simple traditional weapons of lances and swords against a Shawan army most of whose troops were well armed with repeating rifles and were comparably better organised and commanded. Also the Arussi warriors could not maintain themselves in the battlefield for more than a week at most during any single military engagement before breaking away to go their different ways. Above all they lacked the existence of a centralised authority that could ensure the effective mobilization and coordination of their war efforts. But still their determination to continue their vigorous resistance in defense of their independence was a major factor which contributed to the continuation of the fighting. Another important factor was the fact that up to the mid-1880s the Shawans could hardly depend on considerable military resources apart from those of Shawa itself. Even so those limited resources were outstretched as several Shawan military commanders and their forces were already committed in various engagements elsewhere in the south. A last fact of major significance in delaying the Shawan conquest of the Arussi Oromo was the nature of the invading Shawan army itself. In the prevailing circumstances of the time it was very difficult to keep the army engaged in the field in a hostile country for long. It was, therefore, necessary for hostilities to be stopped for a time before fighting was resumed once more in order to have enough time for the army to remobilise and become prepared for redeployment in another engagement. It was more specifically for this reason that the Shawans depended heavily on the use of the unmatched superior fire-power of their soldiers. Consequently, it was only from the

1 - Audon, H., "Voyage an Choa (Abissinie méridionale) 1884-1888, TDM (August/September, 1889), p. 150 ; Hajj Gnamo Abbas. op. cit., p. 102
second half of the 1880s onward that the situation began to be substantially altered as a result of the almost unhindered flow of stocks of firearms and munitions into Shawa. The effectiveness of the increased use of firearms was considerably increased and the Shawan wars of conquest were becoming progressively successful and at the same time more cruel and bloody.¹

In order to put an end to previous defeats and to successful Arussi resistance Menilek carefully prepared for the organisation of a big military expedition to be sent against the Arussi Oromo. He entrusted its direct command to his uncle Ras Darge Sahle Sellasse, thought he participated personally in the campaign. A royal proclamation, awaj, was issued giving firm orders for general mobilisation. Those who would be participants in the forthcoming campaign were to present themselves readily prepared at the specified date and place. Those who did not abide by the royal orders were threatened by the confiscation of all their belongings.² At last the king and his uncle left Entotto with a large army on 5 Guenbot / 12 May 1886.³ This is confirmed by the account of Dr. Leopoldo Traversi who accompanied them on the expedition.⁴ After crossing the Awash their army passed through Soddo and Marako Gurage countries into the Arussi highlands. The soldiers began ravaging and looting all over the country around Mount Chilalo before returning with their booty to the plain of Albasso. Leaving their baggage train at their camp there in charge of Dajjach Wolde Gabriel and part of the Shawan soldiers Menilek and the rest of the army left and camped for the night a long distance away. Those who remained at Albasso camp were unexpectedly attacked at night by a large Arussi cavalry force killing many of the soldiers and camp followers. The number of the victims is estimated by de Salviac at two thousand or more while the chronicler gives the figure of 700 only.⁵ A similar second attack on the same camp was aborted due to the vigilance of the Shawan officers and their soldiers. A large number of the Arussi assailants were killed by the defending riflemen⁶. The next day Menilek’s troops began plundering the plain of Albasso for the three days before setting up their camp the foot of a nearby mountain.

¹ - Darkwah, op.cit., p. 103-104; Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op.cit., p. 101
² Antonelli, P., "Zemecia", fol. 12; Marcus, op. cit., p. 66; Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., p. 102
³ Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1,p.234; Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., p. 102
⁵ - Guèbrè Sellasie, Chronique, p. 234; Traversi; op., cit., p. 274.
Defensive precautions were made and orders were given for the officers and sentries to be alert. Again the Arussi Oromo attacked the king's encampment at night, but many of the attackers were mowned down by the rifle fire of the Shawan soldiers. Later on when the Shawans camped at Sirka the warari bands began setting fires and looting the surrounding territories. Many of the isolated and defenseless Arussi groups were killed and large numbers of cattle, horses and mules were gathered and taken away.¹

At this stage the Shawan war of Arussi conquest was radically transformed into a vicious and cruel policy of mutilation and extermination. The Arussi were the only tribal group among the southern Oromo societies who put up a vigorous and determined resistance to the conquering Shawan armies inflicting considerable casualties among their ranks. As a result the Shawans reached the point where they began to respond with rampant vengeance. The policy of mutilating and killing the Arussi Oromo, even the prisoners, women and children without distinction, was resorted to as a last and desperate measure to force their submission. On one occasion Dajjach Walde Gabriel had the right wrists of about 400 Arussi captives cut off. On another instance, which became known as the Anole massacre, a number of Arussi notables and their followers who were assembled to make their peaceful submission were suddenly set upon by the Shawan soldiers who cut off the right arms of the men and the breasts of the women?² It was in this respect that Kofi Darwah writes:

“Of all the campaigns that Menilek conducted before he became Emperor in 1889 perhaps the most sustained and the most bloody were those against the Arussi Galla”³

In the face of the indiscriminate mutilations and killings, the loss of the lives of great numbers of combatants and the destructive plundering of livestock which accompanied each confrontation with the Shawan conquerors since the beginning of 1882 certain notable Arussi clan chiefs decided to renounce the fighting and render their submission. Though this did not bring an end to the war of conquest it was a sign for Menilek that the victory would not be delayed for long.⁴

¹ Guebra Sellasie, *Chronique*, I, p. 235; Antonelli “Zemeccia” fol 96.; Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op.cit., pp. 102 - 103
² -Ibid., p. 103 and n. 14 on page 107
³ Darkwah, op. cit., p. 103.
⁴ Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., pp. 103-104
After almost two months of campaigning (May-June) Menilek decided to return to Entotto. The main rainy season, kerant which falls between July and December, was approaching. During this period the conduct of military campaigns was impractical. The King’s uncle Ras Darge was left behind with the larger part of the army and considerable provisions at the well defended katama of Azule to complete the task of subjugating the Arussi Oromo.\footnote{Guèbrè Sellasie, *Chronique*, I, p. 236 see also Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., pp. 104-105.} In the meantime while Menilek and his forces were on their way to Shawa they were attacked during the night at Dida by large numbers of Arussi warriors led by Lenjeso Diga. During the resultant confusion most of the cattle, horses and mules which were previously collected as war booty were lost and the Shawan camp was set on fire.\footnote{Traversi, op. cit., p. 97; Audon, H. op. cit., p. 150} After this set back the king and his troops continued on their way to Shawa and arrived at Entotto on 24 June 1886.\footnote{Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, I, p. 236 and note 7 on the same page.}

Meanwhile Ras Darge and his army remained at their katama of Azule well protected by about 10,000 riflemen. The still undefeated Arussi Oromo began mobilising to attack them. At the same time they appealed to Ras Gobana, the Tuloma Oromo of Shawa and those of Qabiena and their Gurage neighbours for solidarity and help against the Shawans. Their appeal got no response from either Ras Gobana or the Shawan Tuloma Oromo who remained loyal to Menilek and his régime. Only the Muslim jihadists of Qabiena and the western Gurage became their indirect allies.\footnote{Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., p. 105} On his part Ras Darge succeeded, through the use of secret local spies and collaborators, in tempting the unsuspecting Arussi warriors to attack his army at its well defended katama on the night of 6 September 1886. Ras Darge had given orders for his officers and troops, who were already prepared for battle, to remain calm and immobile at their posts without firing their rifles until he gave the order to do so\footnote{Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, I.p. 236; Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op. cit., p. 105}. As it was expected the unsuspecting Arussi warriors continued to advance in large numbers intending to attack their enemy by surprise. Substantial numbers of them had already made their way inside the enclosure of the katama when the Shawan riflemen began firing at the attackers before any of them could use their weapons. Even though the order to start firing was prematurely given by Dajjach Asfaw, one of the two sons of Ras Darge, the result was predictable. Nearly all the Arussi assailants who got inside the confines of the katama were killed while most of the others who were on the
outside fled. The victorious Shawan soldiers and cavalry continued chasing the fleeing survivors for several days killing all those they encountered.\(^1\) The battle of Azule, therefore, was an unanticipated bloody massacre as far as the Arussi Oromo were concerned. The numbers of the Arussi who were killed that day is given by Gabre Sellassie as 6,500, while de Salviac estimates their numbers as probably more than 12,000.\(^2\) Whatever the exact figures might have been one thing was made very clear. The final outcome of the Shawan war for their conquest was finally decided and their subsequent fate as a conquered and subjected people under Shawan Amhara dominance was predetermined.

There is no doubt that, beside treacherous betrayal, the inability of the Arussi Oromo to adapt their traditional methods of warfare to the military strategies and techniques of their Shawan adversaries did contribute to the failure of their resistance. In the end, however, the principal factor in explaining their defeat was the fact that they were fighting an unequal battle. The large numbers of the undisciplined Arussi warriors were armed with only simple lances while their adversary was a relatively organised army whose soldiers were comparatively better commanded and well equipped with modern firearms.\(^3\) In the immediate aftermath of the battle of Azule most of the Arussi, with the exception of a few rebels, lost the driving force for further resistance. The great losses in human lives, plunderd livestock, destruction of farms, granaries and villages as well as the effects of drought hastened their submission. It was further accelerated by the need to avoid the consequences of the repressive policy of massive mutilations and killings adopted by Ras Darge to speed up the conquest and pacification of Arussi country. According to informants delegates representing the various northern Arussi clans met at their gada general assembly and unanimously decided on their submission and an end to hostilities.\(^4\)

At the same time of the 1886 Arussi campaign a Shawan army led by Ras Gobana and reinforced by Gurage and Marako auxiliaries invaded the territories of the Sosogo and Lemo Hadiya to the south of the Gurage. The Sosogo, who were then engaged in fighting with the neighbouring Kanbata, were surprised by the Shawan attack. Their combatants were forced to retreat in haste as their villages on the plain

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\(^1\) Ibid., p. 106.  
\(^3\) Hajj Gnamo Abbas, op.cit., p. 106 - 107  
\(^4\) Ibid., p.107.
were set on fire. The Shawans then established a katama from which the soldiers set out to pillage the surrounding neighbourhood and returned to wait for repulsing the attacks of the local warriors. The situation for the Sosogo became desperate as most of their livestock had fallen into the hands of the Shawan soldiers. At the end a delegation, headed by their war-leader Gedo Baširro, went to the camp of Ras Gobana and declared their official submission.\(^1\) During the course of the same campaign the Shawan army also passed through the northern peripheries of the territories of the Lemo and fought against some of their forces led by adil Ada.\(^2\)

After that campaign Ras Gobana was transferred with his army by Menilek to Western Wallaga as part of a general administrative reorganisation of the recently conquered territories. Dajach Walda Ašagra, who resided with his army near Waliso since 1879, had conducted several expeditions up to Kambata, but they were for the most part restricted to plundering and returning with booty rather than to establish an effective occupation. From 1886 onwards the military activities of the garrison of Waliso were intensified towards the south.\(^3\) Nevertheless, the effective occupation of the regions to the south of Gurage country was accomplished a few years afterwards. Shawan forces became preoccupied with combating the Muslim followers of Hasan Enjamo of Qabiena who declared a jihad against the Christian Shawan invaders in June 1886. From then onwards until 1889 the jihadists and their neighbouring Muslim Oromo and Gurage allies continued fighting against the Shawans so that the soldiers of the garrison stationed at Waliso in Soddo / Guarge province could leave their katama only with difficulty.\(^4\)^5

Details concerning Shawan expansionist activities in the Macha Oromo regions of the southwest after the battle of Embabo remain obscure in Gabre Sellassie’s official chronicle and the available accounts of European travellers. Through the use of information contained in unpublished manuscripts and local oral source to supplement the content of the official sources Alesandro Triulzi provides a reasonable appraisal of events occurring during the mid – 1880s. When Menilek travelled to meet with the emperor in Wallo during the rainy season of 1882 Ras Gobana and Dajach Mashasha Worke were ordered to leave with their army to the
Gibe region to organise the newly acquired territories. Gobana’s army camped in Limmu where he collected tribute. Later on he established a number of military posts in western Leqa and Sibu countries of western Wallagga. Also during the same period of 1882-1883 Gobana is said to have led his army to Sayyo, Leqa Qellam, Anfillo and up to Ilubbabour and Gimira where he fought and defeated the local leaders of those regions and collected tribute from them.\(^1\) The whereabouts and movements of Ras Gobana afterwards in the southwest are not known for certain except that he was in Wallagga in 1886 conducting military expeditions to the west of the Dabus river up to Fadasi on the Ethio-Sudanese border regions. The French traveller Jules Borelli, who met with Gobana in October 1886 soon after his return from Wallagga, states that Gobana had advanced with his army to Fadasi and that he met “some Mahdist bands” whom he peacefully persuaded to withdraw to the north. He adds that the general brought back with him substantial quantities of ivory and gold\(^2\). The Italian traveller Emilio Dulio, who was in the southwest in 1886, reports that Ras Gobana had subjugated the Arfillo and had gone as far as the Sobat river capturing some Remington rifles from some “Arab” groups. He claims that the general had also conquered the “regions to the left of the Didesa from which comes the gold of the Galla.” The presence of Ras Gobana, the “Makk of the Abyssinians”, in northwestern Wallagga in 1886 was reported by the local Mahdist commander in Bani Shangul to the Khalifa in Omdurman.\(^3\) Nevertheless the lack of sufficient information in the official Ethiopian sources and in the travel literature led to the confusion of the first encounter between Gobana and the Mahdists in Wallagga in 1886 with the later armed engagement between the armies of Ras Gobana and the Mahdist commander Khalil al-Khuzānī in October 1888.\(^4\)

Despite his fall from royal favour and being deprived of the prestigious title of Negus of Kafa and the governorship of the rich Macha Oromo regions he had conquered Gobana still enjoyed some usefulness in the king’s consideration.\(^5\) He was left behind in charge of Shawa between December 1887 and June 1888 when

\(^2\) Borelli, J., op. cit., pp. 150. 164 ;
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 159
\(^5\) Muhammad Hasen, op.cit., p. 199.
Menilek, on orders from the emperor, left with his army to the north. The governors of the recently subdued southwestern regions were also recalled to join with their armies in the general mobilisation against the Italians. Following Menilek’s return to Entotto on 29 June 1888 Ras Gobana was sent to fight the Muslim rebels in the Soddo / Gurage region returning afterwards to Entotto on 4 September 1888.¹ It was after this campaign that Ras Gobana was despatched with his army to combat against a new intrusion of Mahdist forces in northwestern Wallagga. He left Shawa on 17 September, crossed the Gibe and arrived at Billo in eastern Wallaga on 26 September. From there he went southwards to Leqa Naqamte where he called up the Oromo tributary Moroda Bakare to join his forces with the Shawan army. They then crossed the Birbir and Diddessa rivers. On 14 October 1888 Gobana’s army encountered the Mahdist forces and their Bani Shangul allies at Gute Dili near Nejjo where a battle was fought during which the Mahdists were defeated. Their losses are claimed to have been 5,000 ansārs killed at the battlefield and 1,325 rifles were captured. Gobana’s army then pursued the retreating Mahdist commander and his few remaining forces up to the Dabus river before returning to its camp at Nole Kabba. On arriving there Gobana received orders from Menilek to hand over the command of the army to someone else and return immediately to Shawa. A week later Ras Gobana was back at Entotto.²

Local traditions in Wallagga recall that Ras Gobana’s expedition and the victory he achieved against the Mahdists were the outcome of a call for help made by Moroda Bakare the ruler of the Leqa Naqante Oromo and Joté Tullu of the Leqa Qellam.³ Moroda Bakare at first submitted peacefully to the Gojjame general Ras Darasu in 1881 and later to his Shawan counterpart Ras Gobana in early 1882. As a result he was allowed to continue governing his domain and the small territories of the neighbouring clan chiefs whom he had brought under his authority as a tribute paying vassal of the king of Shawa. In addition he was awarded the title of Dajjazmach and given 150 guns by Gobana. In contrast Joté Tullu made his submission to the Shawans only later. The few firearms which he had before 1886 were most probably

¹ Triulzi, A., Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, p. 159.
² - Ibid., pp. 159-160
³ - Ibid., 160-161
received from the rulers of Bani Shangul and the Mahdists who became stationed there in 1882. He also obtained the services of a few gunmen from the same sources.¹

The possession of firearms enabled Moroda to send military expeditions northward to extend his authority over Gimbi and the Sibu trading centre of Nejju across the Diddessa river. Relative superiority in cavalry and firearms allowed Moroda to subject Gimbi and most of the Sibu clan heads except those of Jarso and Gambela regions. Watcho Dabalo, the chief of Jarso region, is said to have enlisted Mahdist military support in checking the advance of Moroda’s forces towards his territories and forcing it to retreat.² On the other hand local traditions and the unpublished biography of Jote Tullu are unanimous that the Oromo ruler made effective use of Mahdist military support to continue the expansion of Qellam at the expense of the neighbouring petty clan chiefs. He maintained friendly relations with the Muslim rulers of Bani Shangul and the Mahdist commander of the garrison stationed there and allowed many Muslim traders and ansārs to settle in his country. It is said that he converted nominally to Islam in order to win Mahdist good will.³

The Oromo of Wallaga in general, and Joté Tullu and his Qellam country men, in particular, soon began to feel the impact of the new wave of Mahdist militancy which followed the death of the Mahdi in June 1885 and the accession to power of the Khalīfā ʿAbdullāhi in Omdurman. The payment of a heavy tribute was demanded from Joté by Khalil al Kuzāi the Mahdist commander of the Bani Shangul garrison. Heavy taxes were imposed on his subjects and strict Islamic laws were enforced. Joté Tullu rebelled and began to resist the Mahdists before withdrawing to Leqa Nqamte to seek Moroda’s help.⁴

The situation was virtually the same in the other Oromo regions of western Wallagga. The new Mahdist policies and forceful practices provoked general resentment and alarm among most of the local Oromo rulers and their subjects alike. Things got even worse as the prevailing famine conditions of 1888 in the border regions were compounded by poor harvests. The local Mahdist authorities began making increasingly excessive demands requiring the rulers and their people to provide provisions to feed the ansārs. Failure in complying with meeting those demands was met with very severe punishments. Peoples cattle was taken away, homes were set on

¹ - Triulzi, A., Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, pp. 163
² - Ibid., pp. 163-164
³ - Ibid., pp. 162-163
⁴ - Ibid., p. 164
fire and even families were enslaved. In the circumstances Moroda Bakere made an appeal to Ras Gobana for help. In the meantime the Mahdist regional commander Khalil al-Khuzānī and the rulers of Bani Shangul are said to have written to Gobana demanding the payment of tribute and threatening him with war in case he refused.¹

After having arrived in Wallagga Ras Gobana and his army were joined by Moroda Bakare, Joté Tullu and some of the Sibu leaders together with some of their forces. Eventually a battle was fought on 14 October 1888 around a small hill called Gute Dile immediately to the east of Nejjo. The fighting is said to have been bloody. At the end the Mahdists and their allies were severely defeated. Only Khalil and Muhammed Hasan the ruler of Fadasi and a few ansārs and Bela shangul soldiers managed to escape while the rest were killed at the battlefield. Local traditions claim that only 300 ansār riflemen participated in the fighting, while Terrefe Woldetsadik gives their number as 600. The numbers of the soldiers of Ras Gobana’s own army were between 500 and 600.²

Following his victory over the Mahdists and the capture of the weapons of those who were killed in action Ras Gobana marched, with Moroda and Joté, across Jarso territories to the Dabus river. As he marched along he established Shawan overlordship over all the regions he passed through. On returning to Leqa Qellam he easily defeated the Busase rulers of the Anfillo to the southeast of Jote's territories and ended any remaining ansār resistance. Both Moroda and Joté were confirmed as the recognised autonomous rulers of their respective large domains under Shawan supreme suzerainty.³ By the end of 1888, therefore, the incorporation of the Oromo inhabited regions of western Wallagga, the rich ivory and coffee producing regions of Qellam and Anfillo as well as the gold-bearing basin of the Diddessa river into Menilek’s expanding empire was completed.

The last Shawan expansionist achievement of significance before Menilek became emperor was the conquest and annexation of the town of Harar and its Oromo and Somali inhabited neighbourhood at the beginning of 1887. The walled town was of vital commercial and strategic significance as far as Shawa was concerned. In the first place it was an important trading entrepot through which exportable ivory, civet

¹ - Terrefe Woldetsadik, op. cit., p. 80; Triulzi, A., "Trade, Islam and the Mahdia", pp67-68; idem., Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, pp. 163-164
³ Triulzi, A., Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, p. 166
musk, gold, coffee and slaves from the rich Oromo / Sidama southern regions and local ivory, coffee, tobacco, ostrich feathers, hides etc. flowed on their way to the coastal ports. At the same time Harar was favourably located to command control of the major caravan trade routes which connected the producing regions of the exportable items of commerce with the Afar and northern Somali coastal ports and with the sources of salt supplies in the Afar desert as well. Most significantly Harar controlled the routes through which most of Shawa’s imports of firearms and ammunition passed. Moreover, the town was the political centre of the regions close to the coasts and, therefore, the most vulnerable to alien aggression and indirectly of major strategic significance to the security of Shawa itself.¹ It was for these reasons that Menilek became concerned about Harar and seriously entertained the possibility of its conquest and annexation for quite a long time.² He regarded with considerable concern the extension of Turco-Egyptian political authority from Massawa in the north to Berbera and Zeila in the south and subsequently to Harar in October 1875. In a letter addressed to the European powers on 6 December 1878, three years after the occupation of Harar, Menilek complained:

“This can only be seen as a desire to change
our cross topped crown with his (the Khedive)
crescent decorated turban).”³

In fact the real reason for Menilek’s alarm was the fact that the extension of Turco-Egyptian authority threatened Shawa’s essential import of firearms and ammunitions. Another reason may have been his fear that the new authorities in Harar may attempt to reopen the old direct trade route that once led from Gurageland and the adjacent Oromo / Sidama regions to Harar. In so doing they would divert a valuable part of the profitable trade of those regions away from Shawan controlled markets. The proceeds of the taxes imposed on the transit trade goods in Shawa were essentially needed to pay for the purchase of imported firearms and munitions.⁴

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⁴ - Ibid., p. 2
When the Turco-Egyptian evacuation of Harar became imminent Menilek began to assert his claims to Harar and express his intention for its eventual occupation. He wrote to King Umberto I of Italy on 25 May 1885: “... my nearness to the Turks is very harmful to my country and every day they cause more difficulties to me. Even before the Turks took Harar from me I sent my complaints to several European governments. "Now I address them to you … Having taken Harar, they contrive to seize my territory of the Ittu Galla and the desert. If, as a result of this, I go to war with them, your Majesty will be my witness before the governments of Europe in order that they will not consider me their enemy. They know that I absolutely cannot allow my territory to be taken without defending myself.”

Actually the Turco-Egyptians were on the eve of abandoning Harar rather than threatening to attack any territories claimed by Menilek at the beginning of 1884. Meanwhile preparations for the eventual Shawan occupation of the town were begun. Spies were sent to Harar to report back on the internal situation. Information was also sought from the Roman Catholic missionary Taurinde Cahagne who was stationed there after his expulsion from Shawa in 1879. The military expeditions conducted against the Ittu Oromo, who occupied the Chercher highlands between the Awash river and Harar, were continued. Two campaigns led by Dajach Walde Gabriel in 1883 and 1884 were unsuccessful in subduing them. He fought them for the third time in February-March 1885 with no success. And though the evacuation of Harar, which was started in October 1884, was completed in May 1885 no further Shawan campaigns were conducted against the Ittu until October 1886.

In the meantime internal developments restricted the king’s freedom of action and temporally delayed any offensive action on his part concerning Harar. The unexpected Italian occupation of Massawa on 5 January 1885 strained their relations with Emperor Yohannes. In the circumstances it became difficult for Menilek to continue with his plans for the conquest of Harar with open Italian backing without offending his mighty imperial suzerain whom he feared or risk damaging his friendly relations with the only European power on which he depended for the essential

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2 - Caulk, “The Occupation……”, pp. 1,3,4.
3 - Ibid., p. 5
4 - Ibid.
supplies of firearms and ammunitions. However, soon after Yohannes became reconciled with the Italians the king of Shawa resumed his efforts to gain Italian diplomatic support for his intended occupation of Harar. On 11 April 1885 he proposed to Pietro Antonelli, the official Italian representative in Shawa, that Italy occupies Berbera and Zeila while he takes Harar. Later, when there was no response from Antonelli Menilek wrote again to the king of Italy on 4 June 1885:

“I wish you to know that by the time you receive this letter Harar as well as its neighbourhood will definitely be under my authority. The region was part of Shoa since the time of my great grand father. I have no idea what European kings will say about this. So, I beg your majesty to defend me against anyone rising as a result of this issue since I have only retaken my own region.”

Once again Menilek was obliged to postpone taking an offensive action concerning Harar. His uneasy relations with Emperor Yohannes were further complicated by accusations of having encouraged the Italian advance from Massawa to Sahati in June 1885 and of stirring up the Muslim Wallo Oromo rebellion led by Sheikh Talha bin G’afar. Therefore, he had no alternative but to comply with the orders of Emperor Yohannes and moved, together with his army, to Wallo where he participated with the emperor’s army in suppressing the rebellion and in the pacification of the region afterwards. The military assistance he offered and the substantially rich tribute, estimated at about 2 million lire/ 200,000 thalers, he delivered in January 1886 convinced the emperor of his loyalty. The governorship of parts of Wallo which were previously withdrawn were restored to him. He was also reconciled with his cousin Dajjach Mashasha Sayfu.

After having spent two months in Wallo Menilek and his army were back at Entotto on 15 March 1886 in time for the Ethiopian Easter celebrations. Then the king campaigned with his uncle Ras Darge in Arussi country from the middle of May until

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1 - Marcus, op. cit., pp. 82-83; Caulk, ”The Occupation …,” p. 5
2 - Ibid.
3 - Ibid., p. 6 and note 32 on the same page.
4 - Ibid., Marcus, op. cit., p. 84
5 - Caulk, ”The Occupation …,” p.p. 6-7 ; Marcus, op. cit., 84
the middle of June before returning to Entotto towards the end of July 1886. More preparations were made for the intended take over of Harar. The construction of a bridge over the Awash river to facilitate the passage of troops and pack animals all the year round was started. Dajach Walde Gabriel was appointed governor of Chercher. He left with his army in October charged with continuing the campaign against the still unsubdued Ittu Oromo and establish a forward military post on the way to Harar and if possible to advance all the way to the town itself.

Though the Turco-Egyptian evacuation of Harar was completed on 31 May 1885 and the government of the town and its surrounding territories was handed over to Emir Abduallāhi Ibn Muhammad Abd al-Shakur Menilek did not launch a direct attack on Harar until November 1886. The time needed to gain Italian diplomatic support and freedom from internal engagements may have been responsible for the delay. By mid – 1886 he was at last free from engagements in Wallo. And with the conquest of the northern Arussi Oromo completed the take over of Harar could not be delayed any longer. It was at this time that he decided to press forward with his plan for the conquest of Harar before any one of the European powers already established at parts of the Afar and northern Somali coasts could forestall him.

Both the Italians and the French were interested in replacing the Turco-Egyptians at Harar and at the coast. Menilek might have been unaware of the aborted Italian diplomatic approaches made during January-November 1884 and March-April 1885 to obtain British approval for Italian occupation of Zeila and Harar. Also he might have been ignorant of the missions of some French officials to Harar and the Somali coast in 1885. He was concerned, however, about the activities of the French traders at the Bay of Tajura and their disputes with the local Afar chiefs over the Lake Assal region which threatened Shawa sources of salt supplies. Equally worrying to Menilek were the news which he received in June 1886 of a recently concluded agreement between Britain and France for the prohibition of the import of arms through their coastal possessions. And in Harar the emir had refused to allow the

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1 Caulk, “The Occupation ...,” p. 7
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Zaghi, C., "Zeila e la mancata occupazione dell' Harar," SPL, 1, (March 1941), pp. 11-18 with an appendix of documents; Giglio, C., op. cit., pp. 352-359, 439-442 see also Darkwah, op. cit., p. 106.
5 Ibid.
6 Caulk, "The Occupation ...,” p.8
7 Ibid.
transportation of previously purchased firearms and munitions to Shawa.\(^1\) Also in June 1886 Menilek learned about the massacre at the hands of the soldiers of the emir of Count Pietro Porro and eight members of an Italian commercial and scientific expedition at Artu near Jildessa on 9 April 1886.\(^2\) This finally aroused the king’s fears that the Italians may respond by occupying Harar.

Although several Shawan military commanders and their forces were already engaged in campaigning in the south Menilek resolved on proceeding with his planned conquest of Harar. He was aware that the emir had at his disposal only a small force which was left to him after the Turco-Egyptian evacuation was completed. It consisted of a few hundred soldiers with about 300-400 rifles and some cannon and ammunitions. It was clearly incapable of defending Harar in the face of a Shawan attack let alone protect the outpost of Jildessa and the caravan trade routes beside serving as the personal guard of the emir as well.\(^3\) Menilek also knew that the internal situation in Harar was getting worse for the townsmen and the few Europeans who stayed behind after most of the others were ordered to leave. Emir Abdullâhi was becoming increasingly unpopular. Commerce declined and several markets were closed. Egyptian currencies and Maria Theresa thalers were replaced by almost worthless newly issued dinars.\(^4\)

At the end of the 1886 rainy season immediate preparations were started for the organisation of a military expedition. Without counting the army of Ras Gobana which was stationed in Shawa and of the other military generals engaged in the south at the time the king could still have at his disposal no less than 10,000 soldiers.\(^5\) On 12 November 1886 Menilek and his assembled army left Entotto without disclosing the intended destination of the expedition.\(^6\) Only a few very close to the king,

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1. Marcus, op. cit., pp. 90-91


4. Ibid., p.90 and note 4 on the same page citing Paulitschke, P., "Relazione subling sulle condizione dell' Harar nel Gennaio 1886," BSGI, XXIII (1886), pp. 397-399.

5. ASMAI 36/2 – 12 Antonelli to MAE, ? 5. 1886.

including Drs. Vincenzo Ragazzi and Raffaele Alfieri who accompanied him, knew
that he was actually heading for Harar. Most of the soldiers who had gathered at
Entotto and others who joined the army on its way towards the Awash believed that
they were going to reinforce the army of the King’s uncle Ras Darge who was
campaigning against the Arussi Oromo.¹

On 28 November Menilek’s army crossed the Awash into Arussi country and
continued marching along the highland regions for ten days. Then it descended into
the plain and valleys of the Magna river below.² Most of the local Oromo inhabitants
fled on the advance of the Shawans and took refuge into the almost impenetrable
forests nearby. Although the chiefs of the region had already submitted and paid
tribute to Ras Darge the indisciplined soldiers began pillaging the surroundings and
setting fire to the villages. Those who tried to protect their property were killed. At
the end of the day the looting and killings were stopped on orders of the king.³
Meanwhile Ras Darge and his army had been stationed during the rainy season at a
newly established and well defended katama at Dida. They had successfully repulsed
repeated Arussi attacks and often undertook counter attacks against the Oromo in the
neighbourhood. Darge’s forces appear to have gained the upper hand over the Arussi
who abandoned the surrounding neighbourhood and withdrew to the south. The
consequent shortage of food supplies as well as the fighting against the Arussi Oromo
resulted in heavy loss of lives among the troops of Ras Darge.⁴

Soon Menilek’s army of 30,000 - 35,000 soldiers and more than 10,000 pack
animals was joined with Ras Darge’s equally large army. The combined armies then
marched through eastern Arussi country towards the Awash river. As the inhabitants
of the region were not yet subdued the Shawa soldiers continued raiding and looting
the countryside as they passed on their way.⁵ Early in December when the army was
approaching the valley of the Awash the king changed the direction of the march.

¹ Ragazzi, V., “Relazione sul suo viaggio dallo Scioa ad Harar,” Ibid. XXV (January,
1888), p. 66.
² Ragazzi, "Viaggio dallo Scioa ad Harar ....,” p. 69.
⁴- Ibid., p. 70.
⁵ Ragazzi, V., ”Relazione sul suo viaggio dallo Scioa ad Harar,” BSGI, XXV (January, 1888), p. 66; Caulk, ”The Occupation ...” pp. . 8-9.
Instead of continuing to march northward towards Shawa the army turned and started to march hurriedly northeastwards in the direction of the Ittu territories of the Chercher highlands.\(^1\) The troops were already exhausted and the transport animals were worn out from the long and difficult march. Many of the soldiers had died of disease and in fighting the Arussi Oromo. Therefore, most of the army’s baggage was abandoned on reaching the border of the Ittu country.\(^2\) On 15 December the army crossed the Egersa river and the deserted border region, the mogga, that separated the territories of the Arussi and Ittu Oromo.\(^3\)

On 18 December Menilek’s army reached the camp of Dajach Walde Gabriel at Galamso only to find out that the general’s advance guard had dispersed and his soldiers as well as the regiment given to him had deserted and withdrew towards the Awash and Shawa.\(^4\) Walde Gabriel had made some progress in fighting the Ittu Oromo and advanced up to the Burca river and set up his camp at Galamso. His troops, already exhausted and reduced in numbers by disease and desertions, were reluctant to fight against an enemy army most of its soldiers were armed with modern firearms as themselves. They also found out that the walled town of Harar was well defended by cannon and riflemen. Large numbers of his soldiers, therefore, refused to continue participating in the campaign, rebelled and withdrew in the direction of the Awash and Shawa.\(^5\) Still determined to proceed to Harar Walde Gabriel pushed on with the remaining soldiers of his army. In late November he arrived at Hirna on the borders of the Ittu and Oborra territories where he camped. Meanwhile Emir Abdullāḥi had advanced with his army to encounter the invading Shawan army and camped nearby in Oborra country. The two armies kept a watchful eye on each other for some time. Then during one night the Harari forces shot several fireworks to frighten the Shawans. Shocked and unnerved by the unfamiliar sight and fearful of being surrounded the general’s army broke up. The general and his soldiers withdrew during the night towards the Awash.\(^6\)

\(^1\) ibid., 75; Caulk, "The Occupation …", p. 9.
\(^2\) Ragazzi, op. cit., 76
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) GuèbrèSellassie, Chronique, 1, pp. 239-241; Caulk, "The occupation …", pp. 9-10
\(^5\) Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 239; Caulk, "The Occupation …", p. 10
By 26 December Menilek's army had advanced from Galamso and camped at Hirna along the Burca river. Further progress was delayed by thick bushes and woods before the army crossed the Burca into Oborra country.1 The king and his army resumed marching at dawn on the first day of January 1887 after information was received that Emir 'Abdullāhi had come with a large army and camped at Warabile to the northeast of Hirna.2 In fact the emir had left Harar on 26 December and stopped on his way at Chillanco where he constructed a small fort consisting of three wooden huts protected by a surrounding ditch and fences. On 2 January the Shawaan army resumed its march very early in the morning in full war gear well prepared for being attacked by the emir's forces at any moment. When it arrived at Chillanco it was discovered that the Harari army had left the place and moved its camp to the higher location of Warabile.3 Menilek's army then halted and camped at Chillanco as the Ethiopian Christmas celebrations were approaching. Raiding bands were then sent out of the camp on a zerafa to pillage the Oromo neighbourhood for food supplies for the forthcoming feast. Many of the soldiers who went out of the camp are said to have been killed or wounded by the local Oromo and their captured rifles were taken to the emir.4

On 3 January Menilek sent a message to Emir 'Abdullāhi demanding his submission and payment of tribute.5 According to the Chronicler Gabre Sellassie, however, Menilek offered to allow the emir to continue governing Harar as a tribute paying vassal if he chose to submit peacefully, He claims that the king wrote to 'Abdullāhi:

“I have come to bring your country under subjection, but not to ruin it. If you submit, if you become my vassal, I shall not refuse you the government of the country. Reflect upon this so that you will not be sorry about it later.”6

1 Ragazzi, op.cit., pp. 76 – 77.
2 - Ibid., p. 77.
3 - Ibid.
4 - Guébrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, 243 ; Ragazzi, Op. cit., pp. 77, 78 see also Caulk, "The Occupation …," p. 11.
No reply was received from the emir. Ragazzi mentions that it was not expected that he would accept, adding that in any way Menilek was determined to march on to Harar.¹ According to a Harari chronicle, however, it was immediately after the defeat of Dajach Walde Gabriel's army that Menilek wrote to Emir 'Abdullāhi demanding his submission and the payment of tribute. It is claimed that it was after 'Abdullāhi had refused Menilek’s demands and Menilek threatened that the emir applied to the Harari 'ulama and notables for their advise. They are said to have agreed with him saying:

"We will not pay tribute to the infidel. We will fight and if they win let them take Harar and we will pay tribute to them."²

"It was only logical that the devout Muslim emir and his fellow Harari 'ulama and notables should have responded in the way they actually did. However, it seems very difficult to imagine as has been argued at length that Menilek, being the far-sighted statesman he was, would have been willing to allow local autonomy to a Muslim ruler over such a commercially and strategically significant region as that of the town of Harar and its dependent territories.³ The centuries long Harari traditions of independence, the legacy by the religious conflicts with the Christian Ethiopians and the general animosity of the Harari towards foreigners especially the Christians ruled out such a possibility. In the circumstance the armed encounter between the two sides was unavoidable. The Harari Chronicle maintains that Menilek and 'Abdullāhi became involved in an exchange of arrogant challenges just before the battle commenced. Menilek boasted about the numerical superiority of his forces while 'Abdullāhi reminded him of the forcefulness of is own men.⁴

At last Emir 'Abdullāhi decided to attack the Shawan army when he thought the conditions were favourable. He chose the afternoon of the Ethiopian Christmas day, 6 January, to launch a surprise assault on the Shawan army at its Chillanco camp. He believed that the Shawan officers and soldiers would be caught off their guard after having had much to eat and drink during the festivities. The Harari attack began during the first hours of the afternoon when their forces suddenly started descending down the surrounding hill sides towards the Shawan camp in the valley below.

¹ - Ragazzi, Op. cit., pp. 77-78 see also Caulk, "The Occupation ...." p. 12
³ - Ibid., pp. 12-14.
Unknown to them Menilek appears to have alerted his army in advance to an expected attack on that day.\(^1\) In fact he had been watching the hilltops through a field telescope. Therefore, he was able to regroup his army in time for battle against the advancing Harari army.\(^2\) The Hararis were lured into the open valley where the greater numbers of the Shawan army gave them an obvious advantage. The emir's three cannon, which were placed on an nearby hill side facing the Shawan camp, fired at least once before the gunners and others in charge of them were overrun by the Shawan cavalry without causing much damage to the Shawan army. In Ragazzi's opinion the cannon were either poorly handled or that the Shawan cavalry counter attack was too swift that the gunners were overwhelmed and slain before they could fire once more and the cannon fell into Shawan hands.\(^3\)

Menilek's army which fought at the battlefield was composed of about 20,000 – 25,000 soldiers, at least 8,000 of them were armed with good rifles. On the other hand 'Emir 'Abdullāhi commanded a force of about 3,000 – 4,000 soldiers of whom only 1,000 had firearms, but no more than half of the guns were in good working order.\(^4\) At the beginning of the battle the two armies advanced rapidly as the soldiers on each side kept on firing at each other. After the first round of rifle fire the Harari forces suddenly slowed down, turned around and then fled abandoning their artillery and rifles at the battlefield. The Shawan cavalry pursued the fleeing soldiers for a long way.\(^5\) The defeated Harari army had simply been "out gunned, outnumbered and outmaneuvered."\(^6\)

According to Harari sources the battle of Chillanco was long and hard fought.\(^7\) Ragazzi claims that it was very brief lasting for only a quarter of an hour.\(^8\) He estimates that the Harari lost a thousand dead, most of whom were Oromo and Issa Somali besides very few "Arabs and a couple of Egyptians. In contrast only a little more than a hundred Shawans were killed and about 600-700 were wounded.\(^9\) Emir 'Abdullāhi escaped first to Harar. Leaving Ras Darge behind in charge of the camp

\(^1\) *Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, 1, p. 243.
\(^9\) *Ibid. See also Caulk, "The Occupation ...," pp. 15, 16.
Menilek hurried by forced marches towards Harar arriving near the undefended town on 8 January.¹ He sent messengers to Abdullāhi demanding his submission and threatening to plunder the town if he did not. Abdullāhi agreed to submit, but he fled during the night with his wives and children to seek refuge with his Somali relatives and supporters at Jijjiga to the east of Harar.² Before he left Abdullāhi sent a message to Menilek appealing to him not to ransack the town. The next day, 9 January, a deputation of leading Harari notables, including the emir's uncle Ali 'Abubakr, the qādī Abdullāhi, the Harari merchant Hajj Yusuf Barhadli and the Italian trader Sacconi came out to meet with Menilek. After making their official submission they pleaded with him for his benevolence and requested him to respect the sharia laws of the local Muslim community. They were well received and their pleas and requests were accepted.³ In this way Harar capitulated without any further fighting and bloodshed and the town was saved from being sacked. The same day Menilek sent his treasurer Bajerond Atnafe with an armed escort to take possession of the town and the emir's palace, the diwan, and to prepare the population for his arrival. Other officials and guards were stationed at the gates of the town where the Shawan flags were hoisted on their tops as well as at the entrance to the diwan and at the main square, faras maqala.⁴

On 11 January the victorious Menilek made his entry into the nearly deserter town accompanied by several of his military commanders. They made their way into the diwan formally asserting the town's occupation.⁵ Although the greater part of the army was left at its camp outside the town's walls guards were posted inside the town to prevent looting.⁶ On Thursday 27 January Menilek appointed his cousin and trusted bālamwal Balamaras Makonnen Walda Mika'el military governor of Harar. He was promoted to the rank of dajazmach and given a small garrison.⁷ The uncle of Emir Abdullāhi Ali 'Abubakr was appointed civil administrator apparently responsible for the local Muslim population. Other Harari were assigned to lesser administrative posts.⁸ An indemnity of 10,000 thalers was imposed on each of the five gates of the

² - GuebrēSellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 245.
³ - Ibid.
⁴ - Ibid.
⁵ - Ibid.
⁶ - Ibid., p. 246.
⁸ - Caulk, "The Occupation ....," p. 17 and note 110.
town and Ali Abubakr was charged with assisting in its collection. The king then spent two days raiding the Oromo in the surrounding neighbourhood and looting their cattle to feed this army. The accumulated booty captured during the whole campaign was distributed among the officers and soldiers. Most of the weapons, munitions and the two mountain guns found at the emir's arsenal together with the arms and ammunitions confiscated from the European owned shop were taken by Menilek. The rest of the weapons were left to Dajach Makonnen. The already existing system of taxation was preserved. Ali Abubakr, the qadi Abdullahi and Hajj Yusuf Barhadli were entrusted with ensuring that the taxes previously paid to the Turco-Egyptians should also be paid to Menilek's appointed governors. They were also sworn on the Qor'an to report any threat to his government they might know of. They were also empowered to mediate between him and his appointed governor on behalf of any member of the Harari population who might have suffered any injustice. Furthermore it is said that before he left Harar Menilek issued the following decree:

"Let the Muslim live as his father before him;
And the Galla too as his father did."

Finally after having finished with the organisation of the affairs of Harar Menilek left with his army for Shawa on 7 February. He made his triumphant entry into Entotto on 6 March 1887. He was ceremoniously preceded by musicians playing the musical instruments captured at Harar. Following him was his army carrying the booty taken during the campaign including two Krupp cannon, each carried by twenty men. Ras Gobana, who had remained with his army at Entotto during Menilek's absence, gave his victorious sovereign a happy reception.

For most of the period between 1885 and 1888 Emperor Yohannes had been preoccupied with foreign Mahdist and Italian threats in the north. In contrast further to the south Menilek enjoyed a comparatively larger measure of freedom of action. Therefore, he was able to extend the Shawan territorial conquests in the directions of the southeast and southwest. In the southeast the northern Arussi Oromo were subdued in 1885-1886. The subjection of the Ittu Oromo followed in 1886. The town of Harar and its surrounding regions were conquered at the beginning of 1887. In the

3 - Ibid., pp. 18-19.
southwest Ras Gobana was successful in eliminating Mahdist threat in northwestern Wallaga and completed the conquest of the Oromo of the region by the end of 1888.

The Shawan conquests and incorporation of Harar and its Oromo and Somali neighbourhood were particularly significant. The hold over Harar provided Menilek with secure control of the junction of the principal caravan trade routed that connected Shawa with the coastal ports of Zeila, Berbera, Obock and Jibuti. Harar once again became a significant trading centre, especially of the arms trade. Menilek had notified the European powers of his occupation of Harar on 20 January 1887.\(^1\) But he still had no control over a coastal port. In this context he wrote to the king of Italy in May 1887:

"My occupation of Harar is good new for the commercial relations between Italy and Shawa, but more important than this… is (the question) of Zeile. If your Majesty sees to its cession to me the route will be opened to trade not only from Shawa but also from the countries of Arussi, Kambata, Jimma and Kaffa …"\(^2\)

The conquest of Harar and the surrounding regions adjacent to the European controlled coastal areas also provided Menilek with a forward base for further expansion eastwards into the Ogaden and other Somali inhabited territories.

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CHAPTER VI
THE LAST PHASE OF SHAWAN AMHARA CONQUESTS 1889-1900

There were no substantial conquests being made in the immediate years that followed the occupation of Harar at the beginning of 1887 and the final submission of the Oromo of Wallaga by the end of 1888. This was largely attributed to Menilek’s preoccupation with a number of significant episodes and developments that took place in 1888 and soon afterwards. One of these was the deterioration of the relations between Emperor Yohannes and the Italians leading to the Dogali incident in January and later the imperial army’s attack on Sahati at the end of March 1887. The events placed Menilek, whom the emperor and most Tigrean notables regarded as an ally of the Italians, in a difficult position. The choice of remaining neutral, taking sides with the emperor whose military strength the Shawans “feared and respected” or with the Italians who were his principal weapon suppliers was a real dilemma. At nearly the same time a Mahdist army under the command of Hamdān Abu ‘Anja inflicted a severe defeat on the Gojjame army of Negus Tekla Haymanot at Sarwaha in Dembiya in January 1888, then plundered Bagemder and sacked Gonder before returning to Metemma (Gallabat with thousands of war-captives. Then there were the strained and relations between the emperor and his Gojjame and Shawan vassals and the projected imperial military campaign to punish them for allying themselves against him.

Even after his defacto accession as emperor in 1889, Menilek soon got engrossed with the crucial internal issues of obtaining unanimous recognition of his status as the imperial monarch and the acceptance of Shawan hegemony over the whole country. He was also concerned with the tragic effects of the 1889-1892 famine and epidemics. In addition, he had to exert his efforts and skills to safeguard the maintenance of Ethiopia’s independence by thwarting the threat posed by Italian colonial ambitions. Nevertheless as emperor he simultaneously continued the twin, closely interconnected, policies of “building up the military capabilities of his armies by providing them with expensive imported armaments” and proceeding with the conquests in the direction of the south. In fact, it was only after 1893 that the thrust of
the expansionist conquests was resumed with vigour; only to be interrupted briefly during the military preparations, mobilization and the fighting against the Italians at Adwa in 1896.

In the meantime, Italian supplies of firearms and ammunitions to Menilek were continued, except temporarily during March-October 1888. Vincenzo Ragazzi arrived in Shawa in late November 1888 with 1,000 Remington rifles for king Menilek.¹ No doubt they were a part of the arms that were promised to be delivered to him when he signed the secret treaty of amity and alliance with Antonelli in August 1887.² Antonelli himself reached Addis Ababa on January 1888 with “4,785 Remingtons, 300 Wetterley, 210,000 Remington cartridges, 426,000 Wetterley cartridges, 490 muzzle – loaders, 1,000,000 percussion caps, 1 machine-gun, 12 cases of power, and 100,000 talers.”³ Another 5,000 muzzle-loaders were still at Assab awaiting transportation to Shawa.⁴

The flow of arms was substantially increased between 1889 and 1896. Following the signing of the supplementary convention to the Treaty of Wichale on 1 October 1889 the Italian government granted Menilek a loan of 4 million lire;⁵ of which 2 millions were used by Makonnen to pay for the purchase of arms and munitions when he was in Italy. A consignment of such arms consisting of 1,300 guns, 20,000 Remington cartridges and 10,000 Wetterley cartridges were landed at Assab in early January 1890⁶, another which included 846 guns and 46,592 cartridges followed in early March 1890.⁷

A modest enumeration of some of the armaments that were actually delivered to the emperor between 1889 and 1896 may provide an indication of the scope and rate of the arms flow. Jules Brémond’s 2,500 Remington rifles prepared for shipment at Marseille far Obock in February 1889 most certainly reached Menilek before his accession to the imperial throne.⁸ In late January 1890 a large caravan of 328 camels carrying 6,000 rifles and 740,000 cartridges left Assab for Shawa; another 4,000 rifles

⁴ - Ibid., p. 109 note 3 citing Antonelli to Crispi, Hadelo Gubo, 10.12.1888, Italian Archives, 36/5.
⁵ - Ibid., p. 118 and note 3.
⁶ - ASMAI 36/9-72 R. Commissario Civile in Assab to Salimbeni in Let-Marafya, 6.1.1890.
⁷ - ASMAI 36/9-72 R. Commissario Civile in Assab to Italian Consul in Aden, 6.3.1890.
and 864,000 cartridges were left behind at Assab for future shipment to Shawa.\(^1\)

Towards the end of March 1890 about 10,000 guns, and one million Remington and Gras cartridges were forwarded to Menilek from Assab.\(^2\) On 29 August, an agent of the emperor left Assab for Shawa with 317 cases of cartridges.\(^3\) Léon Chefneux arrived at Addis Ababa on 8 October 1890 with 15 “good rapid-firing” cannon.\(^4\) And in April 1892 a consignment of 28,420 Remington rifles, 575 cases of cartridges and 6,345 guns were handed over to an agent of Menilek at Assab for transportation to Shawa.\(^5\)

In the meantime Shawan caravans began to use Obock more frequently from the mid-1892 onwards.\(^6\) The French arms merchant Savoure left Harar on 21 July on the way to Obock with a caravan carrying 1,000 tusks of the “best quality” ivory, musk and 3,000 ounces of gold belonging to Menilek; the proceeds of their sale were to be used for the purchase of weapons.\(^7\) In an attempt to salvage, Italian relations with the emperor Traversi brought him in early May 1892 the million Remington cartridges that had been already purchased and paid for.\(^8\) Even so the French continued to supply Menilek with the weapons he needed. In order to bolster up the fortunes of Obock and to encourage the pro-French inclinations of Ras Makonnen, the emperor’s governor of Harar, the governor of the French Somali coast Léonce Lagarde secretly supplied him with “200,000 rifles with spare parts and ammunition” and 14,300 thalers towards the end of 1893.\(^9\) The prospects of Obock and later Jibuti becoming the principal ports for Ethiopia’s foreign commerce were confirmed by the progressive Italo-Ethiopians conflict and changes in French official policy impelled by considerations about the Upper Nile and interests in the Addis Ababa-Jibuti railway project. Consequently, the flow of French supplies of modern armaments was continued up to the battle of Adwa in 1896.\(^10\)

\(^1\) ASMAI 36/9-72 R. Commissario Vivile in Assab in Salimbenci in Let-Marafya, 29.1.1890.
\(^2\) ASMAI 36/9-72 R. Commissario Civile in Assab to Salimbenci in Let-Marafya, 29.3.1890.
\(^3\) ASMAI 36/9-72 R. Commissario Civile in Assab to Salimbenci in Let-Marafya, 1.11.1890.
\(^4\) ASMAI 36/9-72 Salimbenci to MAE, Let-Marafya, 2.11.1890.
\(^5\) ASMAI 36/14-128 Luigi Capucci to Salimbenci in Ankober, Assab, 18.5.1892.
\(^7\) ASMAI 36/14-128 Luigi Capucci to Salimbenci in Ankober, Assab, 18.5.1892; ASMAI 36/10-81 Salimbenci to MAE, Harar, 20.6.1892; Marcus, Op.Cit., p. 141.
\(^8\) ASMAI 36/10-80 Salimbenci to MAE, Harar, 12.5.1892; ASMAI 36/10-82 MAE to Salimbenci, Rome, 10.7.1892; Marcus, Op.cit., pp. 145-146.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 148.
\(^10\) Ibid., p. 158 and note 5.
In December 1895 Léonce Lagarde, the governor of the French Somali protectorate, reported that the Ethiopian emperor could effectively deploy 95,000 riflemen in the field. An Italian source estimated that there were about 80,000 riflemen and 8,000 cavalry in the ranks of the Ethiopian army at Adwa. Moreover, most of the armaments of the defeated Italian forces, including cannon and artillery, were captured by the victorious Ethiopians at the battlefield. In addition, substantial consignments of modern weapons were transported through Jibuti for delivery to Emperor Menilek between 1896 and 1902. For instance, the greater part of the nearly 100,000 rifles with ammunitions that were reportedly being exported from France in 1899 most certainly found their way to Ethiopia. And “at least 280,000 carbines and fusils Gras” were said to have been sold to Ethiopia in 1901.

Ethiopia’s military power, in terms of modern weaponry, was impressively displayed on 1 March 1903 when 307,000 riflemen of the estimated 600,000 riflemen in the combined Ethiopian armies participated in a military parade held on the occasion of celebrating the seventh anniversary of the victory of Adwa. After the end of the parade, the standing imperial army’s 90,000 men-at-arms staged a demonstration of the skilled firing of machine guns, cannon and rifles.

The steady increase in the military capacities of the emperor’s armies in terms of weaponry, hitherto briefly outlined, was most certainly accompanied by an expansion in the size of their manpower. Some additional conquests were made during the difficult conditions prevailing in the early years of Menilek’s reign as emperor before they were resumed with active interest and vigour after 1892, when the country began to sufficiently recover from the effects of the famine. The northern and central Ethiopian provinces, and even Shawa, were the most disastrously affected by the famine. In contrast most of the recently conquered territories and others lying beyond were either comparably less severely affected or had escaped the effects altogether. In such circumstances it become necessary for the emperor, the military commanders of his armies and his provincial governors to look for sources of

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1 - Guèbré Sellassie, Chronique, 11, p. 404 and note 3 by Mauritcede Coppet citing Livre vert, XXIII bis, p, 167.
4 - Ibid., p. 218 and note 2 citing French Archives, Ethiopie, défense nationale, armée – armaments, N.S.4, 1896-1907.
provisions and sustenance for the soldiers of their armies in the southern Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions. The movement of large numbers of displaced peoples away from their home regions in search for food and water in the south added another motivating factor for conquering expansionism. An additional driving force was provided by the imposition of heavy taxes on all the provinces in order to raise the necessary funds to repay the Italian debt and to obtain provisions from unaffected neighbouring territories from abroad.

It was in early 1889, just before Menilek become emperor, that Ras Gobana succeeded in defeating the jihadist forces of Hasen Enjamo of Qabiena and their Muslim Oromo and Gurage allies at Gabdu near Waliso securing Shawaan control over the upper Gibe regions. Dajach Walda Ašagra, the governor of the Soddo / Gurage region who had been recalled to Shawa by Menilek in 1888 was soon back at his post and resumed his functions. In 1891, he organised and led a military expedition against the Sosogo who had refused to pay the tribute. He also conducted another expedition against the Lemo and the Soro Hadiya up to the territories of the Tambaro and the Kambata. Their isolated and ineffective resistance was easily overcome. At the end, however, it was Dajach Wadaju, the son of Ras Gobana, who successfully accomplished the conquest of the Sidama peoples of Hadiya and Kambata. During 1891-1892, while the famine was at its peak and the local people were physically weakened to offer any effective resistance, Wadaju conducted another expedition which reached up to the plains to the east of the Bilate river and subdued the Alaba. After resisting for a while under the leadership of their abagaz Barre Kağaw, the Alaba gave up and capitulated.

By 1893, therefore, the Badawačo Hadiya remained the only Sidama people to the north of the Wallamo (Walayta) who were still unconquered by the Shawaan Amhara. The campaigns of Walda Ašagra and Wadaju Gobana had passed along the northern peripheries of their territories indicating that the days of their independent existence were inevitably coming to an end very soon. The killings of their religious leader the angančo Kabisso and of Dilbatto the king of the neighbouring Kambata at the hands of the Shawans were forbearing for them. They retreated to the south and

1 Marcus, op.cit., p. 136.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
concluded a military alliance with their former traditional enemies the Wallamo to oppose the Shawan invaders.¹

Meanwhile in November 1890 Emperor Menilek distributed substantial numbers of his royal troops to be joined with the armies led by several of his generals and sent them into the recently conquered regions and beyond in the south. The aim was to allow the soldiers to live off the lands and forage for booty in the regions that were less severely affected by the famine and disease more than to accomplish new territorial conquests. Some of them were attached to the army of Takla Haymanot whose country was ravaged by Yohannes's army two years before.² The army which was led by Dajach Bacha Abboyé then left for Kaffa whose king had refused to pay tribute to Ras Gobana and to Bacha Abboyé himself in 1885 and 1886 respectively.³ The territories up to the borders of Kaffa were raided but Kaffa was not subdued.⁴ Other troops of the royal army were attached to the army of Menilek’s cousin and brother-in-law Dajach Walde Giorgis, which left to the southwest and succeeded in conquering the small Sidama states of Konta and Kullo (Dauro) to the east of Kaffa.⁵ Another contingent of the royal army was joined with the army commanded by Dajjach Tessemma Nado, which was sent towards the regions beyond the Gaba river which seperated Wallagga from Illubabour. Tessemma raided the territories up to near the borders of Kaffa before withdrawing to the north.⁶ Still other royal troops were joined with the army of Dajach Makonnen in Harar. Makonnen had been recalled by the emperor to Addis Ababa to assist in negotiations with the Italians and his army was commanded during his absence by his lieutenant at Harar Fitawrari Bangousse and the commander of the royal contingent Qaqnazmach Bacha Bacha took command of the army sent against the Somali of the Ogaden to the south and southeast of Harar. In the autumn of 1891 the forces had pushed up to Ime on the bank of the Webi Shebelli river, Considerable stretches of Somali regions were overrun. Tribute was collected, hundreds of people were killed and wounded and large numbers of cattle,
sheep and goats were looted and taken away. ¹ This occurred nearly at the same time when Dajach Lu l Saggad conquered the Sidamo who inhabited the regions between the Arussi highlands of Bale and the territories of the Borena Oromo in the far southeast. A sizeable number of royal troops were similarly joined with the army of Menilek’s uncle Ras Darge.²

Darge, who had recently completed the conquest of the northern Arussi Oromo, was planning a joint military campaign with Dajach Walde Gabriel the governor of the Chercher region to subdue the southern Arussi Oromo living on the Bale highlands to the south of the Webi Shebelle. Some of the southern Arussi had participated with their northern kinsmen in resisting the Shawan invaders and substantial numbers of the survivors from the 1886 Azulé massacre had sought refuge with their fellow tribesmen in the south. Furthermore, the rich, fertile and well-watered Bale highlands drew the covetous attention of the Shawan generals to conquer and occupy.³ The Oromo populations of the region, similar to their northern counterparts, were at a considerable disadvantage in fighting against the Shawan armies most of whose soldiers were armed with modern firearms. In addition, large numbers of them were terrified by the cruel policies and actions which were adopted by Ras Darge in suppressing the resistance in the north. As a result, their isolated and largely ineffective resistance was easily overcome. The conditions of famine and disease at the time also contributed towards considerably enfeebling the local population and crippling their capacity to resist.⁴ Their effects also obliged Ras Darge and Dajach Walde Gabriel to interrupt their campaigning. Their soldiers could not find enough to eat or even to forage for. They, therefore, withdrew with most of their troops to the north leaving the rest behind.⁵

In 1893, with the end of the difficult years of the famine, the campaigning for the conquest of the southern Arussi Oromo was resumed. This time the Shawan armies were led by Dajjach Walde Gabriel and the two sons of Ras Darge, Dajach Asfaw and Dajach Makonnen. Both of them had previously participated with their father in the conquest of the northern Arussi Oromo. By the beginning of 1897 the southern Arussi Oromo were finally subdued and all aspects of sporadic resistance

⁴- Ibid., pp. 109-110.
⁵- Ibid., p. 110.
had been suppressed. Shawan troops were stationed at several katamas established at selected strategic locations to serve as military garrisons and administrative centres to control the subjected conquered Arussi Oromo population.¹

Among the Shawan expeditions which were conducted in the southern Oromo / Sidama regions after the end of the famine was the one that was led personally by the emperor to Lake Zwai towards the end of 1893. Previous expeditions sent to the Lake Zwai region had resulted in the subjection of the Gurage population of the surrounding territories, but without succeeding in subduing the inhabitants of the islands within the lake. Equally no attempt was made to obtain the Christian treasures, religious books, tabots and other sacred objects believed to had been hidden in the churches in the lake during the Christian / Muslim wars of the sixteenth century. Boats were needed to get to the islands and the soldiers of those expeditions did not have them. The chronicler Gabre Sellassie claims that during the 1893 expedition the emperor intended to obtain those Christian treasures and sacred objects beside helping the Christian inhabitants of the islands who had remained in isolation without baptism and communion.²

Menilek left with his army on the way to Lake Zwai and camped for the first time at Endawdi some 20 kilometers to the south of Addis Ababa on 14 December 1893. Then the army crossed the Awash river by the bridge which was constructed by the Swiss Alfred Ilg and the Luigi Italian Capucci during the 1886 Arussi campaign. After resuming its march, the army stopped to camp three times until it reached Bahrgona near the shore of Lake Zwai. The emperor and his soldiers camped there staying for five days during which flotillas of sixty small boats were built capable of transporting about sixty people. Then they moved with the boats to the shore opposite the two islands of Debra Sina and Guélila. Many soldiers drowned while crossing the lake carrying with them some cannon and a machine gun. The weapons were fired to frighten the inhabitants of the islands and induce them to come forwards and confer with the emperor. The leader of the islands Alibo came forward and made his voluntary submission to Menilek. The emperor and his army spent a whole week in the neighbourhood of the lake raiding the territories of the adjacent Oromo who had obstructed the movements of the Zwai people on entering or leaving their islands. Alibo was reinstalled as governor of the inhabitants of the islands with status of

¹ - Ibid.
² - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 335.
balabbat. Then Menelik returned with his army to Addis Ababa taking with him some of the religious books and sacred objects that were found in the churches of the islands.¹

Before the onset of the rainy season of June – September 1894 Ras Walde Giorgis, who had been promoted to the higher rank a year before, subdued the petty Sidama tribal groups of the Gofa, Kuscha, Bocha and Malo to the west of the Omo river up to Lake Stephanie who were formerly tributaries to the kingdom of Kaffa.² By then, with the Kambata and the Arussi Oromo to the north of them already subdued, the Sidama people of the kingdom of Wallamo (Walayta), who inhabited the regions between the Omo River in the west and the Bilate River in the east, become vulnerably exposed to the advancing tide of Shawan military expansionism. A tentative attempt was made in 1890 by Ras Mangasha Atikem and Dajach Tessemma Darge to subdue the Wallamo was successfully repulsed by their young king Tona.³ Menilek’s chronicler Gabre Sellassie states the official view that the Shawan military campaign conducted in 1894 to conquer the Wallamo kingdom was a defensive counter attack to put an end to repeated aggression by the Wallamo against Shawan controlled territories.⁴ This contention has been accepted and repeated by Harold Marcus when he writes that the “Wallamo Galla (sic. Oromo) raiding into the empire was threatening to become more serious because several punitive expeditions had failed {to stop them}.”⁵ In fact, it was to make up for the 1890 failure to subdue the Wallamo that Menilek personally led the 1894 campaign against them.

Although the proclamation for the Wallamo expedition was made in August the departure of Menilek and his army from Addis Ababa was put off until 15 November 1894.⁶ The delay, according to Vanderheym who accompanied the emperor on the expedition, was attributed partly to waiting for the arrival of the armies of Ras Darge and Ras Mikael and partly to the opposition of Empress Taitu and a number of the old counsellors at the imperial court for conducting military

¹ - Ibid., pp. 336-337.
² - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 360 and note 4; Bieber, Kaffa, 1, p. 100.
⁴ - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 360.
expeditions in distant regions.¹ Participants with Menilek on the expedition were Ras Mikael of Wallo, Dajach Haile Mariam the governor of Gurage, Fitawrari Gabayehu, Leq Maqwas Abata Bawalo and Bajerond Balcha.² After marching for fifteen days the emperor and his army arrived at Korga in the deserted border region, the mogga, between the Arussi Oromo and the Wallamo.³ It was there that the elder son of Ras Darge Dajach Tessemma, then the governor of Arussi, came to meet with the emperor. He brought with him a large quantity of cattle to feed the Shawan troops.⁴ Afterwards Menilek is said to have sent messengers to king Tona of the Wallamo demanding his submission and the payment of tribute if he did not wish that his people would be killed or his country destroyed. But the young king Tona defiantly refused to accept the emperor’s demands and decided to fight the invaders.⁵ On arriving at the main entrance to Wallamo territories, the Shawan soldiers spent much time and effort to clear the road from the large number of ditches covered by tree trunks intended to hinder the passage not only of cavalry, horses and mules but also of people walking on foot.⁶

After crossing the kella with difficulty the Shawan army camped at Kontola for two days (1-3 December), during which the soldiers became involved in a number of skirmishes with the Wallamo. In the account of Gabre Sellassie the Wallamo started the offensive by attacking the Shawans with an army of about 20,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry. Despite their bravery the Wallamo suffered many casualties. Still they continued to fight until the emperor gave orders to Abata and Balcha to fire their mountain machine guns to disperse the Wallamo warriors.⁷ Then Menilek and his army marched for two days camping twice on the way until on the third day they came in sight of Dalbo the principal village of king Tona.⁸ Again, according to Gabre Sellassie, the emperor sent messengers to the king demanding his submission and the payment of tribute but once more Tona refused.⁹ On 10 December, Menilek gave the order for his army to launch a full-scale attack in order to put an end to the skirmishes and guerrilla war that were going on for the past ten days. The advance guard led the

¹ - Ibid., pp. 139-140.
² - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 362.
³ - Ibid., p. 361.
⁵ - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 362.
⁷ - Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 362 and note 3.
⁸ - Ibid., p. 363.
⁹ - Ibid.
main forward assault while the right and left wings moved on to encircle the Wallamo warriors. That day the unfortunate Wallamo were hopelessly defeated at Gasena. Their warriors who were poorly armed with lances and spears had no chance whatsoever in resisting the military might of the Shawan forces most of whom were equipped with superior modern rifles and some machine guns. The victorious Shawan troops then continued the massacre of the unfortunate survivors, while the wounded and mutilated were trampled on by the cavalry. The killings and ravaging throughout the country up to the neighbouring Boroda continued from 11 to 15 December. Everyday the soldiers returned to their camp with captured, slaves and booty.\footnote{1} Braukämper, on the basis of local oral sources, claims that the Badawaččo Hadiya allies of the Wallamo under the command of their war leader Gatisso Balango had taken part with the Wallamo in fighting against the Shawans.\footnote{2} After the defeat of the Wallamo fighters king Tona fled to neighbouring Boroda where the Shawan warari troops and the soldiers of Ras Mikael caught up with him. He was wounded by a gunshot and taken prisoner on 11 December 1894 bringing the fighting for the conquest of Wallamo to an end.\footnote{3} The numbers of the Wallamo who were killed or captured, excluding the women, are given by Gabre Sellassie as 118, 987. Menilek estimated their number at about 90,000 while the estimate of Vanderheym is given as 20,000.\footnote{4} On the other hand, the exact numbers of the looted cattle are difficult to determine because large numbers were slaughtered by the soldiers for their sustenance. The number of those that had remained after the end of the hostilities is given by both the chronicler and Vanderheym as 36,000.\footnote{5} However, substantial numbers of the captured cattle died after becoming infected by rinderpest or were abandoned on the way back to Shawa to avoid the spread of the disease.\footnote{6} Afterwards the emperor returned home making his triumphant entry into Addis Ababa with 18,000 war captives including King Tona on 18 January 1895.\footnote{7} Later on and after having made his formal submission to Menilek Tona was allowed to return home as the appointed governor of his country under imperial suzerainty.\footnote{8}

\footnote{1}{Ibid., Vanderheym, Op. cit., pp. 180-183.}
\footnote{3}{Gabré Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 363; Vanderheym, Op. cit., p. 182.}
\footnote{4}{Gabré Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 363; Vanderheym, Op. cit., p. 172.}
\footnote{5}{Gabré Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 363; Vanderheym, Op. cit., p. 184.}
\footnote{6}{Ibid.}
\footnote{7}{Gabré Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 364; Vanderheym, Op. cit., p. 191.}
\footnote{8}{Gabré Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 364 and note 2 on the same page.}
By 1895, the Shawan Amhara conquests in the south had been greatly extended as far south as Wallamo and the small Sidama states adjacent to the kingdom of Kaffa in the north. In the southeast Shawan forces based at Harar had raided Somali territories beyond Ime in the direction of Lugh for livestock and demanded tribute. On the whole the incorporated conquered southern regions rather than the northern and central provinces, which were impoverished by the famine, provided the necessary human and material resources that were needed during the war with the Italians. The uncompromising insistence of the Italians on their claims of a protectorate over Ethiopia and Menilek’s stubborn refusal to surrender Ethiopian sovereignty led to the hostilities that eventually resulted in the defeat of the Italians at the battle of Adwa on 1 March 1896.1

After the war Menilek’s efforts were directed towards consolidating his military victory by obtaining formal recognition of Ethiopia's independent and sovereign status from the European powers with colonial possessions in regions adjacent to his country, mainly Britain and France. Italian recognition of Ethiopia’s independence and sovereignty had been affirmed by the Addis Ababa peace agreement concluded on 26 October 1896.2 The British who were already established in neighbouring territories to the east and south of Ethiopia would possibly soon extend their authority over the Sudan in the west as well. The French had provided Menilek with diplomatic support during his recent conflict with the Italians and through their port of Jibuti they controlled the flow of Ethiopia’s foreign commerce and particularly the flow of the bulk of her import of armaments. Both Britain and France became involved in a race to win Menilek’s support to attain their aspirations in the Sudan and the upper Nile valleys. With regard to the Mahdist state in the Sudan, which seemed to have been still strong, Menilek sought to maintain cordial relations with Khalifa Abdullāhī in order to secure his cooperation in warding off the common threat of European colonial aggression. In these circumstances, Menilek adopted carefully planned and implemented twin policies. On the one hand he pursued a cautious diplomatic manoeuvring which safeguarded Ethiopia’s independence and the integrity of her territories without openly antagonising any of the European

2- Ibid., pp. 176-177.
powers concerned. On the other hand he ordered his generals to resume the process of southern conquest which had been temporarily interrupted by the war. The aim was to occupy and incorporate additional territories as well as to infiltrate and lay claims to peripheral regions all along the recently conquered lands.

In late 1896, Menilek ordered the newly promoted Ras Walde Giorgis Abboye to undertake the conquest of the last independent and powerful Sidama state of Kaffa and the adjacent regions to the south as far as Lake Rudolf. Also ordered to join under his command were Dajach Tesemma Nado the governor of Illubabour and Dajach Demessie Nassibu the recently appointed governor of Wallagga to replace Fitawrari Taklie who died at Adwa. Other participants who are not mentioned by the chronicler were the troops of Negus Takla Haymanot of Gojjam. Of the 31,000 strong armies sent on the *Ya-Kaffa Zemeccia* (“The Kaffa Campaign”) Ras Walde Giorgis commanded 15,000 troops of whom 7,000 were equipped with rifles, Negus Takla Haymanot’ 8,000 soldiers were all armed with firearms while 4,000 of the 8,000 troops of Dajach Tesemma had rifles.

The king of Kaffa Galli Sherocho, after sending some “rich gifts” to Ras Gobana and Mashasha Workie in 1881. had refused to submit and pay tribute to Ras Gobana in 1885 and to Dajach Bacha Abboye in 1886 and again in 1890. At the time of the 1896-1897 expedition, the regions to the north and east of the kingdom were already conquered by the Shawan Amhara. The Sidama kingdom of Janjero (Yama) to the north of Kaffa was conquered by Walde Giorgis in 1885 with the assistance of Abba Jifar II of Jimma. The small Sidama states of Kullo (Dauro) and Konta to the east of the kingdom were subdued by him in 1889 though King Gansa of Kullo and the ruler of neighbouring Konta rebelled and withheld the payment of tribute during his absence in 1895-1896. The Gofa, Malo and other neighbouring petty Sidama groups were also subdued by Walde Giorgis in 1890. With the conquest of the Wallamo (Walayta) Sidama in 1895, the kingdom of Kaffa became the only remaining independent Sidama kingdom confined by Shawan controlled territories.

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With the considerable quantities of weapons captured at Adwa and others purchased from the European arm traffickers at their disposal Menilek and his generals became determined and confident to conquer Kaffa.  

The armies sent to accomplish the conquest began their attack on the kingdom simultaneously on three fronts. In November 1896 Ras Walde Giorgis advanced with his army from the direction of the east plundering and subduing the Kullo, Konta and the territories of the adjacent Demota, Tola, Chida and Nola Sidama groups on his way until he reached Bonga the principal market of Kaffa which he destroyed and burnt. He continued on his march to Andaracha the royal residence of the Kaffa monarchs which he also destroyed and established his camp on its site. From there groups of soldiers went out every day to raid and loot the surroundings returning to the camp with captures cattle and slaves. In the meantime, Dajach Demessie Nassibu led his army accompanied by a small force provided by Abba Jifar of Jimma across the Gojeb river in the north into Kaffa. At the same time Dajach Tesemma Nado who had departed with his army from Gore in Illubabour subjected en route the Bitto, Chamo, Gimira and other small negroid groups to the southwest of Kaffa entering into the kingdom. The aim behind taking such a round about route was to block the way for the retreat of the Kaffitcho in that direction when they were being attacked from the east and the north. The forces of Demessie and Tesemma finally joined with the army of Ras Walde Giorgis at Andaracha in March 1897.

The young king Gake Shercho, also remembered by his people as Chinito the diminutive of Taten Chini (“King Chini”), had succeeded his father Galli Sherocho in 1890. He had already taken the precautions to defend his kingdom and prepare for resisting the invading Shawan armies. He destroyed grain fields and prohibited the cultivation of ensete and the sowing of grains in the border regions to deprive the invaders of provisions. Trenches and ditches four to five foot wide were dug out and palisades were constructed at the borders. Gates were chained and padlocked and guards were posted at the main points of entry into the country, the kellas.

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1 Ibid., p. 98.
3 Guèbrè Sellassie, *Chronique*, 11, p. 462
4 Ibid.
5 Bieber, *Kaffa*, 1, pp. 101-102
male population were mobilised for war. Bieber was told that the Kaffa king could summon a large army of an estimated 100,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry all armed with lances, spears, knives and shields but only 300 riflemen armed with obsolete weapons captured from the Shawan armies since the reign of Galli Sherocho.¹ The sacred royal crown of the Kaffa monarchs was secretly buried at Mount Butto because it was generally believed by the Kafficho that the strength of their country would continue as long as the sacred royal symbol remained in the land. Other royal objects and properties were also hidden elsewhere. The king’s wives were taken to safety while his favourite wife accompanied him.²

Meanwhile the main rainy season had begun rendering the movement of armies difficult between March and October as the rivers became flooded and the ground turned muddy.³ Food shortages and the spread of disease caused many deaths among the ranks of the Shawan troops.⁴ Though overwhelmed and disadvantaged in terms of armaments the Kafficho continued to fight a harsh and bloody guerrilla war which lasted for nearly nine months. The country was devastated, the main centres of Andaracha, Bonga and Chida were destroyed and large numbers of its population were killed, captured or forced to flee to neighbouring countries.⁵ A local informant told Bieber that, the victims were so numerous that every family in the land had lost a son, brother or a relative.⁶ The monarch became a fugitive accompanied only by a few of his royal servants.⁷

According to Gabre Sellassie the Kafficho finally submitted on 3 September 1897 the same day when King Gake Sherocho as well as his royal crown, chair and two war-drums were captured.⁸ However, Bieber claims that the Kaffa king was captured on 11 September 1897.⁹ He goes on to say that though his capture officially brought the campaign of conquest to an end the Kafficho still continued the fighting for some time afterwards. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to force captives or to bribe informants to reveal the whereabouts of the royal crown. One day by mere chance Ras Walde Giorgis noticed that a part of a forest was guarded with special

¹- Bieber, Kaffa, 11, pp. 292-293, 295.
²- idem., Kaffa, 1, p. 101.
³= Ibid., p. 102.
²- Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 11, p. 463; Kaffa, 1, pp. 100-101.
⁵- Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 1, p. 463; Bieber, Kaffa, 1, pp. 167, 170-172.
⁷- Ibid., p. 102.
³- Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 11, p. 463.
⁹- Bieber, Kaffa, 1, p. 98.
care by the Kafficho. He hid himself in the vicinity and discovered where the buried crown was. It was only after the crown was found by Walde Giorgis that the Kafficho finally stopped the fighting and submitted.¹

After the war was ended all the Kafficho war captives were set free. Only the slaves who were found in Kaffa at the time of the conquest were taken by the victors as war booty. After separating the ten percent of the slaves as the royal share the rest were listed in the treasury records.² Half of the captured cattle was reserved for the royal household and the other half was left for Ras Walde Giorgis and his army.³ After the conquest the Kafficho were prohibited from possessing or carrying firearms except for the local high officials who converted to Christianity and were retained in the administration of the country. The rest of the subject population were allowed to carry only spears and knifes for their own protection. The foreign merchants who were allowed to enter the country were prevented to sell firearms to the Kafficho or to any of the subjected neighbouring people.⁴ They were not allowed to enlist in the ranks of the Shawan armies for campaigning except as volunteers, fanno, in major military campaigns against a foreign enemy, yaagher tor.⁵

After the end of the fighting Ras Walde Giorgis left for Addis Ababa on 3 October 1897 with the greater part of his victorious army. He took with him his royal prisoner Gake Sherocho fettered in his silver chains together with his captured royal crown, chair, war-drums and other objects belonging to him. He left behind his wife, Woyzero Shumbayyach, the sister of Empress Taitue Betul, in charge of the recently conquered country.⁶ He arrived at the capital at the beginning of November. On the morning of Saturday 6 November 1897 the captive former monarch shackled with his silver chains, bare at the head, feet and shoulder, with a rock on his neck and dressed in trousers, a green-bordered robe and black mantle rode on mule back to make his ceremonial official submission in front of Emperor Menilek.⁷

On arriving at the first gate of the imperial palace, ghebi, the captive Gake Sherocho dismounted from his mule, bowed and remained prostrated until the royal attendant, agafari, who was sent to announce his arrival to the emperor and request

1- Ibid., p. 102.  
2- Bieber, Kaffa, 11, p. 309.  
3- Ibid., pp. 309-310.  
4- Ibid., p. 310.  
5- Ibid., p. 310.  
6- Ibid., p. 534.  
7- Ibid., p. 536.
permission for his entrance returned. The procedure was repeated two more times before the former king reached the entrance to the private imperial quarter, elfin, where Emperor Menilek was seated on his throne. Seated outside near the doors of the elfin were Ras Walde Giorgis and Dajach Tesemma Nado. Several officers, troops and court officials were assembled according to their ranks at the courtyard of the ghebi. On entering in the presence of the emperor, the captive monarch bowed and prostrated himself. He remained in that position until the emperor stood up and acknowledged his acceptance of Gake Sherocho’s submission. The former monarch then stood up, removed the stone from his neck, put on a head cloth and covered his shoulder with a part of his robe. With his chained hands stretched forward, he appeared before the crowd of officers and soldiers gathered at the courtyard.1

After the ceremony was over the emperor, Ras Walde Giorgis and the captive Gake Sherocho conferred in private about the future of the conquered country. Bieber claims that the emperor intended to appoint the defeated former monarch as a vassal ruler of his country under Shawan suzerainty in exchange for the regular payment of a prescribed annual tribute.2 But Ras Walde Giorgis objected and insisted that the former king should be bound into captivity in Shawa and that the governorship of Kaffa should be given to him as he was its conqueror. Because of the stubborn resistance of the Kafficho, the long duration of the fighting and the large numbers of the Shawan soldiers killed during the campaign as well as fears about possible future rebellion Menilek agreed.3 Gake Sherocho was bound over under the custody of Azzaj Walda Tsadek at Ankober. Ras Walde Giorgis was appointed governor of Kaffa and the territories he had conquered in the southwest. He left Addis Ababa for the south soon afterwards to establish his administration in the newly conquered Kaffa and to undertake further extensions of Shawan domains in the direction of Lake Rudolf.4

Later on the emperor became worried about the possible troublesome consequences of the continued presence of the royal crown and other royal objects belonging to the former Kafficho monarch. It was for this reason that he gave the crown to his Swiss councillor Alfred Ilg to take it with him to Europe5, while he

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1- Bieber, Kaffa, 11, pp. 536-538.
2- Ibid., pp. 538-539.
3- Ibid., p. 539.
4- Ibid.
5- Bieber, Kaffa, 1, pp. 99, 102.
gifted the royal chair to Monsieur Léonce Lagarde the Minster plenipotentiary at the French Legation at Addis Ababa.¹

Also in 1897, a military expedition was sent to subdue the pastoral Borana Oromo in the far southeast. On Sunday 31 May 1897, the imperial Fitawrari Hapte Giorgis was appointed governor of the Borana Oromo and commissioned to conquer their territories which extended from Lake Stephanie to the Ganale Doria river in the east.² He left Addis Ababa in June at the head of an army composed of 15,000 troops. The object of his expedition seems to have been to forestall the British who were believed to have been advancing northward from their East African protectorate. Hapte Giorgis marched with his army through Sidamo country reaching his destination in the far southeast on 31 July 1897. The Borana Oromo were easily subjected without offering any resistance. After having established a katama on top of Mount Megga and arranged the administration of the region to his satisfaction, he returned with the bulk of his army, passing through Konso territories to the south of Lake Margareta, to Addis Ababa at the beginning of October 1897.³

With the incorporation of the large and rich Sidama kingdom of Kaffa and the vast country of the Borana Oromo in 1897, the process of the Shawan Amhara conquest of the Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions of southern Ethiopia was successfully brought to an end. Further extensions of Shawan domains were continued through the dispatch of military expeditions to infiltrate, subdue or lay claims to peripheral regions all around the already conquered southern highlands. The main objective has been to create buffer Zones of “effective occupation” on the borders to protect the safety of the rich, fertile and relatively populous interior regions. These were intended to serve as valuable bargaining cards in the forth coming negotiations with the European powers for the delimitation of Ethiopia’s frontiers with their adjacent protectorates.⁴

It was to accomplish such objectives that three main military expeditions were sent during 1897-1898. Their destinations and their whereabouts were kept secret until April 1898. One of them, led by Ras Makonnen, departed for the Bani Shangul and adjacent sheikhdoms to the northwest of the Oromo territories of Wallagga. Another, commanded by Dajach Tesemma Nado, the governor of Illubabour, was

¹ Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 11, note 7 on page 463 by de Coppet.
² Ibid., 464 and notes 5, 6.
sent to the Sobat (Baro) region in the west. The third, led by Ras Walde Giorgis marched towards the Lake Rudolf (Turkana) region in the southwest.\(^1\)

The withdrawal of the Mahdist garrisons and administration from Bani Shangul and the neighbouring sheikhdoms had created a power vacuum, which Menilek was only too willing to fill up. In addition, the importance of the region as the source of gold production and as the centre of commercial exchange between the Oromo regions of southwestern Ethiopia and the upper Blue Nile regions of the Sudan rendered its occupation highly attractive. And since the region had not been under effective Mahdist political authority its occupation was not expected to be considered a hostile act by Khalifa Abdullāhī. Therefore, in early December 1897 Ras Makonnen departed from Addis Ababa at the head of an estimated 80,000 strong army on the way to the Bani Shangul region. Sometime before February 1898 Makonnen’s army was joined at Arjo by the Gondare forces under the command of Dajach Demessie Nasibu the governor of Wallagga. Also joined to his army were the local auxiliary troops of Dajach Gabra Egziabher (formerly Moroda Bakare) and Dajjach Jote Tulla the respective rulers of the Leqa Naqamte and the Leqa Qellam Oromo.\(^2\) The combined army then camped at Mendi to the east of the Dabus river from where Ras Makonnen exchanged messages with the local sheikhs demanding their submission. Internal conflicts and animosities between the local rulers precluded any common defensive action against the Shawan invaders. Sheikh Abd al – Rahman Khōjali the ruler of Bani Shangul (known also by his war-name of Tor al Gure) refused to submit and mobilised his forces to fight the invaders. Sheikh Muhammad Wad Mahmud, the ruler of Khomosha (Gomosha), delayed his answer for a while, but later took sides with the defiant Tor al Gure in fighting the Shawans. Sheikh Khōjali al-Hasan, the ruler of Aqoldi (Asosa), readily submitted to Ras Makonnen and served him as a guide.\(^3\)

Ras Makonnen’s army then crossed the Dabus river and began a bitter campaign against the forces of Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Khōjali for several days. The defiant adversary was forced to abandon the Bani Shangul hills and escaped together with Muhammad Wad Mahmud and their followers to the Famaka region. The country of Tor al Gure was looted and its capital Qebesh was destroyed and burned.

\(^1\) Guèbrè Sellassie, Chronique, 11, pp. 471-472.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 176.
down. Sheikh Khōjali al-Hasan’s territories were spared being plundered by the Shawan army for his submission and cooperation. Finally Makonnen and his army returned to the capital on 6 May 1898 without achieving the victory that was expected of the expedition.¹

As far as the other border regions of Gedaref, Roseires and Gallabat further to the north were concerned Emperor Menilek adopted a cautious policy. He refrained from undertaking their military occupation to avoid complicating his relations with Khalifa Abdullāhi. Instead he restricted himself to dispatching Dajach Demessie with letters addressed to each one of the local rulers. Demessie reached as far as Roseires in the summer of 1898. Each local ruler was given an Ethiopian flag and was instructed to hoist it and demand its protection on the advance of an alien military force. This time Skeikh Abd al-Rahman Khōjali submitted hoping to regain his authority over Bani Shangul and set free his people who had been taken prisoners at the time of Makonnen’s expedition. Afterwards Damessie, accompanied by Skeikh Abd al-Rahman, returned to Addis Ababa where they arrived on 7 November 1898. Abd al-Rahman was later joined at the capital by the two other rulers Khōjali al-Hasan and Muhammad Wad Mahmud. The three of them were kept under the “protection” of Menilek until the negotiations with the British for the May 1902 agreement on the Ethiopian western border with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan had been completed.²

In March 1898, Dajach Tesemma Nado left Gore, the capital of Illubabour, with a large force for the west in the direction of the White Nile. He was accompanied on the expedition by some members of the French Bonchamps mission; the Frenchman Faivre, The Swiss Potter and the Russian Colonel L. K. Astamanoff. The force marched first northward then southward subjecting on its way the small Massongo, Gimira and Sauro negroid, shanqalla, tribes. Being much troubled by malaria sickness in the marchlands of the White Nile the force returned to Gore in May. However, the Europeans and a small force of about 800 locally recruited volunteers led by Fitawrari Haile pushed on until they reached up to just before the confluence of the White Nile with the Sobat (Baro) river where they raised the Ethiopian and French flags on 22 May 1898. They withdrew immediately afterwards

²- Ibid., pp. 178-179.
because many of their men and pack animals had died of disease. They could not wait for meeting with Colonel Jean Baptiste Marchand who arrived six days later.1

Also at the beginning of 1898, Ras Walde Giorgis departed from his base in newly conquered Kaffa with a small military force on an expedition into the sparsely inhabited lowland regions to the south. He was accompanied by Captain A. K. Bulatovich, the secretary of the Russian Legation at Addis Ababa, whose presence on the expedition was intended to serve as a useful observer in case of an encounter with an European force. Without meeting any resistance the force subdued the Golda, Maji, Dokko, Dimmi and other small negroid tribal groups. At Menu Hill area, to the north of Lake Rudolf Walde Giorgis and his force came across the abandoned camp of the British Macdonald expedition which had been on its way to the Upper Nile to fend off the French Marchand mission. On reaching the northern shores of the lake the force raised the Ethiopian flag on 26 Mach 1898 and returned to its base in Kaffa.2

In June 1899 the Russian adventurer and self-styled “Count” Nicolai S. Leontieff left Addis Ababa for the south. He had been appointed by Menilek as a governor, with the rank of dajazmach, of the regions in the far south between the Juba river in the east to Lakes Rudolf and Stephane in the west. He was accompanied with his second in command Prince Henri d’ Orléans, a few French and Russian companions, 100 Senegalese personal guards and about 200 Ethiopian troops and their personal followers. They had in their stores 10,000 rifles and 2 million cartridges. Leontieff succeeded for a time in stabilising and consolidating Ethiopian authority in the region and extending Menilek’s sovereignty a little to the south. However, lack of sufficient funds and backing forced him and his companions to withdraw in 1902. They were replaced by Ethiopian officers and their soldiers to continue their tasks.3

In the meantime British, French and Italian diplomatic representatives at Addis Ababa and official authorities in the neighbouring protectorates became apprehensive about the continued Ethiopian expansionism into regions claimed but were not occupied by their local authorities. They were convinced that the problem

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could only be solved through the delimitation of the boundaries between their protectorates and Ethiopia. The first boundary agreement was concluded with France on 20 March 1897. In exchange for what Léonce Lagarde believed to have been Menilek’s support for the French aspirations concerning the Upper Nile the agreement ceded to Ethiopia most of the Somali and Afar inhabited territories in the interior of their coastal port of Jibute. The result had been the considerable reduction of the size of the French protectorate which came to be known as French Somaliland.¹ After negotiations with Menilek at Addis Ababa and with Ras Makonnen at Harar the British envoy Rennel Rodd signed a convention on 4 June 1897 demarcating the borders of Ethiopia with British Somaliland. It was part of a general agreement, which was signed with Menilek on 14 May 1897 that included beside the duty-free transit of all Ethiopian government goods through Zeila, the neutrality of Ethiopia in the war with the Mahdists in the Sudan and an embargo on the passage of arms and ammunition to them. According to the convention, the British yielded 13,500 square miles of Somali inhabited territories to Ethiopian sovereignty that ensured dominant control of the Jildessa – Zeila route and a favourable position in respect to Berbera.²

After lengthy negotiations an agreement was concluded on 15 May 1902 concerning the demarcation of Ethiopia’s western borders with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. By its terms Ethiopia retained possession of the Bani Shangul region on the basis of effective occupation whereas the other border regions were ceded to the Sudan, except the town of Gallabat / Mitemma which was partitioned between the two countries. The agreement also guaranteed for the Sudan non-interference by Ethiopia with the waters of Lake Tana and the affluents of the Blue Nile.³ The reluctance of the British government to spend the money needed to enforce the claims of its protectorate of British East Africa (Kenya) to the border regions with Ethiopia allowed for active Ethiopian southern infiltration to continue unhindered. It was only after the appointment of Zaphiro in November 1905 as inspector to patrol the border areas and drive back Ethiopian raiders that an agreement on a frontier line was reached on 7

December 1906. However, the final draft was agreed upon and signed in December the next year.\(^1\)

The Italians, despite their defeat at Adwa, had been allowed to retain their Eritrean protectorate to the north of the Mareb-Beressa and May – Muni frontier by the formal Addis Ababa Peace Treaty of 26 October 1896.\(^2\) With the conclusion in 1908 of the agreement delimiting Ethiopia’s southeastern borders with Italian Somaliland the process of establishing the country’s considerably enlarged and recognised borders was finally completed.\(^3\) Thus Ethiopia emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century as the only African country which had developed as a result of an internally induced process of territorial expansion through military conquest and had survived the European colonial conquest as a sovereign and independent state after defeating by the force of arms an European colonial power.

The politico-military structures of the enlarged Ethiopian empire-state built by Menilek II depended essentially on the forceful capacity of his Shawan armies. Hence, the continuity of the country’s unity and the effective control over the recently conquered peoples have been maintained by the concentration of the decisive sources of political and military powers at the imperial centre in Addis Ababa. Fears about a disputed succession and consequent apprehensions about the country’s future prospects began to surface after the emperor suffered a “stroke” in May 1906. Nearly all of the European diplomatic representatives at the capital and many other observers almost unanimously predicted a break down of the Ethiopian state on the death of the emperor. The three major European powers with direct interest in the region of the Horn, Britain, France and Italy hurriedly concluded the Tripartite Treaty of 13 December 1906. The purpose has been to forstall the possibility of a conflict arising between them over their clashing interests in Ethiopia by partitioning the country into “spheres of influences” between themselves.\(^4\)

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2- Marcus, op. cit., pp. 176-177.

3- Ibid.

Happily for Ethiopia, and despite some outward appearances, Menilek’s empire-state proved to have been a strongly structured and well-administered polity. No break down of the powers of the state and no deterioration of general security occurred. In those extraordinary and very difficult circumstances which were set off by the emperor’s incapacitating illness and ultimate death in 1913 Menilek’s powerful nobility and military commanders, whose vested interests were closely linked with the fortunes of Menilek’s state, proved capable of asserting themselves. In spite of internal intrigues and struggles for power, but backed up by the influential ecclesiastical leadership of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, they took over the reins of central political and military authority at the capital. They succeeded in steering the country to safety through a troubled succession, a deposition of an uncrowned “minor” emperor and the accession of Empress Zawditu and Tafferi Makonnen, the future Haile Sellasie I.
CHAPTER VII
THE SHAWAN AMHARA ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONQUERED OROMO AND SIDAMA REGIONS

By the beginning of 1900 the Shawan Amhara conquest of the largely Oromo and Sidama inhabited regions of southern Ethiopia had been completed. The conquest was largely accomplished with the cooperation of the assimilated or Amharised Tuloma Oromo of Shawa whose destiny became closely bound with the continuation of Shawan politico-military domination and the hegemony of the Shawan ruling dynasty. Shawan domination throughout the enlarged Ethiopian state led to the shift of the centre of political power from its former locations in northern and central Ethiopia to Shawa further to the south. The provincial ruling dynasty of the principality of Shawa was transformed into the sovereign imperial dynasty ruling over the whole of the new greater Ethiopia. The Shawan newly established capital of Addis Ababa, founded in the mid-1880s, became the permanent political and economic capital of the enlarged Ethiopian state at near the geographical centre of which it was located.

Most of the recently incorporated conquered regions in the south were economically richer and agriculturally more productive than the historic provinces of the northern and central highlands. The latter had been ruinously affected by warfare, repeated plundering, famine, human and animal epidemics. The comparatively slightly affected southern highlands provided opportunities for the settlement of considerable numbers of immigrants from the impoverished regions of northern and central Ethiopia. In addition, the financial revenues and military resources obtained from the conquered southern territories enable the Shawans to extend and consolidate their rule over the whole of the enlarged Ethiopian state.\(^1\)

According to traditional ideology and customary laws the relations between the Shawan conquerors and their non-Amhara largely pagan or Muslim Oromo and

Sidama subjected population were determined by the guidance provided by the Kebra Nagast and Fetha Nagast, both dating back to the fourteenth and fifteenth century. The people of the regions whose rulers had willingly submitted peacefully on their own or after brief negotiations without fighting and accepted their tributary vassal status were spared the destructive effects of the wars of conquest, the appropriation of their lands, their subjection to direct Shawan administrative authority through the occupation of their territories by Shawan armies and officials and their consequences. These local rulers were usually allowed to retain a large measure of autonomy in continuing to govern their people as vassals to Shawan royal authority as long as they remained loyal and regularly delivered the prescribed annual tribute, qurt geber. In this category were included Abba Jiffar II of Jimma, Moroda and his son and successor Kumsa of the Leqa Naqamte, and Jote Tullu of the Leqa Qellam in northern Wallagga. Abba Jiffar had submitted peacefully, regularly paid his rich periodic tribute and remained loyal to Menilek. In addition, he assisted the Shawans in the conquest of the neighbouring Sidama states of Janjero (Yamma), Konta, Kullo, Wallamo (Walayta) and Kaffa. The case of Tona, the former king of Wallamo, who was reinstated as the ruler of his people under Shawan suzerainty until 1903 after having been fought and defeated in battle was an exceptional one.¹

The other rulers who chose to stand up to the invading Shawan armies and resist were severely dealt with. Their territories were plundered, many of their people were killed or enslaved. They were usually deposed after their defeat, and most of them spent the rest of their lives in enforced captivity or exile. They included the former rulers of the Gibe kingdoms, with the exception of Abba Jiffar II of Jimma, and most of the previous monarchs of the Sidama states except for Tona the king of Wallamo for a short period at least.²

In the early days when the process of conquest was still going on once a conquered territory was incorporated a governor was appointed by the monarch for its administration, usually the military commander who was responsible for its conquest. The appointed governor then posted subordinate officers with a contingent of his own soldiers in a newly established military camp, katama. Afterwards the rest of the army continued on its march to other territories. Tribute was collected from the local subject population in the surrounding neighbourhood to provide enough food supplies

²- Ibid., p. 105.
for the soldiers at the camp. The local people were also required to provide the materials and the labour force that were needed for the construction of the fortifications of the military base. Such outposts were usually located at strategically selected hilltops or elevated grounds, and were intended to serve as military garrison and centres of the administration of a conquered province. The governor chose from among the ranks of his own army the sub-governors who in turn appointed their regional officials and the latter in their turn selected their assistants. In this way, a hierarchical administrative system was established in each conquered province in which each officials was directly responsible to his immediate superior.  

Later on more katamas were established in each conquered provinces as increasing numbers of officers and their soldiers together with their families and retainers came along to settle there. As substantial numbers of royal troops became available to Menilek he began stationing special units of the royal regiments in each of the conquered provinces to counterbalance the forces of the provincial governors and thereby prevent any one of them from building up a significant regional power base. Thus when Dajach Balcha was appointed governor of Sidamo in 1897 to replace Dajach Lulsagad units from two royal regiments were sent with him. These consisted of gondare units commanded by Fitawrari Walda Gabrael and others known as the barud bet, some of whom were organised by Balcha himself before the battle of Adwa and some others had formerly been soldiers in the army of Ras Gobana. Balcha’s own soldiers were distinguished by the name of ya-bet ashker (“soldiers of the household”). The commanders of the royal units were directly responsible to royal authority, but during military campaigns they usually placed themselves under the command of the governor of the province in which they were stationed. Otherwise, their independent authority and status were nearly equal to those of the governor. When a change of governorship was make the royal units remained in the province until a new governor, his officers and their soldiers were established.

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With the arrival of new groups of officers and settler-soldiers, other officials and their families new establishments such as market places, churches, cemeteries, schools, courthouses, etc … sprang up. Eventually some of the katamas developed into permanent urban political and administrative centres from which the Shawans maintained their politico – military control of their largely Oromo and Sidama subject population. Based on the accounts of European travellers, Dehérain listed some thirty-seven katamas that were established throughout the conquered provinces up to 1910. Obviously, there must have been others, which were not visited by the European travellers at the time.¹

The principal objectives of the administration of each provincial governor had been to safeguard the continuity and consolidation of Shawan Amhara domination. In practical terms this meant ensuring the imposition and maintenance of Shawan political and military authority by keeping the largely Oromo and Sidama subject population under subjection. At the same time, it allowed for pursuing the systematic exploitation of the human and material resources of the newly incorporated provinces.² Considering the vast areas of the conquered provinces, their distance from the royal political centre at Addis Ababa, the difficulties of communication and transportation, the limited resources at the disposal of the provincial governors and the wide cultural differences between the conquering Shawan Amhara and their largely Oromo and Sidamo non-Christian pagan or Muslim subjects the Shawans naturally resorted to the use of local indigenous intermediaries to assist them at the lower levels of their provincial administrative system. The local employees were usually selected from among members of the former ruling families for the posts of balabbats, qoros and their subordinate assistants. In the case of the Oromo inhabited provinces where the gada institution was still functioning at the time of the conquest occupants of those posts were often chosen from among the previous members of the general gada assembly. In other instances, the administrative authorities appointed whoever they considered to have been useful for their purposes.³

There was nothing “indirect” or especially peculiar about the methods, which were used by Menilek and his generals in establishing and consolidating their administration of the newly annexed provinces and their subject population. All colonial administration or strong rulers in feudal societies had usually because of necessity used some of the indigenous functionaries as willing and convenient intermediaries at the lower levels of their rule. Their main function was to help in enforcing the continued subjection of the conquered people while allowing the colonial authorities to concentrate on the exploitation of the resources of the conquered regions.

In quasi-feudal Ethiopia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries agricultural production predominated as the main source of livelihood and wealth. Consequently, the land and the labour of those who cultivated it were the basis of political and military power. Therefore, the primary concern of the Shawans on the incorporation of a conquered territory was the appropriation of all its land by the right of military conquest. This has been justified by claiming that the Shawans were merely taking back the lands that had formerly belonged to the Amharas before they lost them to the Oromo in the sixteenth century. The appropriated lands then became the exclusive property of the royal sovereign who had the absolute jurisdiction to dispose of them as he wished.

Quite distinct from the prevailing situation in northern Ethiopia the royal grants of appropriated lands in the conquered provinces were made on the basis of the numbers of the tribute and tax-paying peasant cultivators, gabbars, who were settled on the land and not according to the size of the land itself. Though the actual details of the distribution of the gabbars varied from are conquered province to another the general objectives and pattern remained the same. The primary aim was to safeguard the effective collection of tribute and taxation extracted through the exploitation of the appropriated lands and the labour of the peasants who were settled on them and their remittance to the central royal treasury. Another aim was to reward, in lieu of salary, the unpaid governors, officers and their settler – soldiers, other officials and clergy who served in the administration of the newly incorporated conquered provinces.

Other concerns included the maintenance of the royal court, rewarding members of
the royal family, the nobility, ecclesiastical leadership, high ranking state officials and
others in royal favour. The result was the imposition of a complicated system of
landholding rights, tribute, taxation and related labour obligations. These can only be
briefly outlined below.

The greatest parts of the appropriated lands were reserved for the crown.
Certain portions of them, which were selected for their fertility were usually set aside
for provisioning the various departments of the royal court and were administered by
royally appointed representatives, meslenies. Large gult landholdings were allotted to
the military commanders of the conquering armies and eventual governors of the
conquered provinces, members of the royal family, masafents, the court nobility and
high ranking governing officials, makwannent. The recipients of such land grants
exercised their authority as absentee landholders through their appointed meslenies.
The meslenies were also assigned land holdings on their own, in lieu of salary, as a
reward for their services. Large landholdings were also allotted to the churches that
were founded in the conquered regions to provide for the upkeep of their clergy and
other functionaries on the same basis as the grants that were awarded to the nobility
and high ranking state officials. The only exception was that the land grants to the
churches were irrevocable. Members of the former ruling families were also assigned
land grants, siso, amounting to a maximum of a third of the lands they had before the
conquest.

All the northern military and civil personnel who served in the provincial
administration of the conquered provinces received no salaries for their services.
Instead, they were supported for their livelihood, together with their families and
retainers, by the agricultural produce and unpaid labour services extracted as tribute
and taxation from the peasants, gabbars, who were settled on the lands that were
granted to them in lieu of salaries. Such state employees and the representatives of the
royal court and nobility, meslenies, were collectively known as naftenyas (literally,

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2- For the complicated details concerning the various types of Ethiopian land tenure, tribute, taxation
and related labour obligations refer to Mahteme Sellassie Wolde Maskal, “The Land System of
Ethiopia,” EO, 1, (1957), pp. 283-301; and Gebre-Wold Ingida Worq, “Ethiopia’s Traditional System
of Land Tenure and Taxation,” (trans. By Mengesha Gessesse from “Ya Ityopya Maretna Gibir Sim”),
Ibid., IV (1962), pp. 302-339. See also Pankhurst, R., State and Land in Ethiopian History, (HSIU,
“those who carried a naft,” i.e. a gun). The term was gradually applied to all settlers from northern Ethiopia who were settled in the conquered provinces. Landholdings were allotted to their recipients on the basis of the numbers of the subject tribute and tax – paying peasants, **gabbar**s, who cultivated it and not according to the size of the land itself. The landholders enjoyed their privileges only temporarily as long as they continued in the service of the administration. ¹ Though the local **balabbat**s and **qoro**s were similarly awarded landholdings on equal basis as other officials they were not included within the ranks of the **naftenya**s.²

The **naftenya-Gabbar** system which was imposed in most of the conquered provinces was a transplantation of the patron-client quasi-feudal system which had been prevalent in northern Ethiopia, more particularly in Shawa, with the exception of several significant differences. The northern **gabbar**s owned the lands they cultivated; were usually well-armed and could defend themselves against excessive exactions of their patrons and plundering by soldiers of armies on marching through their lands; participated in military campaigns thereby supplementing their income from the land by war booty and their tribute, taxes and labour obligations were less excessive than those required from their counterparts in the conquered provinces. The latter lost any rights of possession which they previously had to the lands they farmed and were reduced to the status of tenants; the tribute, provisions and taxes they paid as well as the unpaid labour obligations they were required to provide were onerous. Though theoretically the additional provisions and the labour services required from them were limited, the **naftenya**s in fact got as much as they could from their **gabbar**s. Again though the **gabbar**s were free to leave the lands they farmed if they wished, case of **gabbar**s leaving their lands or being evicted from them were very rare. Since lands without the peasants who cultivated them were useless, the **naftenya**s were usually very careful in avoiding the possibilities of their **gabbar**s leaving the lands by resorting to the **balabbat**s to prevent them from doing so. In addition the **gabbar**s were not allowed to carry firearms or take part in military expeditions except as servants of their patrons.³

The conquered regions whose rulers had submitted peacefully without fighting and subsequently retained some measure of autonomy in governing their own people as vassals under Shawan royal suzerainty were exempted from the imposition of direct military occupation and the consequent naftenya-gabbar system. Instead each of their rulers like Abba Jiffar II of Jimma, Kumsa Moroda (later Dajach Gabra Egziabher) of the Leqä Naqamte, Dajach Joté Tullu of the Leqä Qellam and Tona the former king of the Wallamo up to 1903 regularly delivered a fixed amount of annual tribute to Menilek at the capital.1

While it is difficult to be exact about the details concerning how the naftenya-gabbar system was actually applied in the conquered provinces as they varied from one province to another an approximate general pattern can be discerned. Initially each provincial governor and his immediate subordinates were allotted several hundreds or even thousands of gabbar each who were settled on the lands given to them in order to provide tax-free agricultural produce and unpaid labour services for their personal needs, their households and retainers. A gabbar family was obliged to deliver to their patron the customary tithe in kind, usually amounting to between a quarter or a third of the harvest, as tribute, gibr. In addition they paid him a tax of ten percent of agricultural produce, asrat, which was introduced in 1893. They were also required to provide their patron with additional supplies in kind and render to him various unpaid labour services. The additional supplies included measures of honey, butter, grain, firewood, dry grass and cash gifts of either a sheep or a goat on festive religious occasions such as New Year, Easter, Christmas and the Feast of the Holy Cross, weddings or the birth of a child. The labour services involved the followings; farming on crown land or on the patron’s cult fief, which usually amounted to about a third of a gabbar’s labour, transporting the harvest to storehouses, construction and repairing houses and fences, herding livestock, fetching water, grinding grain, providing food supplies, dergo, for officials passing through the province and acting as prison guards. There are no exact estimates of how much time it took an individual gabbar to perform such labour services but it is generally said to have been about one day’s work in every three days. Moreover, the patron was also entrusted with the

dispensation of justice, a function for which he received court fees and fines. In addition he usually expected and accepted bribes as well.¹

Each one of the lower ranking military officers and their settler-soldiers, naftenyas, was assigned a certain number of gabbars with nearly comparable obligations according to his rank, the length of his service, the size of his family and retainers as well as the numbers of the available gabbars in the province where he was serving. Therefore, the actual numbers of the gabbars allotted to each naftenya and their obligations appear to have differed from one province to another. During the governorship of Ras Walde Giorgis in Kaffa, Limmu, Gomma, Konta, Kullo, Gimira, Maji and Golja an individual naftenya is said to have been allotted a minimum of ten gabbars, while military officers with the ranks of balambaras (“commander of a fortress”), qanazmach (“commander of the rightwing”), grazmach (“commander of the left wing”) were assigned between fifteen and twenty gabbars each.² In the Darasa region of northern Sidamo gabbars were allotted to their respective naftenyas in units, each of which usually consisted of a number of related families or kinship groups living in the same neighbourhood. The distribution of the gabbars is said to have been as follows; three hundreds for a shambal (“commander of a garrison”), one hundred for a meto alaqa (“commander of a hundred soldiers”), fifty for a hamsa alaqa (“commander of fifty soldiers”) and between fifteen to twenty for an ordinary soldier. The local balabbats were regarded as junior ranking officers, while the qoros were considered as ordinary soldiers; and each category was assigned gabbars accordingly.³

In the Darasa region the prescribed annual tribute obligation of each gabbar unit is reported to have been five Maria Theresa thalers in cash, but it was usually paid in agricultural produce. The unit also delivered to the naftenya various quantities of kocho (a product of ensete), grain or cash in thalers or alternatively in local iron money which consisted of iron bars about half a meter long and bend on one end weighing about two kilos each. Sometimes, however, an individual gabbar could pay his own share of the tribute in cash and perform his required labour obligations to his respective patron separately.⁴

⁴- Ibid., pp. 430-432.
The unpaid labour obligations required from a gabbar in Sidamo appear to have been more or less the same as those expected elsewhere in the other conquered provinces. The only exception was that in Sidamo a gabbar could avoid undertaking the required services personally by either paying his patron for an exemption or by hiring someone else to perform them in his place. All the peasants in a single unit were obliged to take part in farming on the patron’s land, usually for about two days labour each week, transporting the harvest to grain stores, constructing and mending houses and fences, herding livestock, grinding grain, fetching firewood and carrying the patron’s baggage while on a military campaign or travelling around as well as performing whatever was required of them by their patrons. In addition they were required to provide their patron with a gift of a sheep or a goat on the festive occasions of the New Year, Easter, Christmas and the Feast of the Holy Cross.\(^1\) In Kambata, each gabbar was obliged to pay his patron four Maria Theresa thalers in cash annually and provide him with certain quantities of grain, kosh\(\) and five donkey loads of firewood. Moreover, a gabbar was required to shepherd his naftenya’s livestock, assist in repairing his house and fences and generally undertake whatever labour services were demanded from him. He was also expected to provide his patron with a sheep or a goat as a gift on the customary festive religious occasions.\(^2\)

A gabbar usually remained on the land he cultivated as long as he continued to pay the prescribed tribute and taxes as well as he performed the required labour obligations. He could then hand over the land he farmed to his heirs. The landholding rights, on the other hand, could be transferred from one naftenya to another while the gabbar remained on the land. Theoretically the client could leave the land if he wished or he could be evicted from it if he failed to honour his obligations. In such cases, the vacated land could be offered to another gabbar. In fact, as it has been indicated earlier, such cases were very unusual.

The multiple exactions imposed on the gabbars were a heavy burden on the subject peasant population of the conquered provinces and a constant source of resentment. The relationship between patrons and their clients had always been characterised by immense fear. The possession of firearms by the northerners which

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\(^1\) Marcus, Op.cit., p. 193; McClellan, “Perspectives on the Neftenya- Gabbar System …”, pp. 432-434. For further details see also the author’s article “State Transformation and Social Reconstruction …”, pp. 661-666.

had been a major determinant factor in the conquest of the country in the first place remained as a constant threat that contributed in keeping the gabbars in subjection and in their acceptance of their submissive and subservient status. Moreover, the political and economic superiority of the northern naftenyas and the wide ethnic and cultural differences that separated them from their gabbars also contributed towards strengthening those fears. The intermediary role of the local balabbats and their assistants contributed significantly in explaining the realities of the situation and thereby easing the relations between the two parties.1

Similar to the situation in northern Ethiopia the administrative structure which was established in the conquered provinces was political and military in nature. The royally appointed governor was the chief civil administrator in his province and the military commander of the armed forces that were stationed and eventually settled there as well. Theoretically, he was under direct royal authority and control, but he practically enjoyed a large measure of local autonomy. Provincial governors were frequently transferred from one province to another through the traditional policy of shum-shir (literally, “appoint – dismiss”) in order to deny any of them the possibility of building up a regional base of political power. Consequently, most of them usually used their terms in office to draw the maximum profits for themselves from the provinces they governed. In attempts to maintain control over them and to curb their corrupt practices Menilek resorted to encouraging competition between the governors and their troops on the one hand and the rival independently commanded royal forces that were stationed in their provinces, gathering intelligence through specially organised networks and removing uncooperative elements.

The main concerns of each governor were centered on security and taxation. One of his primary duties was insuring the continuation of Shawan domination through the control of the subject population and the maintenance of law and order. Another responsibility was the collection of the annual tribute and taxation levied on the agricultural produce of the peasants settled on undistributed crown or state lands, the tolls imposed on transit trade and market dues. After retaining about a third of the total revenues for himself the governor was required to forward the remaining proceeds to the central royal treasury at the capital. A governor was also entrusted

with the dispensation of justice in his province for which he received court fees, fines and in most cases bribes as well.¹

During the early years, of the provincial administration each governor or local vassal ruler personally presented his annual tribute and taxation revenues beside the occasional personal gifts to Menilek at the capital. For example, on the occasion of the wedding of the king’s daughter Zawditu to the emperor’s son Ras Area Selassie in 1882 Ras Gobana Daci, then the governor of the Macha Oromo regions he had conquered, presented Menilek with a gift consisting of 1,300 horses, 500 mules and various quantities of ivory, civet musk and gold.² In 1885 the tribute brought to Entotto from Gomma included 50 tusks of ivory, 200 horns filled with civet musk and an unspecified amount of thalers. In addition Menilek was given a personal gift of ten small ingots of gold.³ In 1886 Abba Jiffar II, the tributary vassal ruler of Jimma, brought to the king ivory tusks, bamboo trunks filled with musk, jars full with honey, shields decorated in silver, lances and various other locally manufactured items as tribute.⁴ In 1893 Dajach Gabra Egzabher, formerly Kumsa Moroda the vassal ruler of the Leqa Naqamte Oromo of Wallagga, presented Menilek with 500 ounces of gold and several amounts of grain and ivory.⁵ At the same time when the annual tax of ten per cent, asrat, in kind on agricultural produce was introduced an attempt was made to store the collected proceeds in state grainaries established in the conquered provinces from which provisions were distributed for the maintenance of the soldiers stationed there on regular basis.⁶

The gradual transition from the customary tribute system to regular taxation, however, was begun after the battle of Adwa. Special officials from the central royal treasury in Addis Ababa were sent to the provinces to supervise the assessment and collection of the tribute, taxes and the forwarding of the revenues to the capital. A special department of the central treasury under the direct supervision of the Minister of the Pen and with royal approval managed the accounting, auditing and

disbursement of the revenues.\(^1\) Compared to the other conquered provinces Jimma Abba Jiffar, the wealthy commercial centre of the southwest, paid the highest tribute and taxes to the central treasury. In 1904, its ruler reportedly paid 350,000 Maria Theresa thalers in cash, approximately 50 kilos of gold, 10-20 richly caparisoned horses, 100-120 mule loads of wooden furniture, 200-500 rugs and a special gift for Menilek which consisted of gold plates and silver cups.\(^2\) At about the same time Ras Makonnen, the governor of the second richest province of Harar, who was allowed by a special arrangement with Menilek to retain two thirds of the total tribute and taxes of his province which were estimated at about 100,000 thalers annually, paid the full 200,000 thalers of import duties paid at Dire Dawa to Menilek at Addis Ababa.\(^3\)

Ras Wolde Giorgis, the governor of Kaffa, delivered only about 5,000 thalers annually which was about a third of the total revenues of his province which had been impoverished by the war of its conquest. Wallamo paid its tribute and taxes in grain, honey, capes, rugs and small amounts of gold and silver of an estimated annual value of about 25,000 thalers. Similarly, Wallagga delivered its tribute and taxes in wheat, tef, honey and gold amounting to the value of between 15,000 to 20,000 thalers annually. An estimated 10,000 to 15,000 thalers annually in coffee, hides, honey and small amounts of thalers was paid by Illubabour. Gamo Gofa, Arussi and Baroda paid about 5,000 thalers each annually. During the early period of the administration Sidamo paid about 800 thalers only but its annual contribution rose to about 9,000 thalers by the turn of the century.\(^4\)

The contribution of the conquered provinces to the central treasury amounted to a total of about 1,351,000 Maria Theresa thalers annually. The highest revenues extracted from Jimma and Harar were largely derived from taxation on trade. Revenues from the other provinces were apparently obtained from the tribute and the asrat tax paid in kind on the annual agricultural harvest. Part of the produce was stored in provincial grainaries, but most of it was usually sold for cash which was sent to the central treasury. In addition Menilek obtained substantial other revenues from monopolizing the gold and ivory trade, the taxes collected on slaves entering and

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\(^4\) Ibid., p. 635.
leaving Shawan markets, participation in commercial transactions and lending money at high interest rates. In addition he had at his disposal very extensive crown lands and large herds of livestock dispersed throughout the conquered provinces.\textsuperscript{1}

The systematic exploitation of the land and human resources of the conquered provinces through the imposition of the naftenya - gabbar system sustained their military occupation, the maintenance of their administration, the effective control of their subject population and the steady flow of the wealth generated from them to the governing centre at Addis Ababa. The conclusion of the wars of conquest and the effectiveness of the Pax Shawana removed the need for further military action in most of the conquered provinces. The governors and most of the naftenyas were allowed to enjoy relatively comfortable existence being supported by the agricultural produce and the unpaid labour services of their gabbars and slaves for their livelihood. They made substantial additional benefits for themselves by using their local clients to clear and cultivate unoccupied forested and pastoral lands. Moreover, the end of military campaigning and the near destruction of elephant herds led to the gradual elimination of the main sources of slave and ivory supplies. The resultant decline in their supplies and the corresponding inflation in their prices provided a lucrative incentive for the governors and most of the northern settlers to engage in raiding for slaves, ivory and cattle in the peripheral regions to supplement their revenues from the land.\textsuperscript{2}

The northern settlers in the conquered provinces constituted a distinct privileged emigrant minority linked together by relatively common ethnic and cultural identities and general isolation from their original homelands. Their distinctiveness was greatly reinforced by their general political association with the governing authorities and their social and economic pre-eminence. Most of them lived in the newly founded military and administrative urban centres with minimal social contacts with the surrounding multitude of subject indigenous population who greatly outnumbered them. They socialized and interacted with each other, attended their church religious services and sent their children to church schools to learn to read and write in Amharic.\textsuperscript{3}


The distant relationships of the northern naftenyas with their gabbars, of whom they were separated by wide ethnic and cultural differences, were always characterized by fear. The possession of superior firearms by the northerners which was denied to the subject population, that had been a significant factor in their conquest of the country in the first place was also a constant threat that helped in keeping the gabbars in continued subjection and their fatalistic acceptance of their submissive and subservient status. The links between the northern patrons and their subject clients were provided by the balabbats and their assistants. As intermediaries, they helped in smoothing the relationship between the two parties by explaining the situation and the demands of the northern patrons in ways and means that the gabbars could understand and favourably respond to.

The persistence of the conqueror’s mentality of ethnic and cultural superiority among the northern administrators and settlers and the authoritarian colonial character of the administration precluded any possible social interaction with the subject population. The Orthodox Christian churches which were founded in the urban centres catered almost exclusively for the spiritual needs of the northern administrators and settlers, their families and retainers. The church establishment and clergy practically made no attempts to proselytize among the indigenous subject population. As a result, therefore, the adherents of the traditional religious beliefs were more or less left unaffected. On the other hand, Islam succeeded in making increasing progress largely as a reaction to Christian Shawan Amhara conquest and domination. Thus neither the state nor the Orthodox Church establishment made any positive contribution towards assimilating the conquered peoples. Nevertheless, some degree of limited assimilating occurred. The local balabbats, who were invested with titles and assigned landholdings and gabbars, developed a vested interest in the administrative system of the governing authorities. They eventually converted to Orthodox Christianity, took new Christian names, spoke Amharic language, dressed in Amharic fashion and became gradually assimilated into the culture of the northern conquerors. Some assimilation also resulted from the inter-marriages between the

families of the northern *naftenyas* and those of the wealthy local *balabbats* or through northern settlers having fathered children by indigenous mistresses.¹

Attracted by more promising economic incentives increasing numbers of emigrants from northern Ethiopia continued to move to and settle permanently in the conquered provinces. Fortunately, for them the decline in the role of slaves and ivory as the major exportable commodities was slowly replaced by the profitable agricultural production of coffee in the post 1914 period. At the beginning, uninhabited forest state lands suitable for coffee production were cleared and cultivated by *naftenyas* and their *gabbars* as squatters. Eventually the state intervened. Illegal occupants were evicted; the lands were measured and subsequently distributed as *maderia* lands in lieu of salaries to new northern settlers. Most of the former local clients chose to remain on the lands they cultivated as tenants to their new landlords. In fact they became wage labourers retaining a portion of their coffee production, usually 60-70 %, in exchange for their labour. Soon afterwards others, being tempted by the new advantages, moved into the coffee producing regions to join them. Thus, some type of landlord and tenant wage labour system evolved which in time became tied to a monetary economy.²

As coffee production steadily developed into the main basis of the agricultural production in the conquered regions both the settlers and their tenants became economically dependant on its efficiency and profitability. Thus the northern settlers began to move away from the established military and administrative urban centres and congregate into commercially oriented new settlements closer to their coffee producing lands in the countryside. Thus, for the first time the northern Ethiopian settlers were brought into closer contacts with their local peasant population. Soon churches and their Orthodox clergy began to be established in most of the newly settled locations. Though the churches were originally intended for the service of the settler communities their positions closer to where the local inhabitants lived provided more favourable opportunities for possible cultural interaction and social change. Nevertheless, without positive support and encouragement from the governing

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authorities and the ecclesiastical leadership the pace and the extent of cultural interaction was bound to have been limited.¹

In most of the newly conquered non-Muslim regions the local tributary vassal rulers and their families were converted to the official Orthodox Christian religion and were gradually assimilated into the culture of the Shawan Amhara dominated state. In their turn they often become increasingly eager to discourage their people from continued adherence to traditional religious beliefs and practices. Instead, they tended to promote Christian proselytisation among their people through the establishment of churches in their regions and the employment of the clergy for them. In this way large numbers of the Oromo in Wallagga and Illubabor and many of the Sidama in Kaffa and Wallamo were won over to the Orthodox Christian faith.²

In marked contrast the rapid spread of Islam among the Arussi (Arsi) Oromo was in a large measure an expression of their rejection of Christianity which happened to have been the religion of the Shawan Amhara conquerors and the north Ethiopian and assimilated Tulama settlers. Thus, when the traditional Oromo pilgrimage to the Abba Muda was banned on Menilek’s order in 1900 large numbers of them embraced Islam. Their conversion was essentially a protest against Christianity which they identified with the oppressive Shawan Amhara rule and excessive settler exactions. As a consequence the traditional Oromo pilgrimage to the Abba Muda was replaced by the Muslim pilgrimage in February of each year to the tomb of Sheikh Hussein in Bale.³

The incorporation of large numbers of Muslims with the extended borders of Ethiopia rendered the adoption of a militant policy of intolerance to Islam and enforcement of Orthodox Christian conformity certainly impractical and potentially destructive.⁴ Christian proselytisation among the predominantly Muslim Oromo population of the Gibe region was prohibited. Likewise, the establishment of churches in their territories was not allowed. By 1911, the only church in the whole region was

intended solely for members of the Shawan garrison that was stationed in Limmu. A similar policy of toleration of Islam was pursued in Harar after its conquest and occupation. The Muslim faith and the shari’a laws of the Harari people were not interfered with. Most of the Muslim notables were allowed to retain their posts. The few churches that were established in Harar were intended to serve the Shawan administrators and soldiers of the garrison in the town, though one of the churches was built on the site of a former mosque.

Most probably it was Menilek’s intention to avoid generating any feelings of religious resentment and persecution among the conquered Muslim population which, together with their subjugation, would provoke rebellion. Even so a few sporadic revolts against Shawan Amhara expansionism broke out among some of the Muslim subject Oromo people. One of the early revolts was led by Hassan Injamo, Omar Baxa’s successor as vassal ruler of the small principality of Qabiena, in the late 1870s. His rebellion, in alliance with a few neighbouring Muslim Oromo and Gurage chiefs, was put down after several military campaigns led against them by Gobana and Habte Giyorgis. Another rebellion was led by Firrisa, the eldest son of Abba Gubir the last independent ruler of Gumma, among the Muslim Oromo of the Gibe region in around 1899. It lasted for almost two years until it was ended with the leader’s arrest and execution.

A rebellion also broke out in 1909 among the non-Muslim Leqa Qellam Oromo in Wallagga following the deposition and imprisonment of their local ruler Joté Tullu and the extension of direct Shawan rule accompanied by the imposition of the naftenya-gabbar system over their territories. The rebels harassed the Shawan naftenyas almost continuously until their insurrection was brutally suppressed and Joté Tullu was released and entrusted once more with the administration of his territories in 1913. Rebellion was started again for a time towards the end of 1917 when he was finally discharged.

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2- Caulk, “The Occupation of Harar …,” pp. 18-19; idem, “Religion and the State …,” p. 38
The loss of their independence, the appropriation of their lands and their subjection to oppressive alien Shawan Amhara rule were not the only misfortunes suffered by the Oromo, Sidama and other conquered peoples. Their countries have been devastated, their livestock and movable belongings were plundered and most of their villages have been burnt down. Of particularly grave consequences have been the huge losses of human lives. Great numbers of people have been killed or were left dying on battlefields during the military campaigns of conquest. Still equally large numbers, usually young men, women and children, were carried away into slavery as war captives, tribute or victims of slave raiding. After the campaigns of conquest were over slaves continued to be procured through raiding the negroid peoples of the distant peripheral western and southern borderlands. Most of the slaves were sold, despite treaties to suppress the slave trade, at the principal eastern markets of Shawa for foreign export. Considerably large numbers of slaves were also retained within the country. Menilek was the greatest slave owner who kept several thousands of the procured slaves for himself. The royal slaves were employed at the royal palace and its various establishments where most of the young women served in preparing food and drink for members of the royal court and the great numbers of guests at the royal banquets and feasts. Many others served as guards, porters, servants or as metalworkers, brick-layers, carpenters, weavers tanners, potters, etc …. Others ploughed and harvested crops, shepherded livestock or served as staple-hands in the royal estates. Many slaves, too, were employed in the households of the nobility, top state officials, military commanders and leading churchmen as personal retainers, guards, concubines and domestic servants. Nearly all the provincial governors, administrators and settlers in the conquered territories were slave owners who usually employed their slaves as retainers, personal servants and fetchers of water, fodder and firewood.¹

After the campaigns of conquest were over slaves continued to be procured through raiding the predominantly negroid peoples in the distant peripheral southern and western borderlands. The extent of slave raiding in these directions was intensified after 1906 when Menilek’s health began to deteriorate. When provincial governors and their subordinate military commanders in the conquered provinces were transferred from one province to another or to the north they usually took with them

large numbers of slaves for themselves or as suitable gifts for others. When Ras Wolde Giyorgis, the governor of Kaffa, was transferred to northern Ethiopia in 1910 he took with him a very large number of young men, women and children as slaves. His example was followed by his accompanying military commanders. ¹ Menilek’s designated successor Lij Iyasu conducted several slave-raiding expeditions in the negroid Ghimirra-Maji southern regions in one of which he returned “with no less than eight thousand slaves.”²

On the whole the viciousness of the destructive Shawan military expansionism, the predatory behaviour of Shawan armies raiding enemies for booty during war times and living off the subject peasants in peace times³, and the generally oppressive and exploitive nature of their alien rule and their consequences have been felt everywhere by the majority of the conquered peoples. Their experiences have not been substantially different, if not possibly worse, than of other African peoples elsewhere who were subjected to European colonial rule. The Shawan armies of conquest and occupation had in their possession an almost exclusive monopoly of imported firearms which they conquered peoples were prevented from having access to. The unfortunate fate of the helpless tribal warriors who fought them with only lances and spears was predictable. Even the determined and sustained resistance of the Arussi Oromo have been suppressed after six years of repeated bloody military campaigns that ended in thousands of them being killed and their country ravaged. Similarly, the firepower and mobility of the Shawan armies of occupation enabled troops to be effectively deployed wherever they were needed to control and keep the conquered peoples under subjection.⁴

Everywhere the conquered Oromo and Sidama people have shared comparable experiences of immense abuses and sufferings imposed on them by oppressive Shawan rule and exploitive Shawan, north Ethiopian and assimilated / Amharised Tuloma Oromo and Gurage settler communities. A few examples of the manner in which such experiences have been responded to or described indicate the magnitude of what the incorporation into the enlarged Ethiopian state has meant to the peoples concerned. Traditional expectations are said to have been current among the

conquered Oromo at the beginning of the twentieth century of signs that promised the near return of the kao ("the time of full rights and happiness.")\(^1\). In 1901 Roba, a former *abba dula* ("war-leader") of the Arussi who still had hopes of his peoples regaining their independence, was reported saying: "The hour has not come, but it will come; perhaps our children will see the departure of the oppressor."\(^2\)

A few brief contemporary account by European travellers would possibly illustrate the extent of what some of the conquered people, particularly the Oromo, had been through under Shawan Amhara rule. In 1896 Donaldson Smith wrote, "where was the country teeming with lusty war-like people? Certainly no where! What we found … was only … natives presenting the most abject appearance imaginable. Only four years ago, they must have been a fine race of men. They loved to tell us of their former glory, their eyes would light up and they would forget for the instance their present condition … The Arussi Galla here, as elsewhere, were regarded as slaves, and were sold in the market as such."\(^3\)

Koettlitz, who travelled through southern Ethiopia at the beginning of the twentieth century, reported that "the Galla here have been comparatively lately subjected to the Abyssinians. They are a fine-featured, well-formed agricultural and pastoral race who is kept in abject subjection to their conquereors by means of not allowing them to have firearms. The Abyssinians rob, ill-treat and tax their produce without mercy and they are evidently in a very unhappy state."\(^4\)

The profound resentment felt by the conquered peoples as a consequence of the appropriation of their lands and the excessive exactions imposed on them under Shawan Amhara rule have been expressed in a number of popular sayings. "Menilek gave the land to the Amhara, and other people to the birds," is a Wallamo saying meaning that the loss of their lands to the conquering Shawan Amhara has reduced the conquered people to corps to be eaten by vultures. "An ordinary person is born with

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crossed hands, an Amhara is born with outstretched hands” is a Harari saying. Its Wallamo equivalent is “The Amhara and the wolf count sheep they have not raised.”

Even as late as the 1960s the Arussi Oromo reportedly still described their conquest by the Shawans as the “commencement of an era of miseries, since which life has not run as God intended it.” Similarly, we are told that the Boran divide their historical experiences into two periods “before” and “after” their conquest by the Shawan Amhara, the first was good and the second bad. The Guji also blamed all their social problems on their conquest and incorporation within the Ethiopian state.

Conclusion

The campaigns of Shawan Amhara military conquests conducted during the late nineteenth century had more than tripled the territorial extent of the historic Orthodox Christian Ethiopian state and almost doubled the size of its population. Included within the country’s newly extended and recognized borders were the rich, fertile and relatively less densely populated southern highland regions inhabited by the Oromo and Sidama peoples, in addition to the small Gurage and Harari groups. Also added to the enlarged Ethiopian polity were portions of the adjacent lowland regions inhabited by the pastoral Somali and Afar in the southeast, the negroid Berta and Nilotic tribal groups in the southwest and the Gimmira – Maji group in the south.

The successful accomplishment of the conquests was mainly the result of an almost unmatched military superiority of the Shawan armies over the fighting forces of their adversaries in both man – power and armament. The numerical strength of the Shawan armies had been steadily built up during the course of time through the enlistment within their ranks of new recruits and former soldiers of the defeated armies. Most of the financial revenues derived through war – booty, particularly in captured ivory and slaves, the control of the transit flow of the major staples of the exportable items of commerce such as ivory, civet – musk, gold and above all slaves in addition to the tribute and taxation extracted from the conquered territories were spent to pay for the purchase of increasing quantities of imported modern firearms and ammunition for the armament of the armies. The success of the conquests also owed much to the lack of interference by outsiders - including the imperial sovereign, the northern provincial magnates or the European colonial powers – mainly Britain, Italy and France – who had established their respective protectorates on parts of the coastal territories of northeastern Africa.

The military preponderance of the Shawan Amhara was also an instrumental factor in ensuring the effective administrative control they managed to establish over the conquered territories and the systematic exploitation of their economic and human resources. It was also a determinant factor in the decisive defeat of the Italian invading forces at Adwa in 1896. The result had been the survival of the independence of a considerably enlarged Ethiopian state during the era of the European scramble and colonial conquest of sub – Saharan Africa. Internally the
outcome had been the sustained maintenance and consolidation of the newly established Shawan Amharan politico – military hegemony and domination over the emergent greater Ethiopian polity, though the northern Eritrean highlands were ceded to the Italians in 1896.

In many ways, therefore, the emergence of an enlarged Ethiopia as an independent modern African state was essentially a survivor of a former indigenous political paramountcy which had already been expanding as a result of an internally induced process of military expansion rather than being the outcome of external European colonial conquest and territorial annexation as the majority of the African modern states had been. The newly incorporated conquered largely Oromo and Sidama territories were directly settled and administered by royally appointed governors and military generals with their settler officers and soldiers functioning as provincial garrisons and administrators. All Shawan, north Ethiopian, assimilated Oromo and Gurage settlers, their families and retainers were established in the conquered territories as land – holding settlers. They were supported for their livelihood by the agricultural produce and the surplus labour services of the tribute and tax – paying subject peasants who farmed the lands allotted to them in the lieu of salaries. In most cases the settlers supplemented their sustenance by the produce and labour of their own slaves and participation in local trading activities.

The politically and militarily dominant Shawan Amhara conquerors were distinguishably dissimilar ethnically and culturally from their largely Oromo and Sidama subject population whom they had forcefully subjected, oppressively and exploitatively governed. In addition the ruling Shawan Amhara and their conquered subjects had undergone very distinctively different historical experiences over the centuries during which they had developed their respective separate socio – political institutions and identities. In these respects, therefore, it would not be unjustifiable to agree with the contention that the position of the Shawan Amhara visa – vis their largely Oromo and Sidamo subject population was not necessarily different from that of any one of European colonial powers elsewhere in Africa below the Sahara. The only exception, perhaps, was that they were Africans in origin.

Under direct rule of the Shawan governing authorities and the privilged status of the settler communities, most of whom were governing officials as well, the subject largely Oromo and Sidama peoples suffered much oppression and exploitation. The only exceptions who escaped this fate were the assimilated members of the former
ruling families, the balabbats, who became titled officials and landholders whose interests were closely identified with the continuation of Shawan rule and the systematic application of its policies. As a consequence the bases were laid for the resultant division of the society in the newly annexed conquered provinces into two distinct class formations. On the one hand there were the politically dominant, economically and socially privileged minorities represented by the landholding governing officials, settlers and assimilated local notables. On the other hand were the powerless, oppressively and exploitatively governed majority of landless tribute and tax – paying subject tenants. The division and dichotomy between the two groups has been further compounded by the exaggerated belief on the part of the Shawan Amhara conquerors and the northern Ethiopians in the assumed superiority of their ethnic origin and culture and the corresponding inferiority of those of their Oromo and Sidama subjects.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Units of the Shawan Royal Army: Their Commanders and Numerical Size

Appendix B: Letter of Emperor Yohannes IV to Kaiser Welhelm I, Samara, 14 Yakkatit, 1973 (17 February, 1881) complainin about two Turco – Egyptian aggression and outlining Ethiopia’s territorial claims.

Appendix C: Letter of Emperor Menilek II to Kaiser Wilhelm II, Addis Ababa, 14 Miyaza 1883 (21 April, 1891); i e Menilek’s circular letter which was addresses to the European powers outlining Ethiopia’s territorial claims.

Appendix D: Maps.
Appendix A
Units of the Shawan Royal Army: Their Commanders and Numerical Size
According to Pietro Antonelli’s Report, dated
Addis Ababa, 23.11.1887 in ASMAI 36/5-43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Unit</th>
<th>Name of Title of its Commander</th>
<th>Numerical Size of the Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balamwal</td>
<td>Shalaqa Taché</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zebenga</td>
<td>Assalafi Gebru and Haile</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snaiderage</td>
<td>Shalaqa Gabru Gabeiu</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zammanage</td>
<td>Sheika Shalaqa Adeno Goshu</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faras Zebenga</td>
<td>Balambaras Damptu</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eka Biet</td>
<td>Bajerond Atanafe</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwada</td>
<td>Ato Balcha</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciagne</td>
<td>Azaj Sinkie</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mad Biet</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>0,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sega Biet</td>
<td>Shalaqa Agussio</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tej Biet</td>
<td>Asalafi Gabieu</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gasciagiage</td>
<td>Balambaras Deballo</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugamae</td>
<td>Balderas Banti</td>
<td>0,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baleggi</td>
<td>Ato Wald Hanni</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gondare</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghindebel</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neftenya</td>
<td>Turk Basha Dejach Makuria</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>64,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:–
Soldiers of the last three units were equipped with firearms. Only the Neftenya were commanded by the Turk Basha; the Gondare and Ghindebel units had no special commanders, but were usually placed under the command of the various generals who led the Shawan armies during the military campaigns of conquest.

Armies of The Provincial Shawan Generals/Governors
And their Numerical Size
(According to Pietro Antonelli’s Report dated,
Addis Ababa, 23.11.1887 in ASMAI 36/5-43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names and Titles of Generals/Governors</th>
<th>Names of Their Provinces</th>
<th>Numerical Size of their Armies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ras Gobana Daci</td>
<td>(Governor Faras-Tafar, the Oromo Gibe region and Wallagga up to Fadasi; composed for the most part of cavalry)</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ras Darge Sahle</td>
<td>(Governor of Salale, Arussi and half of the Ittu Oromo country)</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sellassie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Mangasha</td>
<td>(Governor of Efrata, Ghedem, Tumuga, Artuma, Gurage and Jillé Oromo country)</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Governorship Description</td>
<td>Troops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Makuria</td>
<td>(Holder of the Turk Basha command post, beside the governorship of Gola province)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Walde Gabriel</td>
<td>(Governor of Chercher, half of the Ittu Oromo country, and half the Danakil (Afar) country up to Mullu)</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Walie</td>
<td>(Governor of the provinces of Midda, Aiafec and Waramba)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Tesamma Nado</td>
<td>(Governor of Gumma and Sullubor)</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Woldie Gabriel</td>
<td>(Governor of Soddo and Gurage)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Wolde Giorgis</td>
<td>(Governor of Limmu and Botar)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Basha Mariam</td>
<td>(Governor of Ghera and Kaffa)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Haile Nado</td>
<td>(Governor of Bacio and Nonno Oromo)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Ammen Shawa</td>
<td>(Governor of Ciabo)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Makonnen Sayfu</td>
<td>(Governor of Metta, Becio, part of The Galam and Harar)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Desta</td>
<td>(Governor of Chaliya)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Mammye Dajach</td>
<td>(Governor of Ghishie)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Mashasha Worke</td>
<td>(Governor of Derra)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajach Mashasha Sayfu</td>
<td>(Governor of Ginbibiet and Amoro)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitawrari Waddajo</td>
<td>(Governor of Konto and Kullo)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitawrari Zewdie</td>
<td>(Governor of Minjar and Dubo Godja)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitawrari Tekla Mariam</td>
<td>(Governor of the Mecia Oromo)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitawrari Ifru Mariam</td>
<td>(Governor of Lalo Meder)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qagnazmach Ceno Qagnazmach Hapte</td>
<td>(Governor of Antochia, Governor of Warra Gano, much of the provinces of Abbu, Maroqo, Jillé and Liban, beside being responsible for the Monarch’s oxen)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>114,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other small armies mobilised by the king’s agafari, then the Turk-Basha Zamare, and other unites formed by junior Shalaqas and Fitawraris held no provincial governorships, but usually followed the king with their modest arms and followers during a military campaign (the “Oa’ Senku”) 3,000
*Other combatants who voluntarily joined the Shawan armies en-route during a military campaigns (the “Fanno”) 15,000
Total 18,000
Notes:-
(I) The overall total numerical size of all the Shawan armies (Royal Unites (64,000), armies of provincial generals /governors (114,000) and other auxiliary units (18,000) was about 196,000
(ii) Soldiers of the gondare, Ghindebel and neftenya royal units were then under the command of the various generals who governed the recently conquered territories to help in keeping the conquered peoples under subjection. In the event of a new military campaign being launched they could be recalled to participate.
(ii) Their number in the recently conquered territories was about 34,000 men, but their numbers could be increased by about 50% if the need arose.
(iv) Of all the Shawan forces only about 50,000 were armed with firearms, and even so only 12,000 of them were armed with good modern weapons, i.e. repeating rifles; 18,000 were armed with double-barell guns, 2,000 with matchlocks and flintlocks and the rest with assorted imprecise old models.

The Military Parade Held on 1 March 1903 on the Occasion of Celebrating the Seventh Anniversary of the Victory of Adwa

On 1 March 1903 Emperor Menilek II reviewed an impressive five to six hours long military parade held at Janhoy Meda in Addis Ababa on the occasion of celebrating the seventh anniversary of the victory of Adwa, the teskar (“memorial”) for fellow countrymen who had fallen at the battlefield and feast of St. Giorgis as well. Participants in the parade and the weapons that were displayed by their soldiers, in the order in which they marched, were:-

1- Fitawrari Habte Giorgis (the imperial Fitawrari, and Governor of Borana, Soddo, Ammeiya, Cabo and Gurge) with 30,000 rifles
2- Ras Walde Giorgis (the emperor’s first cousin and brother – In- law; governor of Limmu, Kaffa, Kullo and Konta) with 32,000 "
3- Afa – Negus Nessibu (the governor of Gomma) with 15,000 "
4- Dajach Demesse (the governor of Lega, Wallagga, Amoro, Gudru and Bani Shanqu) with 30,000 "
5- Dajach Lul Saggad (the governor of Arussi and Bali) with 12,000 "
6- Dajach Abate (the governor of Lemo, Kambata and Chechego with 20,000 "
7- Dajach Balcha (the governor of Sidamo) with 13,000 "
8- Ras Waldie (the governore of Fadji, Dirma, Jamma and Derra) with 15,000 "
9- Dajach Mashasha Walde (the governor of Efrata, Gedem, Queost and Temmu) with 9,000 "
10- Dajach Wube (the former husband of Woizero Zawditu; and the governor of Golla) with 9,000 "
11- Azaj Bezzabbeh and Azaj Ze-Amanuel (the respective administrators of the royal estates of the emperor and the empress) with 10,000 "
12- Ras Mikael (the governor of Wallo, Warra – Himenu, Saint, Borana, Ambasal and Aussa) with 70,000 "
13- Ras Tessemma (the governor of Ilubabour and the terr- itories beyond the Gueb river in the far south west) with 30,000 "

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14- Dajach Lemma (the younger brother of Ras Walde Giorgis; 
and the governor of Gofa and neighbouring negroid 
districts with 12,000
The overall total 307,000


Notes:-
Apart from the above-mentioned 307,000 riflemen who took part in the 
military parade there were 90,000 soldiers of the standing imperial army who were 
equipped with repeat-firing rifles as well as at least 100,000 riflemen belonging to the 
avarmyes of the six other provincial governors who were absent from the occasion. These 
were Ras Makonnen, Ras Wale, Ras Gugsa, Wagshum Gwangul, Ras Bessabbeh and 
Ras Mangasha-Atikem; the respective governors of Harar and the adjacent Isa and 
Ogaden Somalis, Yejju, Bagemder, Semien, Gojjam and Damot.¹ For the most part their 
absence was due to the purpose of securing the maintenance of law and order in the 
respective provinces beside the need to avoid bringing huge numbers of soldiers to the 
capital so soon after the end of the famine and epidemics. Furthermore, the 
preoccupation on Ras Makonnen at Harar and his army with fighting the Somali 
followers of Sayyid Muhammad ‘Abdallāh Hasan and the need for Wube and his forces 
in keeping watch over the disturbed conditions in Tigré province following the 
imprisonment of Ras Mangasha Yohannes were other significant considerations.² 

After the military parade was ended the 90,000 troops of the standing imperial 
army gave a demonstrative display of the use of machine gun, cannon and rifle firing. 
All in all the overall total number of the rifles in the possession of Menilek and his 
various provincial armies was estimated as at least 600,000 by the beginning of 1903. 
They were of diverse types; but mostly repeat – firing Remington, Wetterley, Martini 
and Gras models.³

² - Ibid., note 2 on p. 507 by de Coppet.
³ - Ibid., p. 505.