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State and Society on Ethiopia's Northwestern Borderlands: Chilga *Awraja*, 1935 -1991

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAU	Addis Ababa University
AAUP	Addis Ababa University Press
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
APCs	Agricultural Producers Co-operatives
DMUAC	Debre Markos University Archive Center
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EPDM	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement.
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
EPRA	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Army
HoF	House of Federation
HSIU	Haile Sellassie I University
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Studies
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
NALAE	National Archives and Library Agency of Ethiopia
NGAZRO	North Gondar Administrative Zone Record Office
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PA	Peasants' Association
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council
SCs	Service Co-operatives
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tegray People Liberation Front
WMTMAC	Wolde Mesqel Tariku Memorial Archive Center
WPE	Workers Party of Ethiopia

Glossary of Terms

Abba – a religious father in Amharic

Abägaz - an official who governed roughly a district or a little greater in the early 1940s.

Abujädid –imported cotton sheets (often ofAmerica or Japanese make) used for making clothes

Abun - bishop.

Afänegus -- "mouth of a king", chief of justice under the king

Afersata – a system when a crime was committed, all the inhabitants of a locality were gathered and confined in an enclosure until the guilty person was discovered

Aläqa – a title given to a head of a major church or a monastery, a learned priest, a title often bestowed on scholars versed in traditional education

Asrat- a tax tithe

Ato – a title equivalent to 'Mr'

Aţebiya Daňa – unpaid official with minor judicial power in a locality

Aqeň – the first *gult* holder granted by the state and they are ancestors of *balabats*

Amolé – bar salt.

Amesa Aläqa -- Sergeant

Aser Aläqa - Corporal

Awraja – In the early 1940s it was a region later called governorate-general (province); in post 1946 it roughly mean Sub-province

Azaž - 'commander', chief of the imperial court

Bäjerond - royal treasurer

Balabat – originally hereditary owners of *rest* land

Balambaras - low level administrative title, 'head of a step flat topped hill'

Banda – Ethiopians who supported the Italians in the occupation period as fighters

Baša – a low-level government official title given by the Italians in the occupation period

Belata – a title generally signifying learning, given in the 20th century to government officials

Berr- the standard Ethiopian currency unit

Bimbash -- a Sudanese (Egyptian) title equivalent to Major or Company officer

Bitwädäd - most favored courtier, imperial counselor, army commander

Buda – to possess the power of evil eye

Chäw – salt

Chiqa mar – about one *gundo* (about 19 kilogram) honey tribute that a *Chiqa šum* used to pay to the state at the end of his tenure

Chiqa qolo – a tribute that a *Chiqa šum* collected for himself from the peasant, about one *quna* grain from each farmer in his domain

Chiqa šum - an official who had the lowest link between the government and the peasant

Commissario - Italian sub-provincial governor

Däbtära – unordained clergy, a learned cleric often with attributes of astrology and intrigue

Däjjazmač –'commander of the gate', a politico-military title below *ras*

Dar (Arabic) -- land or home of people

Därg – military government of Ethiopia

Dawula – a sack made of goat skin, a unit of grain measurement, it was equivalent to 20 *quna*

Echägé - the highest Ethiopian ecclestical until the appointment of bishops in 1929

Endärasé – 'in my place', a viceroy or representative of a higher authority

Etägé - a title reserved for queens and queens mother

Färäsäňa or *Gult gäž* – a governor of a specific local place or a non monastery parish

Fitawrari - 'commander of the vanguard', a title below a *Däjjazmač*

Gäbäya – market place

Gäbäz – a church official who manages its internal affairs, the secular overlord of a church

Gäbbar - tribute paying peasant, owner of *rest* land

Gaša – a unit of land measurement made from skin and one gaša had 66.75 meters long rope, equivalent to 40 hectares.

Gäž - governor

Gemjabét –treasury

Gerazmač – 'commander of the left', a politico-military title above *balambaras*

Gult - it was a non-hereditary right given to individuals and institutions to collect tribute and taxes from peasants of a given land

Gundo – a unit made from clay, one gundo equivalent to 19 kilograms of honey.

Jebel (Arabic) -- mountain or hill

Käntiba -- Mayor, originally it was restricted to the town of Gondar

Khalifa (Arabic) --- successor

Khore (Arabic) --- stream or stream bed

Kuaja (Arabic) - rich man

Le'elt – princess, a title borne by daughters of royal family.

Lej – 'child', honorific title generally reserved for sons of the royal family and upper nobility.

Leul - prince, a title borne by sons of royal family; *leul ras* for upper nobility *ras*

Mäkuanent – nobility whose rank was earned by service

Mämeher - a head of a monastery

Mar – honey

Marigéta - a learned cleric above a priest

Mäto Aläqa – Lieutenant

Mäsafent - hereditary nobility

Meketel Wäräda – a sub-district administrative unit

Meketel Mäto Aläqa – Second-Lieutenant

Meketel Aser Aläqa – Lance-Corporal

Meslané - a sub-district governor in the early 1940s

Mofär Zämät – a farming system by moving to a distant locality from one's residence

Nägadras - head of merchants, originally leader of caravan merchants

Nebured- head of Aksum Tsion Church

Negus – king

Negusä Nägäst - king of kings or emperor

Qäbälé – in the early 1940s it was an area equivalent to a district; later on it means a local area or parish

Qadi - Islamic Judge

Qäňazmač –'commander of the right', a politico-military title above *gerazmač*

Qés – priest

Qel -- a unit of honey measurement made from calabash equivalent to 19 kilograms

Qäň Géta- Chorister of the right

Quna – a unit of grain measurement, it could be 4 or 5 kilograms

Ras – 'head', a greatest politico-military title under a *negus*

Residente – Italian governor of a sub-province

Rest – hereditary land use right

Ras Bitwädäd – a title combining the power of ras and the imperial favored of the *bitwädädes*

Restä-gult – a hereditary *gult*

Šaläqa – a local representative of a higher authority, it now equivalent to the army rank of major.

Šambäl --- Captain

Šemeq – local militiamen.

Šum – appointee

Šumšer – appointment and dismissal of offcials

Šumäňa – an appointed official, in between *meslané* and *abägaz*

Şähafi Te'ezaz – head of the royal scribes, keeper of the royal seal, title of the Minster of Pen after 1907

Ţaqa - a band of cloth with about two meters width and about 33 meters length

Ţäqlay Gezat - an administrative unit in the imperial period consisting of several *awrajas,* equivalent to province

Wäräda – in the early1940s, it was a sub-province; after 1946 it means a district

Wärét – a unit for measuring gold; one wärét = 28 grams

Zämäča – campaign

Zällan – transhumant pastoralist

Yägobäz aläqa – head of local militiamen

Key to the Transliteration System of the IES

I. The seven sounds of the Ethiopic alphabet are represented as follows:

Values	Symbol	Example
1st order (ge'ez)	ä	ቡ = Bä
2nd order (ka'eb)	u	ቡ = Bu
3rd order (sales)	i	ቢ = Bi
4th order (rab'e)	a	ባ = Ba
5th order (hames)	é	ቤ = Bé
6th order (sades)	e	ቤ = Be
7th order (Sab'e)	o	ቦ = Bo

II . On the sixth order of a word, it must be noted that é will be suffixed to a letter only if that letter is vocalized or stressed. Otherwise, it would not be required at all. As a general rule the "é" is not required when the sixth form is the last letter of a word. Example, ሹም= šum.

III. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows.

Symbol	Example
ሸ = š	ሹም= šum
ቸ = č	ዘመቻ = Zämäča
ኘ = ň	ተገኘ = Tägäňä
ዠ= ž	ገዥ = Gäž
ጀ = j	ደጃዝማች = *Däjjazmač*

IV. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows.

Symbol	Example
ቀ = Q	ቀበሌ = Qäbälé
ጠ = Ţ	ጣና = Ţana

ጨ = Ch	ጭቃ ሹም = Cheqa šum
ፀ = ş	ፀሀይ = Şähay
ጰ = P	ጴጥሮስ = Péţros

V. Germination should always be indicated by doubling. Example ታደሰ= Taddässä

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Preface

This dissertation is a regional history of Chilga *Awraja* which examines a set of political, administrative, social and economic themes that cover the period 1935 to 1991. The French *Annales* historians have argued that it is difficult in historical studies to separate the political, social and economic themes of a region and examine them separately because these spheres are interdependent and interconnected with each other. They argued and have convincingly demonstrated that the better way of studying a region's history is to examine an interrelated set of themes ('total history') rather than exclusively focus on one particular theme. However, applying an integrated history on a wider geographical area is a challenging task. Therefore, the better approach is to examine these themes together within the confines of a relatively manageable geographical area. That is why I selected Chilga sub-province from the wider geographical region of northwestern Ethiopian borderlands as a focus of my dissertation. This regional history is mainly reconstructed from the perspective of center-periphery relations by taking into consideration the role of the physical environment, power relations and economic processes that influenced the course of history of the region.

Several factors encouraged me to select and write my dissertation on Chilga *Awraja*. First, my father, the late Gétanäh Eyassu, had told me several stories about the region since my childhood. His information influenced me to study the history of Chilga sub-province. Second, when I was a boy in the late 1980s, I heard various rumors and sensational stories about the resistance led by an EPRP female leader nicknamed Ayalnäš against the Därg in Quara and its surroundings. These stories stimulated my imagination and pulled me to Chilga and its history. Third, when I was collecting archival documents in Gondar city in 2010 for my MA thesis on the history of Dära district of South Gondar, I stumbled on archival materials about Chilga *Awraja* in the record office of the then North Gondar Administration Zone. These documents revealed to me the potentials of doing a history of the region in the future. Fourth, in recent years, parts of the Qemant people in Chilga had organized themselves to demand recognition as a separate ethnic group from the Amhara as well as a separate self-administration. This aroused my interest to study their history and historical relationship with their neighbors especially the Amhara. Fifth, there has been a boundary dispute between Ethiopia (mainly along the Amhara National Regional State) and the Sudan especially in 2000s and 2010s. This dispute pushed me to know more about the history of the area. Hence it was a combination of these factors that encouraged me to study the history of Chilga *Awraja*.

The title of the dissertation is "State and Society on Ethiopian's Northwestern Borderlands: Chilga *Awraja,* 1935-1991." Although scholars define the term state in slightly different ways, most commonly it constitutes the people, land, and government of a country. State is a politically organized unity of the people while government is the agency of the state. Society is manly defined as the sum total relationships among people. The year 1935 is taken as the

commencement year for this dissertation because of the beginning of the Italian invasion and its five years' military occupation that changed dramatically the relationship among the local people in Chilga *Awraja*. The year 1991, on the other hand, is the cut-off date for this dissertation because of the end of the Därg regime and the radical reorganization of the country along ethnic and language lines.

Sources and Methodology

This dissertation is written using archival documents and oral information gathered between 2016 and 2019. The major source of the archival documents that I used in this research is the former North Gondar Administrative Zone Record Office (NGAZRO) which under the current administrative rearrangement is called the Central Gondar Administrative Zone. The record office contains a large amount of documents on the political, administrative, security, military, health, modern education, trade and agricultural issues of the province dealing with the period from liberation from Italian military occupation to the present. The archival materials that I used include administrative letters sent to and from districts and *awrajas* of the province to the office of the governor-general, field visit reports by provincial officials, petitions of the local people to the governors of the province, minutes of provincial official meetings, letters sent from and to the province to the Ministry of Interior, and letters sent from and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia on matters relating to the boundary with the Sudan. In the archives, letters are attached together in a file or a folder fastened sequentially according to their dates.

The major problem with the archives in Gondar is however their storage in a disorganized manner. Most of the files have neither folder numbers nor file names which posed a problem with citing these sources. The other problem of the archives is that since sometimes more than

300 leafs of letters are fastened together within a case it was difficult to bring out a letter from the midst of these to make copies for easy reading and referral. Sometimes even the dates and reference numbers of letters have been punctured while fastening them making it difficult to figure out the dates and reference number of the files. In some cases, parts of the letters are also missed when they are captured on a camera. Since there is shortage of shelves in the records office, archive folders are placed one over the other and filled with dust. What is regrettable is that I heard that some of the recent files relating to the EPRDF period have been burned down due partly to shortage of shelves that could be used for storing them. Other files are also merely dumped on the floor facilitating their damage.

The second major source of the documents that I used in the dissertation is the National Archives and Library Agency of Ethiopia (NALAE). The archives at the NALAE are well organized and arranged with code numbers that include the folder numbers and file numbers. The archives found in NALAE are mostly similar to or are copies of those documents I consulted in Gondar. Sometimes archives that are not found in Gondar are found in NALAE and archives that are not found in NALAE are found in Gondar. The problem of more than 300 leafs of letters fastened together and the dates and reference numbers of the letters that are punctured for fastening which I mentioned in connection with the Gander archives is also a problem one encounters at NALAE. Moreover, the page restriction i.e. at a maximum of 15 pages to make a photo copy or take a digital photo from each file number is a challenge that I faced. These drawbacks made my work time consuming and tiresome since I had to take notes by hand.

The third source of archival documents utilized in the dissertation comes from the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) at Addis Ababa University. Archives in this section are copied only by

hand writing. The IES is especially the major source of periodical materials like newspapers and magazines. The other places that I collected archival materials are the Wolde Mesqel Tariku Memorial Archive Center (WMTMAC) of the AAU. The archives I found at WMTMAC are limited and they related to land tax and land granting to commercial farmers. I also collected a few archival documents from Debre Markos University Archive Center (DMUAC) regarding Chilga's frontier relations with Gojjam. My effort to collect archival sources from the centers of the districts in Chilga sub-province was futile because the EDU and EPRP had destroyed the archives during the fighting against the Därg. However, it is possible to get the archives at Gondar thanks to the bureaucratization of the administration. That is archives sent from districts to Chilga *Awraja* are forwarded directly to the province and hence their copies are available in Gondar. My effort at collecting archival materials from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not successful because the record workers at the Ministry informed me that the archives were being relocated to a new building and would not be accessible to researchers for some time.

Since the primary focus of the dissertation is recovering the history and agency of the local people, I have given throughout the dissertation emphasis to the various petitions written by different sections of the society to different government offices. Mostly, letters written by local government officials to officials above them do not completely elide the voice of the local people. Many of them were written based on petitions of the local people and personal observation during field visits to people within their administrative jurisdictions. There are countless letters of this kind written by local officials which attach petitions of the local people to the higher officials above them. In such a case, I mostly cite only the first written petitions and omit from citing other letters in the footnotes. Thus, my experience in the field shows that local

government officials acknowledged the voice of the local people in their letters sent to higher officials. Relatively, the number of petitions written by Amhara and Qemant residents of Chilga is less than those by Gumuz, Kunfäl and Bétä Israelites during the imperial period. I have not come across petitions written by Qemant which suggests the Qemant and Amhara were treated identically by local officials; they were appointed at different levels of the local government without discrimination.

The second category of source that I used in this dissertation is oral information. I gathered this information by interviewing selected individuals who were involved in different aspects of Chilga *Awraja's* history either as participants or observers. Most of the informants were interviewed individually; I only interviewed informants in groups one time. This was because gathering them in groups was time taking both for me as well as them since they lived apart in distant areas. Moreover, most of them have different level of information about different areas. Thus, it was hard to organize a fruitful group discussion. Oral information used to corroborate the information drawn from the archives and to fill the gaps. Several factors, however, hindered my plan to interview informants from the different ethnic groups who live in Chilga. The Kunfäl and Gumuz live in inaccessible areas that require some days of travel on foot. More importantly I could not interview them because of the instability of the area at that time. The Bétä Israelites and Wayṭo no longer live in the area. The former have gone to Israel and the latter have moved to Baher Dar town. Moreover, the declaration of the state of emergency in Ethiopia in the late 2016 and early 2017 while I was gathering sources was a major factor that hindered my research and especially my desire to interview informants.

Moreover, I believe that using oral information gathered at a time when political tensions were running high in a research area and writing history using these as a source is extremely difficult and can be dangerous and misleading. Let me take one example to illustrate my point. Due to conflict between sections of the Qemant and Amhara in Chilga district that started in 2007 and intensified in 2016 and 2017, many of the local narratives regarding the relations between these two close communities has become politicized and deviated in many cases from the recorded narratives. The Qemant activists who are struggling to get recognition for a distinct ethnic identity and self-administration for their group has propagated among sections of the Qemant the idea that they had had no good relations with the Amhara in the past and that the Amhara have been oppressive. In consequence some of my informants were suspicious of me and were not willing to give interviews at the beginning by saying "käman wägän näh" (Lit. To which group do you belong?). They also narrated a revised story about the Qemant during the Italian occupation, by representing Qemant who have worked with the Italians as anti-Italian resistance leaders and some gave me "politically correct" information when I interviewed them. For instance, when I asked them about Qemant collaborators during the Italian occupation, they firmly denied this and stated that they were five year patriots. On the other side, disappointed by the activity of Qemant activists, when I interviewed Amhara informants regarding the Qemant, they belittled them or provided denigrating information about them. One of my Amhara informants went to the extent of saying "enäzih Qemant yämärét serit yälačäwum" (lit. these Qemant were not *rest* land owners during the imperial period). Thus, I have ignored the "politically correct" information that I acquired from informants and have not used these as sources in writing this dissertation. Such information also discouraged me from interviewing Qemant on such politicized issues.

The other challenge I faced in the course of doing oral interviews especially with some literate informants relate to the problem of feedback. For example, after I interviewed an informant for about two hours, he said "bäwnätu yehen hulu yawäqhut yädäm zämänen kanäbäbeku bähuala näw" (lit. In fact, I came to know about all of these after I have read a book entitled *Yädäm Zämän*). Similarly, after I have interviewed an informant for about two hours regarding the Italian occupation period, he said "yäbäläţä lämen yehen mäşehaf alsäţehem atanäbäwum" (lit. For more information, why don't I give you this book? (Garima Tafärä's book). Some of my informants who were not eyewitnesses said "yebalal eňa gen anawqäwum" (lit. it is said, but we do not know it) whenever they suspected the veracity of a fact. Therefore, such kinds of oral information during my fieldwork forced me to depend highly on archival documents than oral informants.

Organization of Chapters

This dissertation is organized chronologically into six chapters discussing the administrative, political, social, and economic conditions of Chilga *Awraja*. It has also introduction and epilogue sections. The first chapter contains the historical background that assesses the geographical setting, the local peoples and their livelihood. It also examines the incorporation of Chilga sub-province into the 'Solomonic' state and the subsequent administrative and economic developments until 1935. The second chapter examines the responses of the local people to Italian military occupation (1936-41) by focusing on Italian colonial policy, strategies to control the resistance and the liberation of the area from Italian rule.

Chapter three and four deal with the history of Chilga sub-province during the imperial period. The third chapter examines the local administration and society in the first two decades of the post-1941 imperial period by focusing on the centralization/integration policy of the imperial government in the regional administration and economy. Chapter four deals with the socio-economic developments in Chilga *Awraja* from the early 1960s to 1974. It examines the other integrating mechanisms of the imperial government focusing on community development works and commercial agriculture. It also discusses banditry and local instability, and contraband trade in the sub-province.

The fifth and sixth chapters elaborate the history of Chilga sub-province during the Därg period. While chapter five examines the war of revolution and counter-revolution in Chilga *Awraja* during the first six years of the Därg, chapter six investigates the Därg, its socialist projects and opponents mainly EPRP in Chilga sub-province from 1980 to 1991. Frontier relations with the Sudan along Chilga sub-province is also incorporated in each chapter. Finally, with the dating system, I have used the Gregorian Calendar (G.C) by adding seven months from 11 September to 31 December and eight months from 1 January to 10 September on the Ethiopian Calendar (E.C).

Abstract

This dissertation investigates and reconstructs a history of Chilga Awraja, a region which is located along Ethiopia's northwestern borderlands adjacent to the Sudan. In Ethiopian historiography, frontier areas located along the nation's borders have not been studied properly. One of these frontier borderlands is Chilga sub-province. Although the area was well incorporated into the Ethiopian state in the 14th century and passed through major political, social and economic changes, it was following the Italian military occupation (1936-1941) that these political and socio-economic changes led to a dynamic change among the people in the

sub-province.. Thus, this dissertation seeks to analyze how the local people in Chilga sub-province reacted to the various socio-economic and political activities and integrating strategies introduced by governments based at Addis Ababa from 1935 to 1991. This dissertation is analyzed and reconstructed based on using extensively archival documents collected in Addis Ababa and Gondar and oral information gathered from informants who were participants and observers of events in Chilga sub-province. I argue that the governments based in Addis Ababa from the Italian military rulers to the Därg's socialist state had little success in integrating Chilga Awraja to the center by using the governance tools at their disposal. Hence the area remained a sanctuary for anti-government forces mainly anti-Därg opposition groups and organizations. Largely the hostile relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan since the mid-1960s partly due to boundary dispute made Chilga Awraja a bone of contention between the two states and this greatly affected the lives of the local people. I believe that this study is a useful contribution to borderland studies in Ethiopia as well as in Africa because it elucidates how governments from the center faced challenges in administering and integrating the borderlands.

Introduction

Boundary, frontier, and border are important terms used in the study of borderlands. Scholars who have conducted research on borderlands from various disciplines have analyzed the conceptual difference and resemblance among these terms.[1] International lawyers like Anthony Allott, for example, consider these terms to be the same and therefore use them interchangeably.[2] This is so because boundary negotiators and commissioners in former times have used these terms in treaties the same way interchangeably to depict a dividing line between adjacent states.[3] Moreover, there is lack of clear difference between these terms in the Anglophone world. This was due to the difficulty in the meaning between American and UK English. In British English, frontier and border may refer to both a dividing line between adjoining states as well as a region. However, in American English, border is commonly used to refer to the international boundary while frontier refers to a region along the boundary of bordering states.[4] Despite this problem, some writers use the terms boundary and border as a line and frontier as a region along the boundary which has dynamic character.[5]

A borderland is a region located along the international boundary of adjacent states and its extent is defined by its contact with the other side. When outside influences are restricted to the nearby

[1]Ian Brownlie, *African Boundaries*: *A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopedia* (London: University of California Press, 1979), 3.
[2]Anthony Allott, "Boundaries and the Law in Africa," In Carl Gösta Widstrand (eds.), *African Boundary Problems* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1969), 9.
[3] Nur Taha Hassan, "The Sudan-Ethiopia boundary: A Study in Political Geography" (PhD Diss., Durham University, 1971), 1-2. http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/7922/; Bradley J. Parker, "Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes," *American Antiquity*, Vol. LXXI, No. 1 (Jan., 2006), 77-100.
[4]Malcolm Anderson, "Boundaries, Frontiers and Borders," In Anthony Asiwaju (eds.), *Borders in Africa: An Anthology of the Policy History* (Addis Ababa: AAU/IPSS, 2015), 54; Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (Fall, 1997), 213.
[5] Raimondo Strasssoldo, "The Study of Boundaries a Systems-Oriented, Multidisciplinary, Bibliographical Essay," In Anthony Asiwaju (eds.), *Borders in Africa: An Anthology of the Policy History* (Addis Ababa: AAU/IPSS, 2015), 162.

areas of a boundary line, the borderland becomes a small area. The borderland, on the other hand, becomes a larger area when the outside impact is felt deep in the interior of the adjacent state beyond the boundary line.[6] In this dissertation, in order to avoid confusion, I will use the terms border and boundary to refer to a dividing line and frontier and borderland interchangeably to refer to a region.

Anthony Asiwaju, the well-known historian of African borderlands, stated that the application of the term frontier in African studies has two denotations. Its first usage was as a reference to a region that existed in the continent before the advent of European colonialism in the 1880s. The second usage was as a reference to a boundary and is comparatively a recent phenomenon that followed the establishment of European colonialism in the continent. Its usage as a reference to a boundary was unknown in the continent in the pre-colonial times when topographic features like rivers, hills and valleys were largely used as markers in border regions.[7] The present boundaries of African states, therefore, are products of European colonial power politics that began in the late 1880s and incorporated very little of pre-colonial African traditions, local conditions, and socio-cultural groups in their making.[8] Colonial African boundaries were first constructed on maps using rivers, watersheds, straight lines and arcs of circles (astronomical and mathematical lines) and were then demarcated on the ground.[9] The colonial boundaries therefore have been

[6]Oscar Martnez, "Borderlands and Borderlands," In Anthony Asiwaju (eds.), *Borders in Africa: An Anthology of the Policy History* (Addis Ababa: AAU/IPSS, 2015), 55.
[7]Anthony Asiwaju, "The Concept of Frontier in the Setting of States in Pre-Colonial Africa," In Anthony Asiwaju (eds.), *Borders in Africa: An Anthology of the Policy History* (Addis Ababa: AAU/IPSS, 2015), 256- 257.
[8]Brownlie, 6; Jeffrey Herbst, "The Creation and Maintenance of National Boundaries in Africa," *International Organization,* Vol. XLIII, No. 4 (Autumn, 1989), 674; Saadia Touval, "Africa's Frontiers: Reactions to a Colonial Legacy," *International Affairs,* Vol. XLII, No.4 (Oct., 1966), 641.
[9]Markus Kornprobst,"The Management of Border Disputes in African Regional Sub-Systems: Comparing West Africa and the Horn of Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. XL, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), 369; Wilbert Gooneratne and Elisabeth Mosselman, "Planning across Borders Border Regions in Eastern and Southern Africa," In Anthony Asiwaju (eds.), *Borders in Africa: An Anthology of the Policy History* (Addis Ababa: AAU/IPSS, 2015),

sources of dispute among African states after their independence.[10] Scholars indicate a slight conceptual difference between territorial disputes and boundary disputes. The former refers to a disagreement on a broader geographical area while the latter is relatively a dispute on a narrow area and borderline dividing states,[11] and I will use these terms in my study in relation to the Sudanese impact on the development commercial farming in Chilga *Awraja*.

Anthony Asiwaju, classifies borderlands studies in Africa into "traditional" and "modern" types. The "traditional" border study gives more emphasis to the delimitation and demarcation of the boundary and its effect on the relationship between adjacent states. This form of borderland study is reflected in research works done in the fields of diplomatic history, political geography, geopolitics, international relations and international law. The "modern" type of borderland study, on the other hand, gives greater weight to local communities in the borderlands. It uses local voices as sources of information, documented the local border communities political, economic, social and cultural activities and their ways of life. Studies by local historians, ethnographers, anthropologists, economists, and economic geographers are grouped under this category. Although these two forms of borderland studies have differences in emphasis, they have several common elements between them.[12] The modern type of borderland study does not totally ignore the frontier relations of the two states; rather it incorporates its impact on the local borderland communities. In the same way, the traditional form of borderland study documents a little about its impact of the relations between the two states on the local borderland communities.

579-581; Samuel Chime, "The Organization of African Unity and African Boundaries," In Carl Gösta Widstrand (eds.), *African Boundary Problems* (Uppsala: the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1969), 66.

[10]Anat Gromyko,"Colonialism and Territorial Conflicts in Africa: Some Comments," In Carl Gösta Widstrand (eds.), *African Boundary Problems* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1969), 165.

[11]Carl Gösta Widstrand, "Some African Boundary Problems: A Discussion," In Carl Gösta Widstrand (eds.), *African Boundary Problems* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1969), 169.

[12]Anthony Asiwaju, "Preface," In Anthony Asiwaju (eds.), *Borders in Africa: An Anthology of the Policy History* (Addis Ababa: AAU/IPSS, 2015), xv.

The state-centered history of the northern Ethiopian highlands with their focus on the "Great Tradition" of the Amhara and Tegré societies has been one of the limitations of Ethiopian historiography. While the history of this "Great Tradition" that had been the center of political power for centuries has been written, the history of other parts of the Ethiopian polity especially the periphery/frontier remained largely unstudied until the end of the imperial regime.[13] Scholars mainly social anthropologists and a few historians like Alessandro Triulzi were at the forefront of the historiographical re-orientation that led to the enrichment of Ethiopian studies by conducting studies on the frontier peoples of Ethiopia following the 1974 Revolution. One of the significant works in this historiographical revolution has been Donald Donham and Wendy James's edited book that came out in 1986.[14] The book is a collection of historical and anthropological essays on the southern Ethiopian borderlands. One of the significant conceptual contributions of this book was its deployment of the center-periphery model to understand the complex interplay between Addis Ababa and the peripheries in the making of modern Ethiopia. Donham and James divided the Ethiopian frontiers into two groups: the southern frontier ("new frontier") and the northern frontier (the "old frontier"). The "new frontier" was located in areas south of the Blue Nile and created following Emperor Menelik's dramatic territorial expansion of the last quarter of the 19th century. The "old frontier", on the other hand, included areas located to the north of the Blue Nile along the border with the Sudan that had existed for centuries. Although the book focused especially on the early 20th century and failed to incorporate studies on the "old" frontier, it is valuable to my study in methodological approach.

[13]John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers* (Rochester: James Curry, 2011), 19-21.
[14]Donald Donham and Wendy James (ed.), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

It is valuable in that it shows how much local sources on the frontiers are more valuable than the state sources to properly document the local history of the borderlands.

A more recent scholarly work on Ethiopia which has adopted Donham and James's approach but differs in terms of area studied, period covered and discipline is John Markakis's book.[15] Markakis primary focus in the book is the process and prospects of nation-state building in Ethiopia on the lowland peripheries mainly inhabited by pastoralists (Afar, Somali, Borena, Gambella, Beni Shangul Gumuz, and South Omo). Using a center-periphery approach, Markakis shows how the center differs from the periphery basically in terms of uneven power relations, although geography (distance and topography), cultural discrimination and economic marginalization are the other determining elements. Markakis examines the mechanisms that the Ethiopia governments used to integrate the frontier to the national political economy. Unlike Donham and James's book, Markakis discusses the binary relations between the two since the last quarter of the 19th century to the 2000s and divides the Ethiopian periphery into "highland" peripheries and "lowland peripheries". The "highland" periphery is the Ethiopian highland situated to the southwest of Addis Ababa. The "lowland" frontier that has different names as "fringe periphery", "outer periphery" and "hostile periphery" is basically the pastoralists' lowland. Thus, his book is valuable to me especially his methodological approach of center-periphery relations. His analysis of how the frontier is different from the center in terms of unequal power relations is significant and has helped my study of Chilga's history.

Inspired by Donham and James's path-breaking works, various historians have tried to study the various frontiers of Ethiopia. One of these scholars is Richard Pankhurst who wrote a book

[15]John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers* (Rochester: James Curry, 2011).

focusing on the history of the Ethiopia borderlands.[16] The work is primarily an overview of the frontier regions of Ethiopia and their relationships with the center and the outside world from ancient times to 1800. Pankhurst relied predominantly on royal chronicles and travelers accounts as his primary source. The work, however, lacks depth of analysis and discussion of frontier processes that center on the actions and perceptions of frontier people. Thus, it is a good example of the traditional kind of borderland study that has been identified by Asiwaju. But it is still a valuable contribution to the borderland studies in Ethiopia and it demonstrates the need to use local archival and oral sources to document the history of the frontier people properly.

Belete Bizuneh, Tim Carmichael, Cedric Barnes and Samuel Negash are the other historians who examine the center-periphery relations in the peripheral region of eastern and southern Ethiopia and the reactions of the local people mainly pastoralists to the integration mechanisms of the central government.[17] While Carmichael whose study focuses on Harär town and Barnes who examines the Somali region limited their discussion to mid-20th century, Belete who studied Boräna and Samuel who studied the Ogadén region extended their study period up to the end of the Därg regime. These studies are modern types of borderland studies that privilege the lives and actions of border people and their agency. Methodologically, they demonstrate the relevance of local sources in fashioning more inclusive and dynamic histories of frontier people and their interaction with the state.

[16] Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands: Essay in Regional History from Ancient times to the end of the 18th Century* (Asmara: Red Sea Press, 1997).

[17]Belete Bizuneh, "An Agrarian Polity and its Pastoral Periphery: State and Pastoralism in the Borana Borderlands (Southern Ethiopia), 1897-1991" (PhD Diss, Boston University, 2008); Tim Carmichael, "Approaching Ethiopian History: Addis Abäba and Local Governance in Harär, c.1900-1950" (PhD Diss, Michigan State University, 2001) Cedric Barnes, "The Ethiopian State and its Somali Periphery *circa* 1888-1948"(PhD Diss, Trinity College, 2000); Samuel Negash, "Pastoralism and Settlement in the Ogaden Region, 1930- 1991" (PhD Diss, AAU, 2013).

Scholarly works conducted on the "old" frontiers of Ethiopia are very few and focus predominantly on the pre-20th century. Some of these studies like those by Alessandro Triulzi and Tsega Endalew focus on the present day Beni Shangul Gumuz region.[18] Triulzi reconstructs the history of the area in the 19th century by focusing on the historical experiences of the frontier people on the basis of local sources. He is a pioneer historian in breaking away from the state-centered approach of Ethiopian historiography and in reconstructing a regional history of the area. In fact, his selection of the period prior to its incorporation into the Ethiopian state forced him to rely exclusively on local sources. Tsega has studied inter-ethnic relations in Mätäkkäl region from 1898 to 1991. These studies are important contributions to borderland studies in Ethiopia, although they are not a type of center-periphery relations history. They also shaped my study by showing the importance of giving high emphasis to local sources of the frontier society.

How the Ethiopian kings and regional lords made military expeditions and collected slaves (mainly Gumuz) in the western borderlands for centuries is the focus of studies by Richard Pankhurst, Abdussamad H. Ahmad, and Wendy James.[19] While Pankhurst as usual used extensive secondary materials, travelers' accounts and Ethiopian royal chronicles, James largely depends on Pankhurst's works and the Dutch traveler Juan Maria Schuver's account. Unlike James and Pankhurst, the selection of the early three decades of the 20th century as his period of

[18]Alessandro Triulzi. *Salt, Gold and Legitimacy: prelude to the history of no-man's land Bela Shangul, Wallaga, Ethiopia (ca.1800-1898)* (Napoli, 1981);Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätakkäl (Ethiopia), 1898-1991* (Harrassowitz,Verlage,Wiesbaden, 2006).

[19]Richard Pankhurst, "The History of Bareya, Šanqella and Other Ethiopian Slaves from the Borderlands of the Sudan," In *Paper Submitted to the Conference on Ethiopian Feudalism held by the Research and Publications Department of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University and the Historical Society of Ethiopia*. (Addis Ababa, 1976); Wendy James, "A 'Frontier Mosaic': Ethiopia's western edge," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies,* Vol. XL, No. 1/2 (June-December 2007); Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "The Gumuz of the Lowlands of Western Gojjam: The Frontier in History 1900-1935," *Africa*, Vol. L, No. 1 (1995); Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz, Ethiopia: Border Enclaves in History, 1897-1938," *Journal of African History*, Vol. XL, No. 3 (1999).

study helped Abdussamad to employ oral information and Sudanese intelligence archives to document the history of slave trade among the Gumuz and elephant hunting in the forests of Quara. However, like many of his articles, Abdussamad's two articles that focused on Gumuz have no major difference in the internal contents except their titles. These studies are important contribution to the borderlands studies in Ethiopia and they shaped my study by showing how much the western Ethiopian borderlands were exploited economically by officials from the highland areas due to unequal power relations and helped me to study such marginalized areas like the lowlands of Chilga sub-province.

The largely cordial and sometimes hostile relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan through Chilga sub-province are the other issue that has caught the attention of scholars. Merid Wolde Aregay and Sergew Hable Sellassie and Richard Pankhurst have produced valuable studies that shed light on the relationships between the Gondarine Kingdom and the Funj Kingdom of the Sudan.[20] While Merid and Sergew's pioneering paper examines the political, economic and social relationships between the two states up to the end of the 18th century, Pankhurst's lengthy paper reconstructs the economic and cultural ties between the two states up to the mid-19th century. Although these studies fall within the traditional type of borderland study, they are useful studies to the Ethiopia borderlands since they make some reference to Chilga. They have also helped me to realize the importance of conducting a detailed study on the frontier area of Chilga based on local sources.

[20] Merid Wolde Aregay and Sergew Hable Sellassie, "Sudanese-Ethiopian Relations before the 19th Century," In Yusuf Fadl Hasan (eds.), *International Conference:Sudan in Africa*, Sudan Research Unit, Faculty of Arts, (Khartoum. University of Khartoum, 1968).
Richard Pankhurst, "Ethiopia's Economic and Cultural Ties with the Sudan from the Middle Ages to the Mid-Nineteenth century," *Sudan Notes and Records,* Vol. LVI (1975).

The hostile relations between Ethiopia and Sudan reached its height in the late 1880s when the Mahdists invaded Chilga and raided as far as Gondar. This dramatic period has been a source of interest by both popular and professional historians. Popular historians are represented by Heruy Wäldäsellasé and Täklä Tsadeq Mäkuriya.[21] Heruy's pioneering work is a small account based on oral information that he gathered from Gondar and Tegray regions. Since it is nearest to the event in time and place, Heruy's study is served as a reference work for various researchers. Täklä Tsadeq's work is a broad study on the reign of Yohannes IV in which the Ethio-Sudan conflict and Mätäma is presented as an epic battle in Ethiopia's fight to maintain its sovereignty. Various professional historians have also studied the Ethio-Sudan conflict with varying degrees of depth, analysis, emphasis and variety of sources.[22] Most of them pursue a common methodology in which official correspondences between the two states form the core corpus of sources. However, these studies failed to consult local sources from the frontier areas and hence remain traditional borderlands studies. These studies are valuable to my study since the event had a long lasting impact on the lives of people in Chilga sub-province especially in the 1960s when the borderland was given to commercial farmers.

The hostile relations between Ethiopia and Sudan were followed by long-drawn negotiation and agreement between Ethiopia and British Sudan to delimit their common boundary in the late 1890s and early 1900s. This theme has attracted historians, geographers, and political scientists

[21]Heruy Wäldäsellasie, *Itiyopeya ena Mätäma: Yä-aşé Yohannes Tarik Bacheru* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopia Matämiya, 1910 E.C); Täklä Tsadeq Mäkuriya, *Aşé Yohannes Ena Yä-Iteyopeya Andenät* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1982 E.C).

[22]G.Sanderson, "Conflict and Co-Operation between Ethiopia and the Mahdist State, 1884- 1898," *Sudan Notes and Records,* Vol.L (1969); Iris Seri-Hersch,"Transborder Exchanges of People, Things, and Representations: Revisiting the Conflict Between Mahdist Sudan and Christian Ethiopia, 1885–1889," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol.XLIII, No.1 (2010); Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Haggai Erlich, "Ethiopia and the Mahdiyya-You Call Me a Chicken?," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies,*Vol. XL,No.1/2 (June-December 2007); Richard Caulk, "Yohannes IV, the Mahdists, and the colonial partition of north-east Africa," *Transafrican Journal of History,*Vol. I, No.2 (July 1971)

who have done scholarly works with varying degrees of depth, analysis, emphasis and sources.[23] These studies show how Ethiopia's northwestern border area, especially Mätäma and its surroundings, was a bone of contention in the negotiation between the two countries and how Emperor Menelik II (r.1889-1911) had a firm stand on Mätäma town. Since Harold Marcus has done his pioneer paper in 1963, before the Sudan raised officially the boundary issue with Ethiopia, he depicted their boundary as a stable one. However, since other researchers conducted their research after the Sudan raised the boundary case in 1966, they indicated how their boundary was a source of dispute and hostile relations between the two states.

Their boundary, mainly the fertile land from Sätit to Dinder Rivers, is a bone of contention in the relations of Ethiopia and the Sudan since the 1960s when they started official negotiation to demarcate/ re-demarcate it. This has been a source of interest for researchers like Mulatu Wubneh, Belete Belachew and Luca Puddu who have conducted largely historical studies.[24] They have a difference in their approach of examining the case. While Mulatu, a geographer, in his book, discusses Mätäma and its surroundings using local oral and archival sources, Belete and Puddu do not utilize such local sources at large. Unlike Mulatu, Belete and Puddu rely on the

[23]Harold G. Marcus, "Ethio-British Negotiations Concerning the Western Border with Sudan, 1896-1902," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. IV, No.1 (1963); Bahru Zewde, "The Relation between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier, 1898-1935" (PhD Diss, University of London, 1976); David Hamilton, "Ethiopia's Frontiers: The Boundary Agreements and their Demarcation, 1896-1956" (PhD Diss, Oxford University, 1974); Wondwosen Teshome, "Colonial Boundaries of Africa: The Case of Ethiopia's Boundary with Sudan," Ege Akademik Bakış / Ege *Academic Review,* 9 (1) 2009); Nur Taha Hassan, "The Sudan-Ethiopia boundary…"; Mesfin Wolde Mariam *et al*, "Yä-Iteyopeya Ena Yä-Sudan Wäsän Tarik" In three Vols. (1975 E.C), IES, Ms no.1872.

[24]Belete Belachew, "Setit-Humera: A Blister on Ethio–Sudanese Boundary Disputation," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No,1 (2016); Luca Puddu, "Border diplomacy and state-building in northwestern Ethiopia, c. 1965–1977," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. XI, No.2 (2017); Mulatu Wubneh, "This land is my land: the Ethio-Sudan boundary and the need to rectify arbitrary colonial boundaries*," Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, (2016); Mulatu Wubneh, *Yä Iteyopeya ena YäSudan Wäsän:Tarikawi Hidätu ena Alämäkalälu Yäfäṭäračäw Čegeroč Yämäfetehé Hasaboč* (Gondar: Gondar University Press, 2011 E.C).

correspondences of the two states and failed to reflect the voice and perceptions of the people to the boundary negotiations and agreements between Ethiopia and Sudan.

In addition to the Ethio-Sudan boundary negotiation and agreements in and around Mätäma, the Chilga borderlands and its various populations have been a source of interest to historians and anthropologists. The anthropologist Frederick Gamst and the historian Teclehaimanot GebreSellassie have done studies on the Wäyţo.[25] They examine the political, economic, religious and cultural lives of the people. Gamst has also a book on the Qemant and it is an extended anthropological work on cultural changes, especially on religion.[26] Although there are many studies on the Bätä Israelites, James Quirin and Steven Kaplan's books are the major historical works on the issue.[27] Although they examine historical developments from the controversial and problematic origin to the early 20th century, they are slightly different in methodological approach and sources. First, while Quirin depended mainly on oral tradition, Kaplan depends largely upon sources written in ge'ez. At times, this has led to minor shifts in interpretation and differences in opinion. Second, while Kaplan's study is a narrative history from outside-in, Quirin discusses with comparative and theoretical issues mainly from inside-out.

[25]Teclehaimanot Gebre Sellassie, "The Wayto of Lake Ţana: An Ethno-History" (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 1984); Frederick Gamst, "Wayto Ways: Change from Hunting to Peasant Life," In Robert Hess (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies, Session B, April 13-16, 1978* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1979).

[26]Frederick Gamst, *The Qemant: A Pagan-Hebraic Peasantry of Ethiopia* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

[27] Robert Hess,"Towards A History of the Falasha," In *Anthropolgy Miscelanea-5* (IES, 1969); Steven Kaplan, *The Bete Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the 20th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); David Kessler, *The Falahsa: A Short History of the Ethiopian Jews*. 3rd edition (London: Frank Cass &co.ltd, 1996); James Quirin, *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews: A History of Bete Israel (Falasha) to 1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

Frederick Simoons and Simon Messing's studies[28] are other scholary works that assess the people and economy of Bägémder and Semén province. While Simoons, a geographer, assesses the economic life of the people of the province, Messing's work is an anthropological discussion of the culture of the Amhara people with a focus on Bägémder province. Messing examines the life cycle of individuals, interpersonal relations and artistic expressions, living standards, division of labor, social organization and associations, public administration, healing body and sprits. Although they are useful to my research since they contain information (mainly their field observations on the 1950s) on Chilga sub-province, my study greatly departs from them since it is a historical one reconstructed using a variety of local sources.

Scholarly studies focusing on Chilga sub-province in the post-1941 period are few and are limited to Mätäma district. Dessalegn Bizuneh has done work on the history of Mätäma town from 1936 to 1991.[29] Zelalem Aberra's anthropological research is a comparative analysis of the 1984/5 and the 2003/4 resettlements and their impacts on the environment and re-settlers in Mätäma.[30]Atakilt Redda's historical research focuses on the partially mechanized farming on Mätäma and Abdärafi from the 1950s to 1980s.[31] Although Atakilt used oral information to reconstruct the history of commercial farming, his research lacks depth because he failed to use more local archival documents. His extensive dependence on oral information without cross-checking these with local archival documents have led him to document errors on the local history at various points. Moreover, Atakilt's chapters' division is carelessly copied from TAMS

[28]Frederick Simoons, *Northwest Ethiopia: Peoples and Economy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960); Simon Messing, "The Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia" (PhD Diss, University of Pennsylvania, 1957).
[29]Dessalegn Bizuneh,"A History of Matammā Town, 1936-1991" (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 2010)
[30]Zelalem Aberra, "Resettlement and Environment in Peripheral Areas of Northwestern Ethiopia: The Case of Metemma 1980s - 2003/3" (MA Thesis, Department of Anthropology, AAU, 2004).
[31]Atakilt Redda, "A History of Partially Mechanized and Other Arable Farming along the Ethio-Sudan Border: The Case of Abdärafi and Mättäma, 1950s - 1980s" (PhD Diss., Department of History, AAU, 2015).

(Tippetts-Abbett-McCarty-Stration), a company that studied intensively the mechanized agriculture of Sätit-Humära from economic perspective in the early 1970s.

In general, the majority of the sources reviewed above focused on the pre-1935 period and are conducted mainly using the outside-in approach. This approach is a traditional type of borderland study that does not give emphasis to local archival and oral sources to reconstruct a history of the local community but rather mainly use sources generated from the center. Thus, in this dissertation I attempt to reconstruct a comprehensive history of Chilga *Awraja* with an inside-out approach which is a modern type of borderland study using extensively local archival documents and oral information that express the voice of the local people. This approach of writing the history of borderland communities is a better way than the outside-in approach because it reflects the life experiences of local people in the frontiers.

CHAPTER I

Historical Background

Introduction

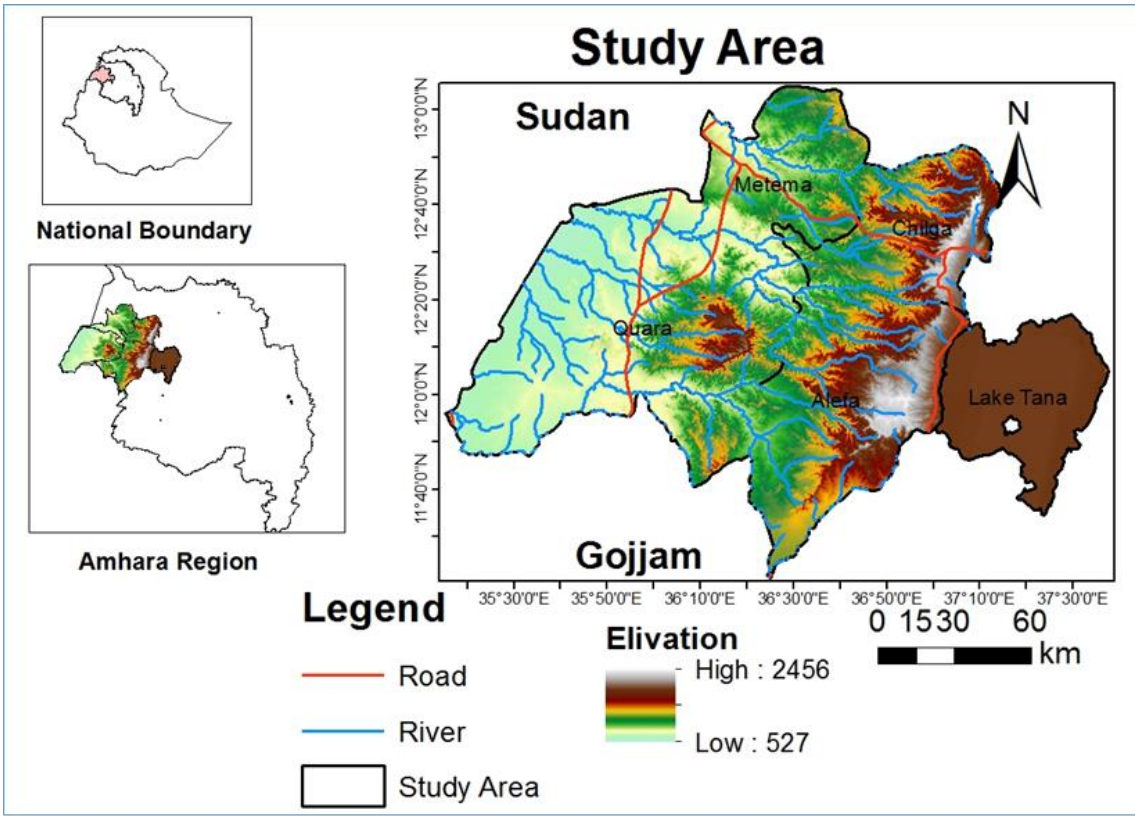
This chapter offers a general background to the study area by focusing on the geographical, social, political, and economic contexts for Chilga sub-province in the period prior to 1935. It describes the geographical setting of the area and examines how settlement pattern and livelihoods have influenced the relationships among the different ethnic groups of the region before the arrival of the Italians in the area. The chapter also examines how the political, social and economic conditions of the region changed following the shift of the political center first from Šewa to the Lake Ţana area in the 16th century and then back to Šewa beginning in 1889. It also provides a background discussion for understanding local politics in the Italian period by describing the activities carried out by Italian consular officials in Bägémder in the late 1920s and early 1930s. I argue that although Chilga sub-province had been an integral part of the Ethiopian state since the 14th century and served as a springboard for the formation of modern Ethiopian state in the mid-19th century, government officials did not administer it properly for centuries partly because it was hot lowland territory infested with malaria and this was manifested in local instability, raiding, banditry and external invasion.

Geographical Setting

The name Chilga denoted different geographic units at different times in the past. It was the name of a sub-district, a district and an *awraja* (sub-province). Its usage as a reference to a district dates back to the 17th century. Although the origin of the name is not clear, Chilga was a market center on the route from Gondar to Gallabat. Beginning from 1946, Chilga also referred

to a sub-district, a district and an *awraja*. Chilga *Awraja* was one of the *awrajas* in Bägémder and Semén Governorate-General which was established in 1946. It shared boundaries with Baher Dar and Mätäkäl *Awrajas* of Gojjam Province in the south, Lake Ţana in the east, Gondar *Awraja* in the north and northeast, and the Sudan in the west.[1] Chilga sub-province covered approximately the present day Mätäma, Chilga, Aläfa, Ţaqusa and Quara districts and its administrative center was Aykäl town, about 61 kilometers west of Gondar city, on the road to Mätäma. Parts of the present day Jawi district of Awi Zone was also part of Chilga *Awraja*.[2]

Map. 1 Map of Chilga *Awraja*



[1]The *awrajas* were Chilga, Gondar, Wägära, Semén, Libo (set up in 1957), Däbrä Tabor, and Gayint.
[2]North Gondar Administrative Zone Culture and Tourism Department, "YäSemén Gondar Astädadär ena Yä Gondar Kätäma Yä-Tourist Mäseheb Habetoč Bäkäfil"(Gondar, np, 2009 E.C), 29; Chilga Wäräda Culture and Tourism Office, "BäChilga Wäräda Yämigäňu Säw Säraš ena Täfäţeruawi Yä-tourist Mäseheb Botawoč Märäja"(Aykäl, 2009 E.C), 12.

Fig.1. The Relative location of Chilga *Awraja* with Gondar *Awraja*, the Sudan and Gojjam

Source: Adopted from "YäBägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Hulätäňaw YäEdegät Ena Lemat Seminar." Gondar, 1963 E.C, from the cover page

Let us see the current geographical features and climatic conditions of each *wäräda* (district) that was included in the former Chilga *Awraja* (sub-province) in the pre-1991 period. During the imperial period Chilga *Awraja* had four districts namely Mätäma, Chilga, Aläfa-Ţaqusa and Quara-Um Idela. There was also a territory under Mahbärä Selasé Monastery that became a new district named Maţäbiya following the end of the imperial regime. Chilga district shares boundary in the north with Upper Armacheho and in the east with Dämbiya. The present Chilga district covers an area of about 322, 264 hectares and its capital is Aykäl town. Out of its total area, about 47,188 hectares is suitable for cultivation. About 52,812 hectares is made up of mountains and other land features which makes it unsuitable for cultivation. About 23.60 hectares of land is covered with forest and the remaining is grazing land and other geographical

areas. The district has an average annual rainfall of between 900 and 1,110 mm. Out of this area, about 67% features *qolla* (hot) and 33% of *wäyna däga* (moderate) climatic conditions. Chilga district has an altitude that ranges from 900 meters to 2, 267 meters above sea level (a.s.l). The average annual temperature is between 23^0c and 27^0c. Agro-ecologically, the crops that are commonly grown in the district are *ṭéff* (Eragrostis teff), *dagusa* (Eleusine coracana or Eleusine tocusso), maize, barley, wheat, and different kinds of spices.[3]

To the west of Chilga district lays the border district of Mätäma which shares boundary in the west with the Sudan and in the north with Lower Armacheho (now renamed West Armacheho). Mätäma district covers an area of about 440,085 hectares and its capital is Gändawuha town. There is about 10,000 hectares of land under Gändawuha town administration. The land feature of Mätäma district is 80% plain, 16% mountainous, 2.20% water body, and 1.80% gorge. The district has an altitude that ranges from 700 to 1,100 meters a.s.l. It has an annual rainfall of between 700mm to 900mm. About 92,000 hectares, i.e about 18.24 %, of Mätäma district is covered by forest of different acacia species and grass. The district has *qolla* climate condition with a great potential for cotton, sesame, gum, and incense production. Due to its large sesame production, the district of Mätäma has recently acquired a nickname of "the land of white gold".[4]

To the south of Mätäma district is found the border district of Quara which shares boundaries with the Sudan in the west and Beni Shangul Regional State in the south. Quara has an area of about 858, 588 hectares. Its capital until 1997 was Tewodros Kätäma and then shifted to Gälägo town. Quara has 70% *qolla* and 30% *wäyena däga* climatic conditions. The altitude of the

[3] NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga Wäräda Culture and Tourism Office to North Gondar Administrative Zone Culture and Tourism Department, Ref.no. ባ/ቱ/2039/1, dated 08 Miyaziya 2006 E.C.
[4] Mätäma Wäräda Communication Office, "YäMätäma Wäräda Acher Gäṣeta" (Gändawuha, 2010 E.C), 1- 4.

district ranges between 500 meters and 2,000 meters a.s.l. Its annual rainfall ranges from 400mm to 1,200mm. Its temperature varies from 26 ^{0}c to 42 ^{0}c. The main crops grown in Quara are sesame, sorghum and cotton in the lowlands, and maize, wheat, *ţeff*, beans, and other crops in the highlands.[5] Aleţaš National Park, established in 2006, covers about 2,665.70 hectares (about 33% of the district), is located in Quara adjacent to the Dinder National Park of the Sudan.[6]

To the east of Quara lies the district of Aläfa that borders with Lake Ţana in the east, Jawi and Ačäfär districts in the south. It has an area of about 189, 287 hectares and its capital is Šahura town. The present districts of Aläfa and Ţaqusa were one district named Aläfa-Ţaqusa until 2005, when they became separate districts. Aläfa has about 20% plain, 10% mountainous and gorges, and 70% small hills. Its elevation is between 1,100 meters and 2,300 meters a.s.l. Its annual rainfall ranges from 900mm to 1,400mm; and its temperature ranges from 27 ^{o}c to 30 ^{o}c. The climatic condition of the district is about 55% *qolla* and 45% *wäyna däga*. The district harvests different crops like *dagusa*, *ţeff*, barley, wheat, maize, sorghum, horse beans (Phaseolus vulgaris), peas (Pisum abyssinicum), and chickpeas (Cicer arietinum), lentils (Lens abyssinica), and grass peas (lathyrus sativus).[7]

To the north of Aläfa is located the district of Ţaqusa which has an area of about 190, 283 hectares and its capital is at Dälgi town. Ţaqusa is bordered in the east by Lake Ţana and in the northeast by Dämbiya district. The district contains a land feature about 26.5% plain, 52.16%

[5]Amhara National Regional State Urban Planning Institute, "Yä Gälägu Kätäma Mäsärätawi Plan Yäkeläsa Ţenat Sänäd" (Baher Dar, March 2008 E.C), 8; Quara Wäräda Culture and Tourism Office, "Yä-Quara Wäräda Gäşeta" (Gälägo, Hedar 2010 E.C),1.
[6]Quara Wäräda Culture and Tourism Office, "Yä-Quara …",1; Hailu Menale, "Potentials and Challenges of Alatish and Dinder National Parks (Ethiopia, Sudan) - Implementing Transboundary Park Cooperation" (MA Thesis, University of Klagenfurt, 2011), 21; Aletaš National Park (pamphlet), "Aränguadéw Zäb" (Gälägo, 2008 E.C), 1-3.
[7]Aläfa Wäräda Communication Office, "Aläfa 2002 E.C Amätawi Yämäräja Mäşehafet"(Šahura, 2003 E.C), 1-2.

mountainous, 9.24% gorge, and 12.10% is other geographical features. The district's elevation is from 600 meters to 2000 meters a.s.l. About 48% of the district is *qolla* and 52% *wäyna däga* climatic conditions. It has an annual rainfall between 900 mm and 1,200 mm and it harvests various crops like *dagusa*, *ţéff*, maize, barley, wheat, *nug*, chickpea, rice, pepper, and different spices.[8]

Chilga *Awraja* has several major rivers traversing the various districts. These are Šaho, Šinfa, Dubaba, Gälägo, Guang, Awuga, Gändawuha, Sod, and Ayima (Dinder). These rivers arise in the highland areas of Quara, Ţaqusa and Aläfa and flow westwards to the Sudan. Ayima River, which the Italians renamed as Dinder during their occupation, separates Quara from the Bela Shangul Gumuz Regional State. Awuga and Gändawuha Rivers are tributaries of Guang (named Atbara in the Sudan). The upper parts of the Awuga and Guang Rivers that arise in Dämbiya contain a deposit of poor quality coal.[9] Guang separates Chilga sub-province from the Upper and Lower Armacheho districts of Gondar *Awraja*. Šinfa (named Rahad in the Sudan) and Dinder join the Blue Nile in the Sudan. There are also small streams like Kina and Sarwuha that have origins in the highlands and flow eastwards to the Lake Ţana.[10]

The pre-1991 Chilga *Awraja* formed the western parts of Bägémder and Semén Province which was bordered with the Sudan in the west, Eritrea in the north, Tegray in the northeast, Wällo in the east, and Gojjam in the south. The province, which had about 74, 250 square kilometer area

[8] Ţaqusa Wäräda Communication Office, "Kä 2003 E.C -2007 E.C Yätätänätänu Märäjawäč"(Dälgi, 2008 E.C), 1-5.
[9]DMUAC, Northwestern Ethiopia Planning Office, "Reports on Geological Works of North-Western Ethiopia" (Bahir Dar, December 1984), 22-33; Bäkur Gazéţa, "BäChilga Wäräda 225 mega watt Electric Haile Mamänchät Yämiyasčel Yädängay Käsäl Alä täbalä," 30 Hamlé 1999 E.C.
[10]DMUAC, Regional Planning Office for Northwestern Ethiopia, "A Regional Atlas of North-Western Ethiopia" (Bahir Dar, 1985), 6.

(7,425,000 hectares),[11] was a land bounded by the Täkäzé, Bäšilo, Abay, and Ayima Rivers. In the past, Bägémder and Semén were sometimes amalgamated and administered as one province while at other times they were two separate regions. Semén was the region that stretched from the Täkäzé River in the north and east to the Sudan border in the west, and Angäräb and Bambilo Rivers and Bambilo hill in the south.[12] Bägémder was the region from Bäšilo River in the southeast to Mätäma in the west and from Bambilo hills (and river) in the north to Abay and Dinder Rivers in the south.[13] In earlier times, more specifically before the Gondarine period, the use of the name Bägémder was limited to the area between Lake Ţana and the Bäšilo River.[14] Through time, however, it came to refer to the broader region mentioned above.

Authors have different suggestions with regard to the naming of Bägémder of which are misleading ideas. Commonly, in the past many people believed that it is derived from the two names: Bäg (sheep) and meder (land), and describing it as "land of sheep" since the districts like Farţa and Gayint have been known for their quality wool and mutton. However, Fernand Rey, Charles Beckingham, and Huntingford rejected this idea and suggested another possible origin of the name. Rey says Bägémder means "the land of the Bega [Beja]" (nomadic people on the Eritrea-Sudan border), just as Agäw Meder means "the land of Agaws".[15] Rey's idea is, however, unlikely. As Beckingham and Huntingford note the association of the term with the

[11]The Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, "Report on Land Tenure Survey of Begemder and Simien Province" (Addis Ababa, 1970), 3; NALAE Code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Administrative Office to the Ministry of Interior, no dated, 1937 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Gondar Bägenbataw Aqeţacha," 18 Hamlé 1973 E.C.

[12] "Kä-Bägémder ena Semén Gar Mätäwawäqiya" IES Ms. no 1264,1; Ande Alem Mulaw, "Bägémeder and Simén (1910-1930)" (BA Thesis, Department of History, HSIU, 1971), 1.

[13]"Kä-Bägémder …" IES Ms. no 1264, 1; NALAE Code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Administrative Office to the Ministry of Interior, no date, 1937 E.C; Ande Alem, 1.

[14]LaVerle Berry, "Bägemdər," In *Encyclopedea Aethiopica,* Vol.I (Harrassowitz Verlag Wiesbaden, 2003), 439-440; Manuel D. Almeida, *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593-1646.* C.F.Beckingham and G.W.B Huntingford eds. and trans (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), 230-231.

[15]Fernand Rey, *In the Country of the Blue Nile* (London: Duchworth, 1927), 50-51.

Béja people who live far from the region is not plausible. Beckingham and Huntingford based on the record of Charles Beke who noted the scarcity of water in the area associated the term with Amharic name Bäga (dry season) as a likely source for the name of the region.[16] Like Rey's idea, this idea is also unlikely since the area is the source of main rivers named Reb and Gumara that arise from Guna Mountain and there had been no such shortage of water in the region for a long period. Rather the area around Lake Ţana has been known for its water and flood streams as Märse'é Hazän Wäldä Qirqos and Henry Blanc stated well. Märse'é Hazän Wäldä Qirqos stated that the naming of Bägémder is based on the suitability of the land for farming and cattle rearing. He says, "**በጌምድር ብዙ ወንዞች የሚገኙበትና አዝመራ የሚሰምርበት ለምለም አገር ነዉ። ከዚህም የተነሳ የድሮ ሰዎች ለሰዉ መኖሪያ ለከብት ማርቢያ የተመቸ መሆኑን አይተዉ አገሩን በጎምድር ብለዉ ጠርተዉት ነበርና በዘመን ብዛት በጌምድር ወደ መባል ተለወጠ ተብሎ በአፉ ታሪክ ይነገርለታል።**"[17] (Bägémder is a fertile region that contains many rivers and suitable for cultivation of crops. Hence, observing its suitability for living, crop cultivation and rearing of cattle, people in the past called the area Bägo Meder. In oral history, it is said that through long period this was changed into Bägémder).

Similarly, Henry Blanc, after identifying Bägémder as the land of sheep and corn, described the land around Lake Ţana as follows:

> The whole- be it valleys, plains, or plateaux - is watered by countless streams; the soil,…, is so rich, of such fertility … , we cannot be surprised if three harvests are usually reaped in a year. Teff,…, grows almost everywhere, except on the higher plateaux, where corn and barley thrive so well. Cotton covers the plains of Foggara, wine is made from the grapesof Mahdera Mariam; honey,…, is ludicrously abundant; and the herds of cattle, in peaceful times, of such magnitude, in numbers

[16]Almeida, *Some Records…*, 230-231.
[17]Märse'é Hazän Wäldä Qirqos, *Geremawi Negusä Nägäst Qädamawi Hailä Selasé Gondären Yämägobňätačäw Tarik, Mäskäräm 23-Ţeqemet 7, 1939 E.C* (Addis Ababa: Berehan Ena Sälam Printing Press, 1939 E.C), 3.

> hardly to be credited, enough to supply a thousand cities! Western Abyssinia, well may we exclaim, is indeed a land of milk and honey: a "land blessed by God, but cursed by man!" [18]

Märse'a Hazen's idea more likely holds a grain of truth because the districts around Lake Ţana are fertile and noted for cattle and grain productions. Districts like Fogära, Dära, Chilga, Aläfa, Ţaqusa, Dämbiya are known for their cattle; Semén, Gaynit and Farţa were especially known for sheep.[19] Until recently, transhumance pastoralism was common and was the base of the lives of many people around the shores of the lake for centuries.[20] The adjacent districts used the pasture of the lowlands along the border with the Sudan seasonally. However, transhumance pastoralism in the area declined beginning in the 1960s because of several constraints like human population growth, increase in crop cultivation, expansion of human settlements, cattle theft, human and cattle disease, and conflicts among the local people in the lowlands over pasture.[21]

On the origin of the name Semén, although the name was mentioned since the third century Aksumite Greek inscription, its origin is unknown.[22] With the coming to power of the Därg the name Bägémder and Semén province was changed into Gondar Province in April 1977 since the people and their culture was the same and there was no need to have two names.[23]

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[18]Henry Blanc, "From Metemma to Damot, along the Western Shores of the Tana Sea," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. XXXIX (1869), 50.
[19]And Alem, 48; "Kä-Bägémder…." , 1.
[20]James Quirin, "Ethnic History in the Northwest: Who were the Zallan?" In Harold G Marcus (ed.), *New Trends in the Ethiopian Studies: Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University 5-10 September 1994.* Vol. I. (Michigan: The Red Sea Press Inc, 1994), 868-879; Addis Zemen, "Ţana Baher ena Zällan", 18 Ţer 1951 E.C.
[21]Azage Tegegne *et als*, "Transhumance cattle production system in North Gondar, Amhara Region, Ethiopia: Is it sustainable?" (Addis Ababa, ILRI, 2009), 2-3, 49-50.
[22]Paul Henze, "Protecting the Semyens: Four Decades of Effort*," International Journal of Ethiopian Studies,* Vol. II. No. 1/2 (Summer/Fall 2005-2006), 210.
[23]NALAE Code 17.1.13.01.01, a letter from Lt. Mälaku Täfära (Därg member) to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref. no. ቁጥር ተ.ደ 184/69, dated 26 Mägabit 1969 E.C.

The sub-province of Chilga was/is home to different ethnic groups like the Amhara, Bétä Israelites, Qemant, Wäyţo, Kunfäl, and Gumuz. The Wäyţo no longer live in the district while only a few descendants of the Bétä Israelites live in the area. Although there are different views on the origin of these ethnic groups, they are not the subject of this dissertation and I will not discuss them. The Amhara are the dominant people in number, culture, economy and politics in the sub-province and occupy the largest inhabited lands. Economically, they are engaged in agriculture (farming and animal rearing) and trading. They are Amharic speakers and predominantly followers of Orthodox Christianity. Only a few of them are followers of Islam.[24] They have well-established marriage and funeral ceremonies, and a long history of administrative and legal systems.[25]

The Qemant have been living mainly in the districts of Chilga, Lay (Upper) Armacheho and adjacent localities intermixed with the Amhara. According to James Quirin and Frederick Gamst, it is impossible to get a reference to the name Qemant prior to the 18th century in the written sources.[26] The historical origin of the Qeman is unclear and there are different views among scholars and traditions among the local people.[27] This issue is not the subject of this dissertation and I will not go through for explanation. The people north of Lake Ţana up to Täkäzé River were named Amhara and they began to embrace Christianity in the late Aksumite period. In the ninth century Aksumite king named Dagnajan entered south of Täkäzé River and consolidated the Christianization of the people. Sergew Hable Sellassie states:

[24]Simoons, 23-26.
[25]NGAZRO, a letter from Ašagré Taddäsä (vice-administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administration, Ref.no. 2353/2264/16, dated 16 Ţer 1970 E.C.
[26]James Quirin, "Caste and Class in Historical North-West Ethiopia: The Beta Israel (Falasha) and Kemant, 1300-1900,"*The Journal of African History*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2 (1998), 203; Gamst, *The Qemant…*, 1-7.
[27] Ibid; See also Simoons, 39; Tayä Gäbrämareyam, *YäIteyopeya Hezeb Tarik (*Addis Ababa, reprinted in 2008 E.C), 14-17; Näga Gété, *YäQemant Hezeb Tarik* (Gondar, 1993 E.C), 2.

> And he crowned Dagnajan. During his time he took 150 priests from Aksume to Amhara and named them Debtera. When he left Aksume he made his capital at Weyna Dega and had 60 tabernacles which accompanied him onto the battle field. Then his army drank water of Fiq from the lake in the land of Derginda Tekezze (river), right of Tahya and left of Rib.[28]

The names of places and rivers mentioned in the above quotation are now found in Gondar province. However, with the decline of the Aksumite kingdom, the people seem to have abandoned Christianity and began practicing Judaism. Regarding this Henry Stern, the protestant missionary who worked and lived among the Qemant and Bétä Israelites in the 1860s says:

> According to Abyssinian tradition, the King of Tigrē, soon after his conversion to Christianity, crosses the Taccazy, and invaded Semien and Amhara. Here he met a people who were neither Pagans nor Christians, a marvel which aroused the monarch's curiosity, and he inquired what they believed; to which in a laconic style, they replied in their own dialect Kamant, or Kam Ant, i.e as thou [like you], from whence they obtained their present appellation.[29]

The Qemant are landholders and agriculturalists since they submitted and paid tribute to the "Solomonic" kings since the incorporation of the Lake region into the 'Solomonic' state in the 14th century. They were steadily integrated, embraced the culture and religion of the ruling Amhara class. These helped them to integrate themselves with in the ruling class and gain some administrative positions. Although their major task was supplying wooden beam, the Qemant contributed a lot during the construction of the castles of Gondar mainly by serving as servants and manual laborers; sometimes they also served as guards and soldiers.[30] They continued to give wood to the city after castle construction was ended. Due to their religion the Qemant, however, faced discrimination by the Christian Amhara. James Bruce mentioned them as "Kemmont" and noted that they carried water and wood to the city of Gondar and "the

[28] Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* (Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972), 231.
[29]Henry Stern, *Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia; together with a Description of the Country and its Various Inhabitants* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh and Hunt, 1862), 44.
[30]Quirin, "Caste….", 204-205.

Abyssinians" did not like them.[31] Samuel Gobat, the protestant missionary who lived in Gondar in the 1830s and 1840s, mentioned them as "Camounte" and expressed a view similar to Bruce.[32] Hormuzd Rassam, the British Consul in Ethiopia in the 1860s, saw the Qemant performing their traditional religious ritual under a tree near a stream and says,"It is owing to this practice that the Christian Abyssinians style the Qemant as worshiper of wood or simply wood. Another reason, however, for the latter appellation is that in former times they used to supply Gondar, the capital with fuel."[33] Thus, the derogatory tradition that they came from wood might have developed from these practices.

The Qemant called their religion "Hegä Lebona" (lit. the law of heart), although Fredrick Gamst called it "Pagan-Hibraic" incorporating pagan, Hebraic and Christian elements. The title of their religious leaders (head priests) was known as *wämbar*. Until recently, the Qemant had two *wämbars*. The first was based at Tekel Dengay and led the Qemant who lived to the northeast of the Guang River. The second was stationed at Säraba (near Aykäl) and led the Qemant who lived to the southwest of the Guang River.[34] The Qemant have no written doctrine and preaching system of their religion; rather they said "**ከልብህ ይደር**" (lit. let it be in your heart).[35] Unless they became Orthodox Christian Qemant did not marry Amhara.[36]

[31]James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Blue Nile in the Year 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773. Vol. IV* (London: Edinburgh, George Ramsay and Company, 1813), 275-276.
[32] Samuel Gobat, *Journal of Three Years Residence in Abyssinia* (New York: M.W Dodd, 1850), 469.
[33]Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, King of Abyssinia.* Vol. I (London: John Murry, 1869), 209.
[34]Gamst, *The Qemant*:.., 4; Olivier Tourny,'Kedassie'. A Kemant (Ethiopian Agaw) Ritual," In Svein Ege et al (ed), *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Trondheim, 2009), 1225-1226; Simoons, 41-42; Quirin, " Cast…,″ 204.
[35]Esubalew Eyasu, "BäQemant Beheräsäb Yäbahlawi ena Mänfäsawi Esétoč Lay Yätäkahédä Acher Qeňet" (Bahir Dar, 1994 E.C), 11-14; Informants: Abuhay, and Wäldé.
[36] Informants: Wäldé Färädä, and Ejargäw Asäfa; a letter from Šibabaw Aseräs (secretary of Chilga district) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 625/17/70, dated 28 Tahsas 1970 E.C.

The Bétä Israelites were the other people who lived in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. Other people called them Fälaša. Like the Qemant, because of lack of reliable historical evidence, the origin of the Bétä Israelites remains a matter of speculation and there are different views on their origin. James Quirin groups the views into three. The "lost tribe view" argued that the Bétä Israelites came from the ancient Israelites people. The "convert view" stated that they might be the Agäw people who were converted to Judaism. The "rebel view" states they were the Aksumite people but they rebelled against the state and Orthodox Christian religion.[37] Taddesse Tamrat citing church documents stated that when King Amdä Şeyon sent an army to subdue them in 1332:

> He sent other contingents called Damot, Säqält, Gondär, and Hadiya consisting of mounted soldiers and footmen and well trained in warfare…; their commander was Bägämdir Şäga Kristos. He sent them to the country of rebels to fight. …the people of Simén, Wägära, Şälämt, and Şägädé. Originally these people were Christians but now they denied Christ like the Jews who crucified him. For this reason the king sent an army to destroy them….[38] (emphasis added)

I think the "rebel view" is the most plausible idea. Since they refused to embrace Orthodox Christianity that was supported by the "Solomonic' state, the Bétä Israelites created a separate identity from the Amhara and Qemant. Because religion was one of the key elements for the formation of ethnic identity in the pre-modern period. The Bétä Israelites religion contained not only Jewish but also pagan and Christian elements. Their religious house is called *Mäsgid* and their religious leaders called *kahen* and *däbtera*.[39] The Bétä Israelites predominantly resisted subjugation by the 'Solomonic' dynasty since the period of King Amdä Şeyon (r.1314-44) and they preserved their religion and they were called *ayhud*.[40] Especially, the reign of King Yeshaq

[37] Quirin, *The Evolution…*,7-11; Kaplan, *The Bete Israel…*, 13-32.
[38]Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopa, 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 192.
[39] Jacques Faitlovitch, "The Falashas," *The American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. XXII (September 1920/21), 85
[40] Kaplan, *The Bete* …, 54-65; Quirin, "Caste...", 201; Quirin, *The Evolution*…, 40-52.

(r.1413-1430) was a landmark in the history of the Bétä Israelites because he declared: "May he who is baptized in the Christian baptism inherits the land of his father; otherwise let him be uprooted from his father's land and be a stranger (falasi)…. Since then the Bétä Israelites were called Falashas (falashoch)".[41] Subsequently, they lost *rest* land rights and shifted into other occupations like blacksmithing, pottery, and weaving. They also served as masons and carpenters in the construction of the castles and churches during the Gondarine period. In the period of *Zämänä Mäsafent* (c.1769-1855), they were associated with the name *buda* (lit. evil eye). Such attitudes steadily segregated the Bétä Israelites from the surrounding Christians.[42]

In 1860, the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (also known as the London Jewish Society) led by Henry Stern set up a mission to the Bétä Israelites and started to convert them to Protestantism until Emperor Tewodros II imprisoned them.[43] The numbers of Bétä Israelites converted to Protestantism were about 65 in 1868, 1,470 in 1894, and 1,513 in 1908.[44]

The Kunfäl who also call themselves *Qoläňoč* were the other ethnic group who lived in Chilga sub-province. Although they never called themselves as "lowland Agäw" in their petitions, writers also called them as "lowland Agäw" (kulsi) for their language similarity with Awni language. They have been followers of Orthodox Christianity, and live in scattered villages along

[41]Quirin, *The Evolution*…, 55.
[42]Quirin, *The Evolution*…, 89-163; Kaplan, *The Bete* …, 99-114.
[43]Don Seeman, "The Question of Kinship: Bodies and Narratives in the Beta Israel-European Encounter (1860-1920)," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. XXX, Fasc. 1 (Feb., 2000), 86; Kaplan, *The Bete* ..., 116-117.
[44]Steven Kaplan, "The Beta Israel (Falasha) Encounter with Protestant Missionaries: 1860-1905," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (Winter, 1987), 27.

the Dinder and Bäläs River valleys,[45] which was part of Chilga *Awraja*. They are engaged in shifting cultivation, wild honey collection, and hunting.[46] Except their language, the Kunfäl are more related to the Gumuz physically and socio-economically. I think they might be Agwized Gumuz since there was a tradition among the Amhara of Quara that claimed the Kunfäl were ex-slaves freed by Emperor Tewodros II.[47]

The Gumuz who are a Nilo-Saharan language group speakers are liveing on both sides of the Ethio-Sudan border from Mätäma to the Blue Nile. Although they have different names in various areas in Ethiopia, they are usually referred as "Šanqella" in historical records. "Šanqella" has been a pejorative name used by the highlanders to refer to the Gumuz due to their dark skin.[48] The Gumuz had been victims of slave raids for centuries until the early decades of the 20th century.[49] As archival documents indicate, the Gumuz of Quara and Mätäma were said to have come from the area south of the Dinder River (in Mätäkäl) in the 18th century due to fear of slave raiding by Gojjam and Agäw Meder chiefs.[50]

In the early decades of the 20th century, fearing Ethiopian slave raiders, the Gumuz continuously escaped to the British Sudan where the colonial government established anti-slavery

[45]Simoons, 44-45;Teqebba Birru *et al*, "The Kunfäl People and their Language," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (July 1971), 99-106; NGAZRO, a letter from Täsfahun Afäwärq to …cited above, Ref.no. 305/17/70, dated 15 Ţer 1970 E.C.
[46]NGAZRO, a letter from Ašagré Taddäsä to …cited above, Ref.no. 2353/2264/16, dated 16 Ţer 1970 E.C; a letter from Mälkamu Ayalćw (secretary of Aläfa-Ţaqusa) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.170/16/70, dated 20 Tahsas 1970 E.C.
[47] Simoons, 44.
[48]Abdussamad, "The Gumuz …", 53; Patrick Wallmark, "The Bega (Gumuz) of Wollega: Agriculture and Subsistence," In M.L.Bender (eds.), *People and Culture of Ethio-Sudan Borderlands* (USA: Michigan State University, 1981, monography No.10), 79; James Wendy, "Notes on the Gumuz: their culture, History and Survival," *In Paper presented at the Conference on Ethiopian Origins held at School of Oriental and African Studies on 28 and 29 June 1977*, 1-2.
[49] Pankhurst, "The History of Bareya…" , 1-44.
[50]NGAZRO, a letter from Sergent Asäfa Käbädä (administrator of Mätäma District) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 869/16/70, dated 25 Miyaziya 1970 E.C.

headquarters along the frontier, gave protection and freedom, and established agricultural settlements for them.[51] Although the slave trade was prohibited officially in Ethiopia in 1923 and a special anti-slavery court was set up, domestic slavery continued in most frontier parts of the country for several years.[52] The Gumuz slaves of northwestern Ethiopia at times escaped from the slave raiders and their masters to the Sudan, sometimes they sheltered in monasteries like Mahbärä Selasé where they served as laborers. On Gumuz slaves who escaped to the Sudan, Hermann Norden, an American traveler who went to Mätäma via Chilga in 1929, says:

> [T]he men had doubtless been slaves somewhere in Abyssinia, and had run away from their masters, hoping to reach the Sudan border, from where they might not brought back. *En route*, and probably hungry, they had climbed to one of the monasteries in the mountains and had asked employment of the priests, who usually welcome runaway slaves for servants. Work in a monastery gives a slave safety, for his master may not claim him out of one of these religious institutions […]. Work in the monasteries, however, becomes itself a sort of slavery, since the runaway slaves may not venture out without danger of capture. After a while, therefore, strengthened and heartened by food and a respite from fear, these slaves journey on towards the real freedom of another country.[53]

Economically, the Gumuz practice in shifting cultivation. Cotton has been their basic cash crop. Sorghum has been their basic food crop, and mostly cotton and sorghum are interplanted. They keep only a few goats and sheep.[54]

The Wayţo are a small group of Amharic speaking "Muslim" people who was lived on the shores of Lake Ţana. There is lack of evidence to determine their origin or original language prior to their use of Amharic.[55] European missionaries, travelers, and consuls who visited the shores of

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[51] James, "A 'Frontier Mosaic…,", 277-291; Abdussamad, "Trading in Slaves…" , 433-446.
[52] Fernand Rey, *The Real Abyssinia* (London: Seeley Service & co limited, 1935), 168-170.
[53]Hermann Norden*, Africa's Last Empire: Through Abyssinia to Lake Tana and the Country of Falasha* (London, witherby, 1930), 225 - 226.
[54]NGAZRO, a letter from Täsfahun Afäwärq to…cited above, Ref.no. 305/17/70, dated 15 Ţer 1970 E.C; a letter from Säţargäw Endäšaw (administrator of Maţäbiya district) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 230/16/70, dated 3 Yäkatit 1970 E.C.
[55] Gamst, "Wayto ….", 233; Simoons, 45; Teclehaimanot, 1- 13.

the lake recorded in their accounts almost similar information regarding the Wayţo.[56] The Wayţos were hunters of hippopotamus and engaged in craft works like *gäbäta* (wood bowl), *wäfecho* (stone mills), and *muqächa* (motars). They also made *tankua* (reed boat) from the papyrus tree which they used to transport goods and people over the lake.[57] The Wayţo have been the most marginalized and untouchable people around the lake because of their habit of eating the flesh of hippopotamus, wild fowls and other animals deemed to be non-edible by the surrounding Amhara.[58]

The Incorporation of the Area West of Lake Ţana into the Christian Highland Kingdom

One of the key developments that followed the accession of King Amdä Şeyon (r.1314-1344) to the 'Solomonic' throne was territorial expansion and evangelization.[59] His expansion into the Lake Ţana area, however, faced resistance from Agäw south of the lake and the Bétä Israelites from north of the lake. After initial resistance, he defeated both groups, controlled the area, and this was followed by Christian evangelization.[60] King Amdä Şeyon set up Christian settlements, established churches, and granted *gult* land to his officials in the lake area. His successors consolidated imperial control around the lake by reinforcing these activities.[61] For instance, a

[56]Almeida, 35; Bruce, Vol. III, 403; Rassam, Vol I, 314; Walter C. Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country* (London: Longmans, Green and co., 1869), 194; E.A De Cosson, *The Cradle of the Blue Nile: A Visit to the Court of King John of Ethiopia. In two Vols. Vol. I* (London: John Murray, 1877), 66 - 80; R.E. Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1936), 92 - 93.
[57]Teclehaimanot, 47- 88; NGAZRO, a letter from Aläna Käbädä (Secretary of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no.1930/2264/17/70, dated 14 Tahsas 1970 E.C.
[58]Simoons, 47-52.; Gamst, "Change….", 233 - 236; NGAZRO, a letter from Aläna Käbädä… cited above, Ref. no. 1930/2264/17/70, dated 14 Tahsas 1970 E.C.
[59]Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea: the Rise and Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty and Muslim -European Rivalry in the Region* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1980), 22.
[60]Taddesse, *Church and State …*, 189-192; Steve Kaplan, "The Monastic Holyman and the Christianization of Ethiopia, 1270-1468" (PhD Diss., Hebrew University, 1982), 70, 112-115.
[61]Seltene Seyoum, "A History of Bahir Dar Town, 1935-1974" (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 1988),

document written by *balabats* of Chilga sub-province in 1948 stated that King Amdä Ṣeyon's son and successor, King Säyfä Ared (r.1344-1371), had a son named Gäbrä Mareyam who was said to have had 18 children. Gäbrä Mareyam granted the land from Quara to Sinar in the Sudan to his children as their *gult* and *rest* land. The *balabats* therefore regarded him as *aqeň* (lit. founder of *rest* land system by granting *gult* land).[62] Thus, Christian Amhara settlements carried out by the Amhara ruling class and Orthodox Christianity were consolidated in the area west of the Lake Ţana.

The area from Lake Ţana to the Sudanese border started to be controlled more effectively after King Minas (r.1559-1563) transferred the political center of the kingdom from Šewa to the lake Ţana region. The Oromo population pressure and Muslim threat from the south were the push factors while the availability of fertile lands and the trade routes of the lake area were the pull factors behind this move.[63] Before the establishment of Gondar as permanent capital in 1636, Gubay, Ayba, Dänqäz, Gorgora, Aräṅgo, and Azäzo served for brief periods as royal centers for the successors of king Minas.[64]

The shift of the political center to the lake area enhanced the political, socio-cultural, and economic relationships between the Gondarine Kingdom and the Funji Kingdom of the Sudan. The area from Chilga to Gallabat was the nerve line of this contact and played a multifaceted

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3-4; Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Highland Kingdom of Ethiopia from the 13th-20th Centuries* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 24-34.

[62]NGAZRO, a petition of Quara *ballabats* (*Däjjazmačes* Hagos Täsäma, Kasa Mäšäša and others) to *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay (Governor-General of Bägémder and Semén), dated 18 Tahsas 1941 E.C.

[63]Richard Pankhurst, *History of Ethiopian Towns from the Middle Ages to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Wiesbaden,1982), 94; LaVerle Berry, "Architecture and Kingship: The Significance of Gondar-Style Architecture," *Northeast African Studies (New Series)*, Vol. II, No. 3 (1995), 9.

[64]Solomon Addis, *A History of the City of Gondar* (Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 2006), 4; Richard Pankhurst, "Three Urban Precursors of Gondar: Enfraz, Gorgora and Danqaz," In Robert Hess (eds), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Session B, April 13-16, 1978* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1979), 415 - 426.

role.[65] However, the lowlands along the border with the Sudan remained peripheral area for centuries because of their malarious ecology. Despite this, it was a source of revenue for the two states. Due to loss of the southern regions to the Oromo and the Muslims, the revenue of the Gondarine kings declined. Hence the borderlands became one of the areas where kings raided and taxed the inhabitants heavily. Similarly, the Funji state taxed and raided the area at times reaching as far as Chilga.[66] The lowlands have also been a place of asylum and protection for discontented individuals for centuries. For instance, in about 1607, Adelan deposed Abdel Kadir of Funji and Abdel Kadir escaped to Ethiopia to get protection from King Susenyos (r.1607-1632). Susenyos gave shelter and appointed him governor of Chilga. In return, in 1612, when Susenyos sent a punitive expedition against Chausen, a Gumuz slave raider in the border, the Funji gave protection to him.[67]

Susenyos's religious persecution of many Orthodox Christians led to the expansion of Orthodox Christianity in the borderlands of Quara and Mätäma. He embraced Catholicism and harassed Orthodox Christian clergy in and around Azäzo. Many clergy escaped to the lowlands where they sheltered and founded churches.[68] One of these churches is the monastery of Mahbärä Selasé that traces its foundation to the 16th century (more probably in the closing years of the century).[69] It was a well-organized monastery since the reign of King Fasiladas (r.1632-1667) who was said to have given about 44 tributary churches (*qeféf*) as *gult* to it in the surrounding areas and the association of its clergy since then is known by the name "Yä Mahbärä Selasé

[65]Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands…..*, 368 - 372.
[66]Merid and Sergew, 2-3; Pankhurst, "Ethiopia's …" , 53 – 75.
[67] Merid and Sergew, 4.
[68] LaVerle Berry, "The Solomonic Monarchy at Gondar, 1630-1755: An Institutional Analysis of Kingship in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia" (PhD Diss, Boston University, 1976), 190.
[69] NGAZRO, a petition from Mahbäerä Selasé Monastery to Ministry of Justice, dated 14 Genbot 1959 E.C.

Gädam Yäšeh Mahbär",[70] named after a thousand monks who lived there. It was a dedicated monk of the monastery named *Abba* Amedä Selasé who came from Šewa that obtained these tributary churches from King Fasiladas in return for curing his father (Susenyos) from his sickness by praying.[71] The monastery had cordial relations with the Gondarine kings and played an important role in expanding Orthodox Christianity by founding churches in that frontier area.[72]

Following the emergence of Gondar as the political, religious and cultural center of the Gondarine Kingdom (c.1636-1769), the Lake Ţana area became a center of commercial activity linking various caravan routes. It was connected to Gojjam and further south,[73] and much of the provisions from the area arrived in Gondar via Dängäl Bar (located in the western coast of the lake). Gondar was connected with the Sudan by two routes: via Mätäma/Gallabat and via Humära. The caravan route to Gallabat passed through the markets of Chilga, Wähni, and Mätäma.[74] Ivory, slaves, honey, and wax were the main export items to the Sudan. Horses, mules, donkeys, cotton, beads, clothes, silks, firearms, sword blades, gunpowder, *kool*, drinking glasses, and bottles were imported from the Sudan.[75] Merchants used camels to transport goods

[70]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.10, a letter from Andargačäw Mäsay (Governor-General of Bägémder and Semén) to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no.35/2076, dated 5 Säné 1940 E.C; Täkelä Şadeq Mäkuriya, *Yä Iteyopiya Tarik Kä Aşé Lebenä Dengel Eskä Aşé Tewodros* (Addis Ababa:Berha ena Selam Printing Press, 1951 E.C), 138-139.

[71] Birhanu Bisrat, *Mahbärä Selasé Gädam Ena Kerestiyanawi Yämenané Heyewät Senä Megebar* (Addis Ababa: HY International Printing House, 2009 E.C), 71-74; Täkelä Şadeq, *Yä Iteyopiya Tarik Kä Aşé Lebenä Dengel …*, 138-139.

[72]Birhanu Bisrat, 71-102; Täkelä Şadeq, *Yä Iteyopiya Tarik Kä Aşé Lebenä…,*139; Informant: Sisay. When *Abba* Amedä Selasé returned from a pilgrimage in Egypt via the lowlands of Mätäma, he washed his cloth in a stream and the area since then is named Maţäbiya.

[73] Richard Pankhurst, *A Social History of Ethiopia: The Northern and Central Highlands from Early Medieval Time to the Rise of Tewodros II* (London: Edmunsburg Press, 1990), 75, 87.

[74]Stephen Haar, "Long Distance Trade, Political Economy and National Reunification in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, 1800-1900" (PhD Dis., University of California, 1990), 49-50; Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia: 1800-1935* (Addis Ababa: HSIU Press, 1968), 348-353.

[75] Merid and Sergew, 8-9; Pankhurst, "Ethiopia's Economic…", 18-53; S. W. Baker, "On the Tributaries of the Nile in Abyssinia," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. X, No. 6 (1865-1866), 292.

over the dry lowland areas and horses, mules, and donkeys for shorter range travel in the highland areas. The Funji and Gondarine Kingdoms had customs officers in Mätäma/Gallabat to collect and share the custom duties.[76]

Quara began to play an active role in the politics of the Gondarine Kingdom in the 18th century. It was the main power base for one of the political factions that emerged in the Gondarine court on the eve of the *Zämänä Mäsafent* (c.1769-1853). *Etegé* Mentewab, a native of Quara and the wife of Emperor Bäkafa (r.1721-1730), dominated Gondarine court politics in the reigns of her son *Aşé* Iyasu II (r.1730-1755) and her grandson King Iyoas (r.1755-1769). She appointed her relatives to important positions that led to the emergence of a political faction named *Quaräňoč* that struggled against the Wällo Oromo faction of Wubit, the mother of Iyoas.[77]

During the *Zämänä Mäsafent* the governors of Bägémder were important officials of the kingdom because of the region's strategic location surrounding the capital, Gondar.[78] The *Wärä Šäh* family which was of Yäjju origin ruled Bägémder at the time making Däbrä Tabor their political center from 1786 to 1853. Under the *Wärä Šäh*, local rulers governed the area from Lake Ţana to Mätäma. These areas were the scenes of major showdowns and battles among the regional lords until the 1850s.[79] In the 1810s and 1820s, *Däjjazmač* Maru Garäd of Dämbiya

[76]Merid and Sergew, 8; Abdussamad H Ahmad, "Ethiopian Slave Export at Matamma, Massawa and Tajura, c.1830 to1885," In William Gervase Clarence-Smith (eds.), *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (USA: Frank Cass and Co.Lt, 1989), 93-100.
[77]Donald Crummey, "Society and Ethnicity in the Politics of Christian Ethiopia during the Zamana Masafent," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*,Vol. VIII, No. 2 (1975), 272; Berry, "The Solomonic…", 52, 326-332.
[78]Pankhurst, *A Social* …, 87.
[79]Shiferaw Bekele,"The State in the Zamana Masafint (1786-1853): An Essay in Reinterpretation," In Taddese Beyene *et als* (ed.), *Kasa and Kasa: Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV (1855-1889)* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 1990), 26-30; Sven Rubenson, *King of Kings Tewodros of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa-Nairobi: HSIU/ Oxford University Press, 1966), 18; Walter C. Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country* (London: Longmans, Green and co., 1869), 358 - 359.

ruled the area from Agäw Meder to Mätäma and hence the area was named "Yä-Maru Qämäs" (Lit. Maru tasted).[80] With Maru's death in 1827, *Ras* Maryé governed much of this area until it was transferred to *Däjjazmač* Kenfu Haylu in 1831. *Däjjazmač* Kenfu, Maru's nephew, fought against the Egyptians who raided and enslaved the border people as far as Wähni and scored a victory over them at Wad Kaltabu in 1837 in the Sudan. After the death of Kenfu in 1839, the area was given to *Däjjazmač* Berru Gošu of Gojjam. Abruptly in 1840, *Ras* Ali II transferred this area to Empress Mänän (his mother) as her fief.[81]

The lowlands of Chilga sub-province, mainly Quara, were *Lej* Kasa Haylu's power base in his fight for the throne. Demanding the governorship of his half-brother Kenfu's former territory, he quarreled with *Ras* Ali II of Yäjju and became a *šifta* in the 1840s in the lowlands of Quara, his birthplace. Moreover, Kasa claimed a share of tribute from *Sheik* Hasan (chief of Gallabat) and wrote to him in February 1847 stating that the tribute paid to Kenfu belonged to him.[82] He was also a defender of the area from invasion by the Egyptians against whom he fought at Däbarqi in 1848 and lost the battle. In the end, *Däjjazmač* Kasa defeated the various regional lords competing for supremacy in the early 1850s and ascended the throne in 1855 as Emperor Tewodros II (r.1855-1868).[83] Thus, Quara and its surroundings served as a spring board for a ruler who laid the basis for the formation of the modern Ethiopian state.

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[80]Merid Wolde Aregay,"YäTéwodros Alamawoč Käyät Endämänächu," In Taddese Beyene *et als* (ed.), *Kasa and Kasa: Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV (1855-1889)* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 1990), 70-75; Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of Princes, the Challenge of Islam and the Reunification of the Christian Empire 1769 - 1855* (London and Harlow: Longman, Green and Co Ltd, 1968), 32.

[81]Rubenson, 15-32; Mordechai Abir, "The Origins of the Ethiopian-Egyptian Border Problem in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (1967), 452 - 453.

[82]Seven Rubenson (ed.), *Acta Aethiopica.Vol. I: Correspondence and Treaties 1800-1854* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 1987), 126.

[83]Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*. 2nd eds. (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2002), 27 - 29; Ruth T Anderson, "A Study of the Career of Thewodore II, Emperor of Ethiopia, 1855-1868" (PhD Diss, Ohio State University, 1966), 62 - 66.

Emperor Tewodros II's reign saw the arrival of various European travelers, missionaries and consuls like Henry Stern, Henry Dufton, Henry Blanc, and Hormuzd Rassam in Ethiopia through Mätäma in the 1860s who have left us valuable information not only on the region from Mätäma to the Lake Ţana and its surroundings but also on Ethiopia. The sources indicate that Qemant chiefs were influential governors of Chilga district because of their command of the strategic route to the Sudan. It was the main route through which Europeans arrived in Ethiopia and returned to their country in the reign of Emperor Tewodros II, since other ways in the north were controlled by rebels and difficult for journey. As a result, Emperor Tewodros II sought not to further endanger his position by creating hostile relations with Qemant chiefs. Thus, he appeased and integrated them by appointing them to top positions without discrimination and they actively participated in the administration of the country. In fact, as their later history also shows Qemant chiefs were integrated and accommodated themselves easily with rulers of Ethiopia, as far as they governed their locality, Chilga.

The Qemant chiefs governed their district from Guang River which separated Chilga from Dämbiya sometimes extended up to Mätäma town in west since the lowlands from Wähni to Mätäma were mainly a "no man's land". For instance, *Sheikh* Jumma, the governor of Gallabat/Mätäma in the 1860s, was under *Balambaras* Gälmo Mamo, the governor of Chilga until 1873. Gälmo was one of the chiefs of the country which Emperor Tewodros II entrusted to keep prisoners at Säraba until they were transferred to other areas following him in 1864.[84] Thus, the Qemant chiefs were among the most trustworthy men of the emperor as Rassam stated, "no

[84] Henry Dufton, *Narrative of A Journey Through Abyssinia in 1862-1863* (London: Chapma and Hall, 1867), 41-71; Rassam, Vol. I, 158 - 209; Stern, 37 - 5.

king of Abyssinia ever had such loyal subjects as these Kamants have proved themselves by their devotion to Theodore, for they stuck by him to the last."[85]

In the early 1860s, the inhabitants of Gallabat who were mainly Takruri emigrated from Darfur, paid taxes to the Ethiopian and Egyptian governments.[86] However, the Egyptians raided the northwestern Ethiopian borderlands taking the opportunity of the instability created in the country when Emperor Tewodros II was struggling against regional chiefs from 1865 to 1868.[87] At the same time, the lowlands around Mätäma were victims of Ţiso Gobäzé's raids. Ţiso had been one of the rebels against the Emperor. Ţiso plundered Chilga, Wähni and Mätäma areas by making his base in Awasa, in Lower Armacheho.[88] *Sheik* Jumma, the governor of Mätäma/Gallabat, also took counter-measures by leading cattle raids against Ţiso's bandit group.[89] Ţiso continued to create trouble on the local people until *Däjjazmač* Gobäzé Gäbrämäden of Lasta killed him in 1868 at Qäha, near Gondar.[90] Henry Blanc described the war-torn districts along the western shore of Lake Ţana as follows:

> On the 13th January (1866) we began our march towards the Emperor's camp, and passed successively through the provinces of Tschelga, part of Dembea, Dagossa, Wandigé, … leaving the Tana Sea on our left. The three first-named provinces had a few years before fallen under the wrath of the despot [Tewodros II]; every village had been burnt, every crop destroyed, and the inhabitants had either perished from famine or been absorbed into the Imperial army. A few had just then returned to their broken-down homes, on hearing of the pardon proclaimed by the Emperor; who, after three years, had relented, and allowed those who still wandered in distant provinces, destitute and homeless, to return again to the land of their fathers. Here and there, amongst the ruins of former prosperous villages, some

[85] Rassam, Vol.I, 158, 209.
[86] S. W. Baker, "On the Tributaries…", 293.
[87] Haar, 180.
[88] Rassam, Vol.I, 158, 209.
[89] Charles Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia.* 2nd Ed. (London: Longmans, 1867), 180 - 181.
[90] Seven Rubenson (ed.), *Acta Aethiopica.Vol.II: Tewodros and His Contemporaries* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 1994), 369.

> half-starved and almost naked peasants were seen erecting small sheds on the ashes of their ancestral huts, near the land they were going again to cultivate.[91]

From the above we understand that the peoples of Chilga sub-province were recruited into the army of Emperor Tewodros and contributed a lot to his effort of re-unifying Ethiopia. However, the local people were victims of attacks by rebels against the emperor when he was in other parts of the country. This condition continued following the commited suicide of Emperor Tewodros II at Mäqedäla in 1868.

Emperor Täklä Giorgis (r.1869 -1871), Tewodros' successor appointed Wäldäselasé Wäldäkidan (nicknamed Wäréňa, probably he acquired this name for his talks of dreaming the throne), one of the contenders to the throne, to govern Bägémder and Semén, below Täkäzé River as far as Quara up to Chächäho, with the title of *ras*. On ascending the throne, Emperor Yohannes IV (r.1872 -1889) also recognized *Ras* Wäldäselasé's position. The *ras*, however, refused for unknown reason to cooperate with the emperor in his fight against the Egyptians who were raiding and enslaving the inhabitants along the borderlands of Quara and Mätäma as far as Wähni, while *Balambaras* Ţašu Wasé who replaced Gälmo as governor of Chilga in 1873 faced difficulty to defend the area. Due to his disagreement with the emperor (probably Wäldäselasé dreamed of taking the throne), *Ras* Wäldäselasé and his son *Däjjazmač* Nägaš became *šifta* in Semén. While Nägaš remained a *šifta* and attacked local officials of the province, the emperor captured and imprisoned Wäldäselasé.[92] A.E.De Cosson, the British explorer, arrived via Mätäma and met the emperor at Ambachara (near Gondar) in 1873, noted that "Ras Warenia, the

[91]Henry Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1868), 123 -124.
[92]Seven Rubenson (ed.), *Acta Aethiopica Vol. III: Internal Rivalries and Foreign Threats* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2000), 102-103, 134-146; Täkläyäesus Waqejera, *YäItiopeya Tarik*. Sergew Gälaw Eds. (Addis Ababa, 2008 E.C), 256 - 257.

newly subdued chief, who, before, had ruled over all Amhara [Bägémder and Semén] as an absolute prince, but now was forced to prostrate himself in the dust before his master".[93] Subsequently, the over lordship of Bägémder and Semén was given to *Ras* Araya Demşu, the emperor's uncle. William Winstanley, the British traveler who arrived in 1880 in Chilga via Mätäma stated that *Ras* Araya was the governor of Dämbiya and governor-general of Amhara [Bägémder and Semén].[94]

Although *Ras* Wäldäselasé was imprisoned and *Ras* Araya was appointed over Bägémder and Semén, local instability which manifested itself in raiding, rebellions, and burning of villages continued on Chilga sub-province due partly to the imposition of heavy tribute on the local people. For instance, Winstanley stated that the governor of Ţaqusa called "Indashaou" and the local people had rebelled due to the heavy tribute imposed on them. While *Balambaras* Bitäwa, the governor of Chilga, gathered an army and suppressed the revolt, Indashaou escaped to a small island on Lake Ţana.[95]

The local instability and hardship of the local people in Chilga and its surroundings was worsened in the late 1880s by the Mahdist invasion. Since Emperor Yohannes had assisted on the Egyptian evacuation from the eastern Sudan in 1885, the Mahdists identified Ethiopia as their enemy and launched attacks on Mätäma and its surroundings. Since the emperor was in Märäb Melaš (later named Eritrea) to contain the Italian encroachment in 1888, the Mahdists under their leader Abu Anja took this opportunity to raid Ethiopian territory as far as Gondar and Lake Ţana.

[93]A..E. De Cosson, *The Cradle of the Blue Nile: A Visit to the Court of King John of Ethiopia*. Vol. II (London: John Murray, 1877), 6, 138.
[94]William Winstanley, *A Visit to Abyssinia: An Account of Travel in Modern Ethiopia*. In Two Volumes, Vol. II (New York: Negro University Press, 1881), 116.
[95]Winstanley, Vol. I, 147-149, 162-165, 245-274, and Vol. II, 31-36.

En route from Gallabat to Gondar they devastated about 200 churches including Mahbärä Selasé and enslaved the inhabitants. The effort of regional governors like *Negus* Täklä Haymanot of Gojjam to repulse the invasion ended with defeat at Sarwuha, in Dämbiya, in January 1888. *Negus* Menelik did not arrive in Gondar on time and fight the Mahdists. He wasted about six months of journey to arrive around Gondar and he soon returned to Šewa.[96] After he postponed his contradiction with Täklä Haymanot and Menelik, Emperor Yohannes IV mobilized his army, campaigned to Mätäma in the early months of 1889, and fought the Mahdists at Mätäma on 9 March 1889. However, the Ethiopians lost the war; the emperor was wounded and died a day later. The Mahdists captured his body, beheaded him and took the head to the Sudan.[97] The impact of the invasion on the local people was immense. The local people, including priests, were massacred and enslaved to the Sudan. The bone remains of the battle of Sarwuha were visible in the area for more than a decade. Churches were destroyed. The invasion also killed the commercial relations of the two countries via Chilga sub-province. All these had a heartbreaking impact on the overall lives of the local people.

Local Administration from 1889 to 1935

Chilga sub-province became peripheral within the Ethiopian polity following the death of Emperor Yohannes IV and the shift of the political center to Šewa. *Negus* Menelik of Šewa while he was at Boru Méda in early April 1889 declared to the Ethiopian people as "I am your lord, stay (put) as it is". In June 1889, when the *negus* camped at Quana (in Wadla Dälanta) the nobles of Bägémder and Semén, like other regional lords of north central Ethiopia, paid him homage. In turn, *Negus* Menelik made *šumšer* (appointment and dismissal of officials) in the

[96]Zewde, *Yohannes IV…*, 238 - 239; Täkläyäesus, 272 - 276; Täklä Tsadeq, *Aṣé Yohannes…*, 447- 452.
[97]Zewde, 239 - 249; Täkläyäesus, 276 - 280; Täklä Tsadeq, *Aṣé Yohannes*…, 541 - 547.

northern regions of Ethiopia. The former *šifta Ras* Wäldäselasé was appointed over Semén, *Ras* Mäšäša Tewodros over Dämbiya, and other local officials of Bägémder were allowed to remain in their positions (This shows that Qemant chiefs had remained in their position as governors of Chilga). *Ras* Wälé Beţul who was appointed over the region north of Chächäho was also appointed the overlord of the chiefs of Bägémder.[98] Yet, *Ras* Wäldäselasé refused to support the emperor's campaign against *Ras* Mängäša Yohannes of Tegray at the beginning of 1890. Probably Wäldäselasé again aspired to take the throne as he did against Emperor Yohannes IV when the emperor fought the Egyptians. Under order from Emperor Menelik II, *Däjjazmač* Zäwdé (a native of Bägémder) defeated Wäldäselasé and Nägaš at Reb River in June 1890. Zäwdé captured Wäldäselasé and sent him to Menelik II. The emperor appointed Zäwdé to govern Bägémder and Semén with the title of *ras*. However, *Ras* Zäwdé was harsh to the local people who survived the catastrophe of the Great Famine (1888-1891). He hung individuals for minor criminal activities and this brought discontent among the local people in the province. He was not also in good terms with the emperor since he rejected the overlordship of *Ras* Wälé and intended to fight him. The force under *Ras* Wälé was sent to Bägémder in late 1892. Zäwdé retreated first to Semén and later on to Chilga to get protection from a Qemant chief, *Däjjazmač* Bitäwa. In the end, Bitäwa handed over Zäwdé to *Ras* Wälé and sent him to Menelik II.[99] The Qemant chief showed again their loyality to the Ethiopian rulers as they did to Emperor Tewodros II.

[98]Richard Caulk, *Between the Jaws of Hyenas:A Diplomatic History of Ethiopia (1876-1896),* Bahru Zewde (eds.), (Harrassowitz: Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2002), 171; Gäbrä Selasé Wälde Arägay, *Tarik Zämänä Zä Dagmawi Menelik Negus Nägäst Zä Iteyopeya* (Addis Ababa: Berhan ena Selam Printing Press, 1959 E.C), 154-155; Täklä Tsadeq Mäkuriya, *YäIteyopeya Tarik Kä Aţé Tewodros Eskä Qädamawi Haile Selasé* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Printing Press, reprinted in 2000), 93.

[99]Gäbrä Sellasé, 172 - 177, 184 - 185, 294; Caulk, *Between*, 281 - 283; Täkläyäesus, 292 - 293.

Emperor Menelik reorganized the administration of Bägémder and Semén in about 1893. While *Däjjazmač* Gäsäsä Wäldä Hana, nephew of the Empress Ţaytu, was appointed over Semén, Bägémder was partitioned among several notables. Quara was put under *Ras* Mäšäša Tewodros, Bägémder south of Reb River (Bägémder Proper) was given to *Ras* Wälé, and Bägémder northern of Reb River and west of Lake Ţana was given to *RasBitwädäd* Mängäša Atikäm.[100] Powell-Cotton, the British naturalist and ethnographer who visited Chilga and Mätäma in 1900/1901, said *Däjjazmač* Cubudda [Käbädä], the son of Mängäša was the governor of the northwest area of Lake Ţana and his younger brother, *Däjjazmač* Merrit [Mehret], was in command of the fort along Chilga to Mätäma.[101] Following this administrative divisions, Gondar town lost its administrative center in favor of Däbrä Tabor and Dabat.

The constant change of governors in Bägémder and Semén in the last decade of the 19th century and the outlaw and oppressive character of the governors were the basic factors for widespread banditry and local instability in the area between the Lake Ţana and Mätäma. There were other contributory factors. First, it was remote from the central government based in Addis Ababa and its location on the border between Gojjam and Bägémder Provinces. This helped bandits to cross and hide in another province. When Chilga sub-province officials searched for them, they crossed to the Sudan and Gojjam. Second, the agricultural crisis and epidemic due to the Great Famine and Mahdists war brought suffering on the peasantry and pushed them into banditry.[102] Richard Caulk states that most *šiftas* in the 19th century in northern Ethiopia had either blood or

[100]Caulk, *Between*…, 283; Peter Garretson, "The Naggadras, Trade, and Selected Towns in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ethiopia," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*,Vol. XII, No.3 (1979), 435; G.N Sanderson, "The Foreign Policy of the Negus Menelik, 1896 - 1898," *The Journal of African History*,Vol. V, No. 1 (1964), 93.
[101] G. Powell-Cotton, *A Sporting Trip through Abyssinia* (London: Rowland Ward Ltd, 1902), 283 - 287, 346.
[102]Fernyhough, 155 - 157; Cheesman, 217 - 218.

marriage relations with the provincial nobility and their actions were aimed at seeking an office. The motive of these kinds of which sought *šiftas* to get positions was different from that of ordinary bandits, although they shared many common elements such as engaging in robbery.[103]

One of the key developments along the northwestern borderlands of Ethiopia at the close of the 19th century and dawn of the 20th century that had significant impact on the population of the region was the Ethio-British Sudan boundary negotiation and agreement. The boundary negotiation and agreement between Ethiopia and British Sudan was a protracted one due to several reasons. The first thing was Emperor Menelik's 1891 circular letter sent to European powers that stated the extent of Ethiopian boundaries. On the border with the Sudan, the letter says as follows:

> Starts from Arafale on the sea, the Italian border, stretches across the plain of Jegra toward the west, and extends to Mahio, Halai, Digsa, and up to Gura Adibaro. Starting from Adibaro, it extends to the meeting point between the Mereb and Arated River, and then extends farther south to the meeting point between the Rivers Atbara and Setit where is the town of Tomat. From Tomat, the boundary includes the Province of Gedaref and extends to the meeting point between the White Nile and Sobat Rivers.[104]

Despite Menelik's letter, the Anglo-Egyptian troops occupied Gädarif and Roseires in November 1898. Menelik opposed the occupation as a violation of his claim and informed Harrington (British minister at Addis Ababa) that he would fight to preserve Ethiopia's western border. Soon, *Ras* Mängäša Atikäm planted the Ethiopian flag at Mätäma and returned to his seat in Chilga due to the unhealthiness of the lowlands. The Anglo-Egyptian army occupied Gallabat in

[103]Richard Caulk, "Bad Men of the Borders: Shum and Shefta in Northern Ethiopia in the 19th Century," *The International Journal of African Historical Studie*, Vol. XVII, No. 2. (1984), 203, 216; Donald Crummey, "Banditry and Resistance: Nobles and Peasants in the Nineteenth-Century Ethiopia," In Donald Crummey (eds.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: James Curry, 1986), 133 - 135.
[104] Marcus, "Ethio-British ...," 83.

the last month of 1898.[105] Emperor Menelik and Mängäša protested the occupation of Gallabat claiming that it had been tributary to Ethiopia for years. Mängäša expressed his objection to Col. Collison, the Anglo-Egyptian army leader, as follows: "But why did you go to Gallabat after I had put my flag there: you should have told me before hand that you were going to Gallabat. I have informed my master Menelik for what you have done".[106] Menelik II had especially a strong stand on Mätäma and wrote to Harrington as follows:

> tell your Government I do not wish to claim Matamma as a right, I do not wish to make any questions of right about it; even if I did, I have not the force to make my rights good against you. I merely ask your Government, for friendship's sake, to let me have Matamma, on account of the Christians there. King John was killed there, and the blood of many of my people has been spilt there, and it is for these reasons we wish to have it.[107]

Side by side negotiation with Mernelik, the British sent Majors Charles Gwynn and H. Austin for geographical exploration on the Ethio- Sudanese border by the end of 1899. Gwynn explored the border area from the Sätit (Täkäzé) to the Blue Nile (Abay) Rivers, while Austin explored the area from the Sobat (Baro) River to Lake Rudolf.[108] Due to disagreement on many areas, the negotiation between Menelik II and the British was interrupted. Menelik's claim had gradually shrunk probably for fear of the British military superiority or because he realized that the system of "effective occupation" had become the basis for establishing boundaries in Africa. In May 1900, they agreed to share the revenue of Gallabat/Mätäma,[109] the twins towns separated by a small stream called Amihera. The final agreement on the boundary was signed on 15 May 1902 at Addis Ababa. Article I of the treaty showed the major places through which the boundary

[105]David Hamilton, 274; Bahru, "The Relation…," 71.
[106]Bahru, "The Relation …," 71.
[107] Marcus, "Ethio-British ...," 90; Bahru, "The Relation…," 69.
[108]Charles Gwynn, "Surveys on the Proposed Sudan-Abyssinian Frontier," *The Geographical Journal,* Vol. XVIII, No.6 (Dec., 1901), 562 - 573; Marcus, "Ethio-British…," 91; H. Austin, "Survey of the Sobat Region," *The Geographical Journal,* Vol. XVII, No. 5 (May, 1901), 495.
[109]Marcus, "Ethio-British…," 90 - 94.

would pass and Article II stated the representatives of the two governments would demarcate the boundary.[110]

Soon the "demarcation' of the boundary was followed. Gwynn, who acted as the Sudan Commissioner, demarcated the Ethio-Sudan boundary from the Sätit to the Baro Rivers in 1903. He used border markers of massive stone cairns, and in a few cases iron pipes and beacons made of trees or even tree trunks. However, most of the beacons were demolished for unknown reasons (probably by the local people and pastoralists). He met most Ethiopian local officials along the borderlands and informed them about the demarcation of the boundary.[111] This demarcation had a great effect on the relations not only among the frontier society but also between Ethiopia and the Sudan in the second half of the 20th century.

Alongside the boundary agreement with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Emperor Menelik II carried out administrative rearrangements in Bägémder in 1901. Quara was given to Mängäša Atikäm (the governor of Agäw Meder, Mécha, Ačäfär and Damot) who ruled it until 1910. While Gäsäsä remained the governor of Semén, *Ras* Gugsa was appointed over Bägémder. *Ras* Gugsa, who ruled the area until 1910, was popular among the inhabitants of the province because he employed a stable administrative system. He gave support to poor people, administered justice properly, sponsored the construction of churches, and he faced no local opposition.[112] He had also smooth relations with Menelik, his father-in-law. However, Gugsa and Gäsäsä were

[110]Edward Ullendorff, "The Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1902," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies University of London*, Vol. XXX, No.3 (1967), 642; "Dagemawi Menelik KeTeleyayu Ageroch Gar Yadereguachew Wuloch", IES Ms no. 2201.
[111]Hamilton, 303 - 306; Charles Gwynn, "The Frontiers of Abyssinia: A Retrospect*," Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 143 (Apr., 1937), 158 - 159.
[112]And Alem, 4 - 5; Awoke Asmare, "The Career of Ras Gugsa Wale c.1877-1930" (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 1996), 28, 49-53.

removed from their positions following the 1910 imperial coup that ousted Empress Ţaytu; and *Ras* Wäldä Georgis Aboyä was appointed over Bägémder and Semén.[113] Although his wife (Yäšemäbét Täsäma) was from Semén and a relative of Ţaytu, he faced sporadically oppositions in the province like *Däjjazmač* Admasu Berru, a relative of Ţaytu. It was because Wäldä Georgis replaced local officials by Šewans in the administration of the province. Wäldä Georgis was crowned as *negus* in February 1917; however, he died suddenly a year later at Däbrä Tabor.[114]

The domination of Šewan notables in the provincial administration of Bägémder and Semén declined in the reign of Empress Zäwditu (r.1916-1930), although the intervention of the regent (*Ras* Täfäri) in the province increased gradually. *Ras* Gugsa, who was released from Afqerä Amba prison with the coronation of Zäwditu, was returned to the administration of Bägémder in 1918. *Däjjazmač* Ayaléw Berru was given Wägära, Aläfa, Chilga, and Quara, and governed them until 1928, while *Däjjazmač* Admasu Berru was appointed over Semén.[115] However, Gugsa's second phase of governorship of the province that lasted until 1930 was characterized by political instability and administrative confusion due to his engagement in power rivalry with *Ras* Täfäri who was instrumental in the divorce between Zäwditu and Gugsa. The regent also promised rewards to several local officials especially Ayaléw Berru to stand up against *Ras* Gugsa.[116] The imposition of several taxes and tributes on the local people was one of the manifestations of Gugsa's second rule of Bägémder. *Yäţis geber* (Lit. hut tax) which amounted one MTT per house was the most important tax that Gugsa introduced soon after his return from

[113]Märese'é Hazän Wäldäqirqos, *Yä-Hayaňaw Keflä Zämän Mäbača* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2008 E.C), 73,155,198
[114]And Alem, 4 - 5, 40 - 41; Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last Provincial Kings of Ethiopia: Negus Takla Haymanot and Negus Walda Giorgis," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*,Vol. XI. No.1 (1973), 52; Debash, 31 - 32.
[115]Awoke 35-39; Addis Zemen, "Selä Kebur Däjjazmač Ayaléw Berru Eräfte ena YäHeyiwät Tarik", dated 14 Genbot 1940 E.C.
[116]Awoke, 35 - 39; And Alem, 25.

a campaign in Wällo against *Lej* Iyasu in mid-1921. On one side, the tax was said to have aimed at giving compensation to those who lost their horses and donkeys in the campaign to Wällo.[117] On the other side, James McCann stated that Gugsa's intent of introducing that new tax was to collect money to buy rifles and ammunitions for power consolidation.[118] Whatever intention Gugsa had, many localities rebelled, resisted the new tax, and required its cancelation by petitioning to Addis Ababa. In the end, the state abolished the new tax and administrative adjustment was made in 1923. Accordingly, part of the localities like Nägäla, Sädé-Mujja, and Gayint which rebelled against the new tax were given to Admasu, and Semén was given to Gugsa.[119]

Gugsa's rivalry with the regent partly explains the banditry and local instability that emerged especially along the northwestern Ethiopian borderlands. The well-known *šiftas* in the1890s and early decades of the 20th century were Kidanä Mareyam, Bärihun Bogalä, Šiguté Kokäbé, and Bayabel Dästa. These and other bandits mistreated the local people and robbed the caravan merchants on the route to Mätäma.[120] Kidanä Mareyam submitted to Gugsa in about 1908 and was made governor of Wälqayt with the title of *däjjazmač*. This aimed to keep other *šiftas* in check. Later on, Kidanä Mareyam was sent to Addis Ababa where he was appointed as an official.[121] However, in 1924, when the regent was on a tour in Europe, Kidanä Mareyam escaped from Addis Ababa to Armacheho where he resumed his banditry activity. Soon with a

[117] Awoke, 47-50; And Alem, 28; Asfaw Tässäma, "Yä-Ras Gugsa Wäle Tarik", IES, Ms. No.998 (1969 E.C), 47
[118]James McCann, *From Poverity to Famine in Northeastern Ethiopia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennslvania Press, 1987), 44 - 45.
[119]Awoke, 47-50; And Alem, 28; Asfaw Tässäma, "Yä-Ras Gugsa…," 47.
[120]Timothy Fernyhough, "Social Mobility and Dissident Elites in Northern Ethiopia: the Role of Bandits, 1900-1969," In Donald Crummey (eds.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: James Curry, 1986), 153 - 154; Herman Norden, *Africa's Last Empire: Through Abyssinia to Lake Tana and the Country of Falasha* (London, witherby, 1930), 217 - 231.
[121]Peter Garretson,"Frontier Feudalism in Northwest Ethiopia: Shaykh al-Imam 'Abd Allah of Nuqara, 1901-1923," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*,Vol. XV, No. 2 (1982), 270 - 274; Fernyhough, 160-163.

system of capturing a *šifta* by a *šifta*, Gugsa sent an army from Ţaqusa led by Bärihun Bogalä (who himself was a bandit in the 1900s and 1910s) to Jäntola, in Armacheho, where Kidanä Mareyam was sheltered. A Qemant force from Chilga led by Bitäwa was added to Bärihun's army. In the fighting that led to the death of some people on both sides, Kidanä Mareyam was killed and his corpse was sent to Gugsa at Däbrä Tabor on a donkey. As a reward for his deed Gugsa gave the title of *däjjazmač* to Bärihun and appointed him the overlord of local chiefs of Ţaqusa and Chilga as far as Mätäma.[122] Bärihun and his supporters bragged about hunting and killing Kidanä in the following poem:

የአርማጭሆ በሬ ቁላ አቁልቶ ነበር፤
ቀጠቀጠዉ በሬ አስገባዉ ከቀምበር።
ብሬ ብራብሬ አንድ ነዉ ለናቱ፤
ጅመ·ልመ·ሉን ብረት አስጋዘዉ በፊቱ።[123]

An Armacheho man had become an outlaw
Bärihun, however, hunted him and put him under control
Bärihun had no sister and brother from his mother
He amassed the long rifles in front of him

Bärihun's appointment as their overlord disappointed Qemant local officials and minstrels sung as follows:

ጭልጋ በተዋጋ ጉድብ ባፈረሰ፤
ጣቁሳ በጊዜዉ ቅሚሱን ለበሰ።[124]

Though Chilga fought and destroyed the fortress of the *šifta*
Ţaqusa wear *Qämis* (honorable cloth) and became our overlord

Däjjazmač Bärihun died in 1927 of natural causes; and his minor son, Dämes was appointed on his father's territory with the title of *fitawrari* under a tutor governor *Däjjazmač* Gäbré Kasa.[125]

[122] NGAZRO, a petition letter from *Fitawrari* Dämes Bärihun to Lt.Col. Tamrat Yegäzu (*endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén Governorate), dated Säné 1957 E.C.
[123] Informants: Abära and Haylé.
[124] Informants: Abära, and Abuhay Tadässä.

However, demanding administrative position, Bärihun's three other sons named Taräqäň, Tägäňä, and Abära became *šifta* in and around Mätäma. James Baum, a member of the American Field Museum Abyssinian Expedition, who traveled through northwestern Ethiopia in 1927, stated that with about 500 followers, Bärihun brothers were raiding, stealing cattle, and burning villages in Mätäma and its surroundings.[126] Unlike the 19th century *šiftas*, in the early 20th century the *šiftas* motive to take office was limited to the provincial level.

The Battle of Ančim, fought on 31 March 1930, ended the power rivalry between *Ras* Gugsa and *Negus* Täfäri Mäkonnen. The latter was able to get the support of Ayalėw by promising him the governorship of Gugsa's territory with the title of *ras*. The Šewan army helped by airforce defeated and killed Gugsa. Täfäri, however, did not keep his promise to appoint Ayalėw over the promised region (perhaps because he wanted to avoid another rival). Rather *Ras* Kasa Haylu was chosen to govern Bägémder including the territory of Guba under *Däjjazmač* Banjaw Abešuk.[127] However, Kasa was mostly absent from his administrative area and appointed his son, *Däjjazmač* Wändewäsän (r.1930-1935), as governor of the province. Under Wändewäsän, *Däjjazmač* Mäsfen Gämäč, who was the anti-slavery court judge, was the governor of the districts of Quara and part of Aläfa.[128] Since partly he was from Šewa and lacked the local experience of the province, *Däjjazmač* Wändewäsän did not restore peace and order in the province. He could not eliminate the bandits that infested the route mainly from Lake Ţana to Mätäma. Robert Cheesman, the British consul at Dangela (1925-35), travelled from Dangela to the Sudan via Mätäma repeatedly and stated that the area was infested with bandits led by Šiguté

[125] "YäDäjazmač Gäbré KasaYähewot Tarik", IES Ms no. 2568; Informants: Abära, and Haylé.
[126]James E.Baum, *Savage Abyssinia* (Great Britain: np,1928), 265.
[127]Märese'a Hazen, *Yähayaňaw*…, 396 - 406; Täklä Tsadeq, *YaIteyopeya Tarik Ke Atse Tewodros*…, 184 - 186.
[128] Cheesman, 217 - 220; Abdussamad, "Gojjam…," 25, 74, 94.

Kokäbé.[129] This was partly the incapacity of the young *Fitawrari* Dämes Bärihun. *Däjjazmač* Gäbré Kasa, the overlord of the area from Mätäma to Reb River, ordered the people of Aläfa and Ţaqusa to hand over Šiguté to him peacefully or otherwise, he would fine them. The elders negotiated with the bandit and handed him over to Gäbré sometime in 1933.[130] By the time Šiguté is said to have composed the following poem:

ወይ ጣቁሳ ሞኙ ወይ አገሬ ሞኙ በራሱ መከረ
ክፉ ለክፉ ቀን ይሆነዉ ነበረ።[131]

You are a fool, Ţaqusa my land for you worked against yourselves
This man would have been your protector in difficult times.

Although Šiguté, who was first sent to Däbrä Tabor and then to Addis Ababa was charged and found guilty of several criminal acts and was hung at Enţoţo, other bandit groups continued to disturb the peace and stability of the area. The local people also considered *Däjjazmač* Wändewäsän an oppressive governor for he imposed heavy taxes on them.[132] Realizing the problems in the province, Emperor Haile Sellassie planned to transfer *Ras* Emeru Haylä Selasé from Gojjam to Bägémder and *Ras* Kasa to Gojjam in 1934. However, for various reasons *Ras* Emeru preferred to remain as governor of Gojjam and the plan was therefore not put into effect.[133]

Trading Activity from 1880s to 1935

The incompetent provincial governors appointed from Šewa coupled with other local and external factors weakened the caravan trade and route from Gondar to Mätäma in the last decade

[129]Cheesman, 130 -131.
[130]Informants: Haylé, and Sinor.
[131]Informants: Haylé, and Sinor.
[132]Harald Nystrom, *Yätädäbäqäw Mastawäša* (*With St. George on the Death Ride: A Memory of the Italian-Ethiopian War of 1935-36*) Trans. by Gäbäyähu Täfäri and Däsaläň Alämu (Chibo Light Books, 2014), 199.
[133]Emeru Haylä Selassé, *Käsämahut Kämastawusäw*. 2nd edition. (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2002 E.C), 253 - 256.

of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th century. The year 1880s was a turning point in the commercial activities of Chilga sub-province. The age-old market of Gondar and the Mätäma-Gondar trade route lost its glory as the major import and export of Ethiopia starting from the1880s. The factors for this were the battle of Embabo (1882), the war with the Egyptians and the Mahdists, the shift of the capital to Addis Ababa with the rise to power of Emperor Menelik II, the opening of Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway, and the emergence of rival ports like Gambéla along the Sudanese border.[134] Especially, the Ethio-Mahdist war led to the decline of frontier commercial relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan via Mätäma. Subsequently, the Great Famine (1888-1891) also hit the region and diminished the productive capacity of the two countries. The Anglo-Mahdist war of 1898 was also an obstacle for the development of trade across the frontier. These contributed for the decline of trade with the Sudan in the 1890s.[135]

The central government and regional governors of Bägémder like *Ras* Zäwdé, *Ras* Wälé and *RasBitwädäd* Mängäša Atikäm attempted to re-open the trade by cultivating friendly relations and exchanging correspondences with the Sudanese governors of Gedarif.[136] For example, in January 1899, *RasBitwädäd* Mängäša from Chilga wrote to the governor of Gedarif as "…**ነጋዴዉን ስድጃለሁ እዚያም ያለዉ ነጋዴ ጉልበቱ እንዳደረሰዉ መጥቶ ወደኛ ይነግድ።ምንም ክፉ ነገር የለበት።።**"[137] (…. I have sent traders to your land. Your traders can also come here and trade; there is no harm in this). Although these Ethiopian officials tried to revive trade using different mechanisms, the trade along Mätäma remained very weak in the last decade of the 19th century

[134]Bahru Zewde, "An Overview and Assessment of Gambella Trade (1904-1935)," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,*Vol. XX, No. 1 (1987), 93 - 94; Richard Pankhurst, "The Trade of Northern Ethiopia in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 1 (January 1964), 61.
[135]Abdussamad H.Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and the World Economy, 1901-1935" (PhD Diss, University of Illinois, 1986), 15-116.
[136]"KäRasBitwadäd Mängäša Yätäṣafu Däbedabéwäč", IES Ms.no.1917.
[137]"KäRasBitwädäd Mängäša …", IES Ms.no. 1917.

and first decade of the 20th century. Powell-Cotton, who visited Gondar in 1900, says "Now there is only one large merchant remaining in the place [Gondar], and so low has the state of trade fallen that only five to six salts go to a dollar," [138]

Since the close of the 19th century, the colonial European powers neighboring Ethiopia involved in the commercial penetration of adjacent Ethiopian regions and established consulates in different provincial towns. In the northwestern and northern Ethiopia, the British opened consulates at Dangela and Gondar while the Italians did so at Gondar, Adwa, and Däsé.[139] The Italians and the British did their best efforts to draw the trade of the Lake Ţana area to Eritrea and the Sudan respectively. The Italians carried out several things to pull the trade to Eritrea. With the permission of Emperor Menelik, they constructed a caravan road from Barentu via Niquara to Gondar in the first decade of the 20th century. They also drilled water wells for the caravans on the routes, gave camel transport, and exempted them from paying customs duties when they entered Eritrea.[140] Such Italian activities had negative impact on the trade route that passed through Mätäma and the Sudan, although it had a positive contribution on the commercial activities of the northern regions. The Italians also had studied the economic resource of the area around Lake Ţana and characterized the region as "destined to become the most populous and rich areas in tropical Africa." Giuseppe Ostini, the Italian commercial agent in Gondar in the 1910s, obtained a concession for cotton cultivation on the shores of Lake Ţana and the number

[138] Powell-Cotton, 301.
[139] Bahru, *A History*…., 96 - 97.
[140]Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Trade Relations of Northern Ethiopia with Italian Eritrea, 1903-1935," *Africa (Rome)* Anno 52, No. 3 (Settembre 1997), 416 – 417.

of Italian commercial agents was increased on the shores of Lake Ţana like at Dälgi to monopolize the trade.[141]

Muslims, who were appointed as chiefs of border customs posts, predominantly conducted the trading activity of the region. *Nägadrases* Ali Musa and Nur Hussein Abd al-Qadir were the chief of customs office at Mätäma from 1900 to 1918 and 1918 onwards respectively.[142] The regional governors however taxed the caravan merchants at several *kéla* (customs posts) between Dälgi and Mätäma. Governors of Bägémder used the Ethiopian share of the revenue of the Gallabat/Mätäma custom post, unlike the case in Gambéla and Harar where the revenue went to the central government. This was because the regional power at Bägémder was strong under Gugsa's second phase. Control over revenue of the Mätäma custom post was the main cause of conflict between *Ras* Gugsa and *Ras* Täfäri Mäkonnen, the regent. Since 1918, *Ras* Täfäri wanted to receive the Ethiopian share of the Gallabat/Mätäma customs and requested Wilfred Thesiger, Minister of British Legation at Addis Ababa, to know its exact amount and to transfer it not to *Ras* Gugsa rather to the central government. Thesiger, however, expressed his anxiety indicating that Gugsa would take measures that would have a negative impact on the trade to Gallabat either by increasing tax or other obstacle on the caravans. Despite the attempt of the regent, Ethiopian share of the Gallaba/ Mätäma customs continued to flow to *Ras* Gugsa.[143]

The British officials in the Sudan and consuls at Dangela and Gondar tried to direct the trade of the lake area towards Gallabat/Mätäma. However, they were not successful because of different factors. These were the existence of malaria-infested lowlands along the border, high customs

[141]Abdussamad, "Trade Relations…," 418 - 423.
[142]Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Trade and Islam in the Towns of Bägemdir," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies,*Vol. XXIX, No.2 (1996), 5-10.
[143]Garretson, "The Naggadras…," 437; Abdussamad, "Priest …", 551 - 553.

dues at Gallabat and the lower prices of the Ethiopian items in the Sudan (compared to in Eritrea). These discouraged Ethiopian merchants to trade with the Sudan.[144] Moreover, the existence of many bandits had also a harmful impact on the development of trade route to Mätäma as well as on the local people.[145] Powell-Cotton noted "[…], and the suppression of the robber bands who now infest the caravan route to the west of Lake Tana, I believe Gondar will again become a thriving commercial city."[146] Robert Cheesman also states that the area between Lake Ţana and Mätäma was infested with bandits organized by Šiguté Kokäbé. He noted "he [Šiguté Kokäbé] had been a terror for the neighbourhood for several years and was paralyzing trade on the Sudan road, a trade that it was one of my duties to protect."[147]

There were various items exported to the Sudan via Mätäma. Coffee was the dominant commodity. The coffee of the lake area had high demand in the Sudan.[148] The other trade items were beeswax, honey, cattle, sheep, goats, hides, and skins. In return, goods like cloth (like *abujadid* and *mäbruq*), tea kettles, saucepans, juges, pitchers, knives, iron buckets, pans, shovels, spades, axes, and hatchets were imported to Ethiopia from the Sudan.[149] Contraband was also common in the borderlands. Hermann Norden, the American traveler who visited Gondar and went from Lake Ţana to Mätäma in February 1929, noted that "the district adjacent to the Sudan follows the rule of frontiers the world over, in that it is the scene of much illegal enterprise.

[144]Abdussamad, "Trade Relations…," 424; Abdussamad, "Gojjam…," 238.
[145]Arthurd J Hayes, *The Source of the Blue Nile* (London: Smith, Elder and Co.,1905), 54 - 55; Hermann Norden, *Africa's Last Empire:…,* 217 - 231.
[146] Powell-Cotton, 302.
[147]Cheesman, 130 - 131.
[148] Cheesman, 216; Abdussamad, "Priest …", 551 - 553.
[149]Abdussamad, "Trade Relations…", 420, 423; H.C Maydon, *Simen: Its Heights and Abysses* (London: H.F&G Wtherby, 1925), 123-124.

Shifta bands, slave-dealings, gun-running, and contraband traffic of all kinds, have here their best opportunity."[150]

The activity of *Ras* Emeru Hailä Selasé, the governor of Gojjam (1932-1935), to divert the trade of Gojjam towards Addis Ababa by reducing the customs duties on the route for the caravans had initially weakened the Mätäma-Sudan trade route. However, Gojjam merchants did not benefit because of lack of storehouses for their items in the capital and restarted to trade with the north.[151]

Italian Subversive Activities in Bägémder

Side by side with their commercial penetration in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Italians in Ethiopia were secretly involved in sowing disaffection among the regional nobility against the central government. Among nobles targeted in this policy were *Ras* Gugsa Wälé of Bägémder and *Dajjazmač* Ayaléw Berru of Semén. The Italians tried to capitalize on regional resentment against Šewan rule. Italians were sent masked as travelers, consuls, medical doctors, and commercial agents.[152] Italian consular offices, clinics and schools were opened in the towns of Gondar, Däbrä Marqos, Däsé and Adwa and these served as a place of political conspiracy and surveillance.[153]

This Italian subversive activity seemed successful in the northern provinces like Bägémder and Semén. Hermann Norden, the American traveler, visited Signor Frangipani (the Italian consul in

[150] Norden, 217.
[151] Abdussamad, "Gojjam...," 89.
[152] Bahru, *A History*…, 150 - 153; De Bono, 48 - 50; Angelo Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War, 1935-1941* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 8 - 16.
[153] Sylvia Pankhurst, "The Genesis of the Italo-Ethiopian War-II," *Ethiopia Observer,* Vol. IV, No.1(1960), 29; Harold G. Marcus, "Disease, Hospitals, and Italian Colonial Aspirations in Ethiopia, 1930 - 1935*," Northeast African Studies,*Vol. I, No. 1 (1979), 21 - 28; De Bono, 44 - 45.

Gondar in 1929) and noted that "[a]s intelligence-officer for Italy he has *askaris* and tribal retainers in various parts of the district to keep him in touch with happenings. He has also so completely merited and won the confidence of the *Rases* that he acted as banker for their tax money."[154] Raffaele Di Lauro, who succeeded Signor Frangipani as the Italian consul in Gondar from 1932 to 1935, had also close relations with Ayalew Berru and the *šiftas* Wubnäh Täsäma. Di Lauro is reported to have given arms and money to Wubnäh and pushed him to fight other regional lords.[155] This was designed to create disunity in the region that would be vital for the Italian invasion later. Regarding the success of Italy's subversive activities, Harold Marcus says, "whatever impact the consulates had on policy, their personnel certainly gathered the hard data which was needed by a nation bent on war."[156] A.J. Barker also notes that, "these men [Italian agents] did their work well and when the war came, a good third of the Ethiopian army was paralyzed."[157]

The Ethiopian elites and government understood the threat of the Italian agents and their subversive activities to the Ethiopian state. Intellectuals noted in their writings the risk of invasion coming from the Italians and recommended the government to take countermeasure against them.[158] However, until 1934 the Ethiopian government refused to take serious measures against the Italians because it was believed that the benefits and services they rendered to the society were greater than their threat to the country. Meanwhile, conflict broke out between

[154]Norden, 153-154.
[155]Solomon Addis, "The Career of Rās Amorāw Wubnäh Tasamā in the Five Years Patriotic Struggle" (BA Thesis, AAU, 1985), 3 - 4; NGAZ Patriots Office, Untitled document dealing about the Italian Occupation in Bägémder and Semén , the resistance Movement and the lives of the patriots (Gondar, np, nd), 64.
[156] Marcus, "Disease, ...," 23 - 24.
[157]A.J.Barker, *The Rape of Ethiopia 1936* (New York: Bllantine Books Inc, 1971), 15 - 16.
[158]Bahru Zewde, "The Ethiopian Intelligentsia and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (1993), 271 - 280.

Italians and Ethiopians working at the Italian consulate in Gondar in November 1934. One person was killed and others were injured in the clash. The Ethiopian government tried to cool down the incident by paying an indemnity to Italy.[159]

Conclusion

The multiethnic sub-province that extended from Lake Ţana to Mätäma was incorporated into the Christian Highland Kingdom in the reign of King Amdä Şeyon in the 14th century. Since then, medieval Ethiopian rulers consolidated their control by constructing churches, evangelization, and granting gult lands to officials and churches. The shift of the center of the Christian Highland Kingdom in the 16th century to the lake area encouraged the relations between the Funji and Gondarine Kingdoms. For centuries, the borderland was their main economic basis of the two states by collecting taxes and slaves. The hostile relations of the two states had especially a harmful effect on the overall lives of the local people on the frontier. The district of Qura began to play active role in the politics of the Gondarine Kingdom in the 18th century and it was served as a spring board for the formation of modern Ethiopian state under *Däjjazmač* Kasa Haylu (the later Emperor Tewodros II). The sub-province became a frontier area following the coronation of Emperor Menelik II in 1889. Although several local governors were appointed in the areas between Lake Ţana and Mätäma from 1889 to 1935, they could not set up a stable administration. Due to geographical and other factors, conflict, banditry, and instability were deep-rooted in the area and they had a harmful impact on the overall lives of the

[159]Emilio De Bono, *ANNO XIII: The Conquest of an Empire* (London: the Cresset Press Ltd, 1937),55; Emeru, *Käsämahut* …, 259; Solomon Addis, "The Evolution of Gondar's Public Health College and Training Center: Che-Che-la from an Italian Consular Office to a Medical College," *Northeast African Studies,* Vol. XIII, No. 1 (2001), 80.

local people. Italy and Britain had competed to draw the trade of the lake area to their respective colonies: Italy to Eritrea and the British to the Sudan. Despite some religious discrimination, the different ethnic groups of the Chilga sub-province peacefully coexisted for centuries. The Qemant local chiefs were easily accommodated and integrated with the Ethiopian rulers and loyal to governments until the 1935 Italian invasion. However, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, side by side with their commercial penetration the Italians tried to create subversive activities and discontents among the Qemant and some local officials against the central government.

CHAPTER II

Chilga sub-Province during the Italian Military Occupation, 1935 to 1941

Introduction

Since it is a frontier area and usefully located along the border with the Sudan for the resistance forces, the Italians could not effectively control the area between Lake Ţana and Mätäma, what would after 1946 be called Chilga *Awraja* (sub-province) during the five-years of military occupation of Ethiopia. As a result, Chilga sub-province became a major center of resistance against Italian Fascist rule. It also became the main inlet and an outlet to and from the Sudan for resistance fighters from Bägémder and Gojjam. I will show in this chapter that although the Italians were able to get several collaborators in their divide and rule colonial policy in Chilga sub-province, the area was the major place where the resistance against Italy emerged from very early on and intensified due to its strategic location along the border with the Sudan. Thus, the Italians were not successful in implementing their colonial policy fully in Chilga sub-province during the five years military occupation. This chapter examines the relationships between the people of Chilga sub-province and the Italian forces from 1935 to 1941. The Chapter begins the discussion of how the army of Bägémder and Semén under *Ras* Kasa Haylu, *Däjjazmač* Wändwäsän Kasa and *Däjjazmač* Ayaléw Berru marched to the northern front, fought the Italians, defeated and returned home.

The chapter also offers a detailed discussion of how the Italians tried to divide and rule the local people in Chilga sub-province and the responses of the local people to Italian colonial policy. It

also elaborates how the resistance in Chilga sub-province was started and intensified and the strategies that the Italians used to control the resistance. The struggle of the local resistance force, however, was not enough to liberate the region from Italian military occupation unless a strong foreign support arrived against Italy. This chapter also offers a detailed examination on the role of British military support in the liberation of Chilga sub-province and its surroundings that was delayed until November 1941, six months after the liberation of Addis Ababa.

Italian Invasion and the Mobilization of Bägémder army

Following the December 1934 Wal Wal Crisis between Ethiopia and Italy, preparations were begun by the two states for the imminent war. The Ethiopian government ordered Italian officials to close their consulates and hospitals and leave the country. Ethiopian officials showed the green light to the local people to harass the Italians.[1] Unable to resolve the problem with Italy through the League of Nations, the Ethiopian government declared a general mobilization against the Italians in July 1935.[2] On 3 October of the same year, the Italian army under the commander of Gen. Emilio De Bono crossed the Märäb River and invaded northern Ethiopia on three fronts and occupied many areas without resistance from the local people. Tegrean chiefs like *Ras* Haylä Selasé Gugsa submitted quickly and started to work with the invaders.[3] When the Italian army occupied Mäqälä on 27 October, after they paused for two weeks, Emperor Haile Sellassie ordered the local chiefs not to fight the enemy for tactical and diplomatic reasons.[4]

[1] Marcus, "Disease ...," 24.
[2] Emeru, 263.
[3]Edward Hamilton, *The War in Abyssinia: A Brief Military History* (London: the Unicorn Press, 1936), 7 - 23.
[4]George Steer, *Caesar in Abyssinia* (Boston:Little, Brown and Company, 1937), 149; Bahru, *A History*…., 153 -154.

The forces of Bägémder and Semén were recruited under their respective local governors and made preparations for the northern campaign. The forces of Bägémder under *Ras* Kasa Haylu and his son *Dajjazmač* Wändwäsän gathered at Däbrä Tabor where an army from Sälalé was added to Kasa's force. Some Ethiopians, who received military training under the Belgians at Holäta, also arrived at Däbrä Tabor and gave instructions, training, and arms to Kasa's army before its march to the northern front. On the eve of its departure for the northern front, the Italian governor of Eritrea tried to have Kasa switch to his side by sending an agent to Däbrä Tabor. However, Kasa was said to have rejected this[5]and his army marched to the north via Gaynt-Walda Dälanta-Lalibäla and camped at Abi Adi, in Tämbén. Another Bägémder and Semén army under *Dajjazmač* Ayaléw Berru, commanded by *Fitawrari* Šifäraw Gétahun from Dabat marched via Ţälämt to Šeré.[6] As with *Ras* Kasa, the Italian governor of Eritrea tried to have Ayaléw Berru switch sides by sending a Muslim messenger named Mähamed Emam in November 1935 to Ayalew. Mähamed, a rich Arab Merchant who lived in Eritrea and had trade relations with Ayaléw, promised Ayaléw that the Italians would give him the title of *ra*s and appoint him as governor of northwestern Ethiopia if he betrayed Emperor Haile Sellassie. Italy also promised him large sums of money. However, Ayaléw refused to betray his country although the Emperor had mistreated him.[7] During the march to the north, *Fitawrari* Märso Ayaléw and Asfawäsän Kasa were appointed as *endärasés* of Semén and Bägémder respectively.

[5]Adolf Parlsak, *Yä-Habäša Jäbedu (Habešska Odyssea)*. Tächanä Joberé. trans.), (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2010), 53 - 55, 72; NGAZ Patriots Office document, 23 - 24, 28.
[6]Gärima Tafärä, *Gondäré Bägašaw* (Addis Ababa: Täsfa Gäbrä Sellasé Matämya Bét, 1949 E.C), 13; Tächanä, 53 - 55, 72; NGAZ Patriots Office document, 28.
[7]Harald Nystrom, 44 - 45.

Sometime later, Asfawäsän appointed *Fitawrari* Asfaw Gobaw to take his place as *endärasés* and proceeded with his father to the northern front.[8]

When they approached the northern front in late November, Italian aircrafts attacked Kasa's army, who was appointed by the emperor as the overall commander of the Ethiopian army of the northern front. In the same month, Italian aircrafts also attacked the Gojjam army under *Ras* Emeru Haylä Selasé around Dabat, while he was marching to the north. This created confusion, lack of confidence and some casualties from the Gojjam army. Partly due to this, part of the Gojjam army under *Däjjazmač* Gäsäsä Bäläw and *Fitawrari* Tamrat Agäw deserted Emeru at Dabat and returned home. Ayaléw and Emeru's forces were deployed on the Šeré front.[9] An Ethiopian army under *Däjjazmač* Mäsfen Gämäč, the governor of Agäw Meder, was deployed to Sätit-Humära to block Italian entry into Ethiopia.[10]

Due to its nearness to the war front, the army of Bägémder and Semén was the first to arrive at the northern front and fight the Italians. In December 1935, it had its first engagement in Šeré and Tämbén, and there was war booty, captives and several causalities on both sides. Šifäraw Gétahun, Ayalew's army commander, fought the Italians at Endabaguna on 15 December 1935. Even though Šifäraw's army defeated the enemy, he was killed in the engagement. The fighting continued for the next few days.[11] Soon Ayaléw appointed *Fitawrari* Mulaw Täsäma as commander of his force.[12] Fighting also started between the Italians and the Bägémder force in Abbi Addi, in Tämbén, in January 1936. The First Battle of Tämbén started on 20 January and

[8] NGAZ Patriots Office document, 28.
[9]Emeru, 264 - 271; Polson Newman*, Italy's Conquest of Abyssinia* (London:Thornton Butterworth Ltd, 1937), 124.
[10] Emeru, 267.
[11]Anthony Mockler, *Haile Sellasé's War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 76 - 79; Tächanä, 125 - 190; Newman, 129; Edward Hamilton, 57-58; Emeru, 271 - 272; Nystrom, 87- 97.
[12] NGAZ Patriots Office document, 38.

continued for four days; Kasa's army was victorious.[13] Since they fought on the day of *Ţemeqät* (Ethiopian Epiphany), on 20 January 1936, the following couplet was composed at the time by an Ethiopian soldier:

ኧረ እናንተ ሆየ የዘንድሮዉ ጥምቀት ከየት ነዉ ባህሩ፤
በደም ሲራጭ ዋለ ያገሬ ልጅ ሁሉ::[14]

Where is this year's baptism place?
Men of my country spent the day shedding each other's blood.

After crushing *Ras* Mulugéta Yegäzu's army at Amba Aradom in the third week of February 1936, the Italians then turned against Kasa's army and the Second Battle of Tämbén commenced on February 27. The Italians attacked Kasa's army ruthlessly using modern rifles, airplanes, and mustard gas for the next four days. His army sheltered in caves and tried to save its life. However, unable to resist the superiority of the enemy force, Kasa's army stopped fighting and retreated south to their homes harried by Italian airforce bombardments.[15] Thus, most of Bägémder's force did not participate in the Battle of Maychäw fought on 31 March 1936. Following the Battle of Maychäw, Kasa left for Europe with the emperor, while Wändwäsän sheltered in Lasta until December 1936 when the Italians captured and executed him.[16]

The war on the Šeré front reached its height from 28 February to 3 March 1936. The superior Italian army defeated the Ethiopian army and the remaining Ethiopian troops, harassed by the enemy air forces, retreated in a disorderly fashion to the south crossing the Täkäzé.[17] Haddis

[13]A.J.Barker, *The Civilizing Mission: A History of The Italo - Ethiopian War of 1935 - 1936* (New York: The Dial Press Inc, 1968), 246; Tächanä, 168 - 178.
[14] NGAZ Patriots Office document, 28.
[15]Barker, 255 - 257; Del Boca, 142; Tächanä, 191 - 205, 247 - 263.
[16]Käbädä Tässäma, *YäTarik Mastawäša* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1962 E.C), 166.
[17]Pietro Badoglio, *The War in Abyssinia* (London: Methuen Publishers, 1937), 111-119; NGAZ Patriots Office document, 38 - 40; Emeru, 275 - 277; Nystrom, 162 - 176.

Alämayähu in his reminisces described the retreat of the Ethiopian army from the Šeré front as follows:

> …ተከዜ ወንዝ ደረስን። ከዚያ ያየነዉ ደግሞ፤ ስለ ሽሬ ግምባር ጦርነት ሳስብ ባይነ-ህሊናየ ፊት ጎልተዉ ከሚታዩኝ ክፉ ትርዒቶች አንዱ ነዉ። የተከዜ ዉሀ እመሻገሪያዉ ላይ ሰፊና ፀጥ ያለ ነዉ። ታዲያ ያ ሰፊ ዉሀ፤ ገና ከሩቅ ሲያዩት ቀይ ቀለም በከባዱ የተበጠበጠበት ይመስላል። […] መሻገሪያዉ በቁመ-ም፤ በወርዱም ከዳር እስከ ዳር ሬሳ ሞልቶበት የዚያ ሬሳ ደምና ፈርስ ነዉ! […] ያን ሳይ ዉሀ ጥሜ ተቆረጠ።[18]
>
> . … we arrived at the Täkäzé River. What we saw there was one of the horrific events that comes to my mind when I think of the war in the Šeré front. The river at the crossing was wide and calm. Looking at it from a distance, that water looked as if it was spotted with deep red … The crossing was horizontally and vertically filled with dead bodies and it was the blood and chyme of the corpses that changed the color of the water…. When I saw that, my thirst vanished.

Although Emeru had the idea of starting a guerrilla war in Semén, he did not turn this into a reality due to several factors. These included lack of cooperation from Ayaléw, continuous Italian aircrafts attacks, and decline in the size of his army due to desertion. Ayaléw and Admasu (who came to Semén after the defeat in Tämbén) went back via Dänqäz toYifag and Däbrä Tabor and Gayint respectively, their birthplaces. By then Asfawäsän Kasa, Ayaléw's brother-in-law, was already in Däbrä Tabor. After he phoned to Addis Ababa at Yifag, *Ras* Emeru resumed his journey to Gojjam.[19]

Following the footsteps of the retreating Ethiopian army, a mechanized Italian army led by Gen. Achille Starace marched on the relatively smooth caravan road from Om Hajer to Sätit-Humära-Armacheho and captured Gondar on 1 April, 1936.[20] Another Italian army from Šeré followed the caravan route via Däbarq and arrived at Gondar a day later. A third Italian army consisting of

[18]Haddis Alämayähu, *Tezeta* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1985 E.C), 93.
[19]Del Boca, 156 - 157; NGAZ Patriots Office document, 40 - 41; Emeru, 277-27; Nystrom, 177 - 189.
[20]Barker, 262; Badoglio, 131, 134; Newman, 197- 199, 204 - 206; Edward Hamilton, 98 - 102.

a mixed column marched from Sätit along the Ethiopian borderlands and captured Godäbé (about 40 kilometers north on Mätäma) and Mätäma town on 6 and 12 April respectively.[21]

After a few days of rest and preparation, the Italian army deployed from Gondar to Gojjam. On 12 April, it occupied Gorgora and started the construction of the road that connects with Gondar. Another Italian army under Gen. Gobitto went along the eastern shore of the lake, through Yifag and Fogära and captured Baher Dar on 24 April 1936. While the Italian army under Starace continued its march to Däbrä Marqos, the army under Col. Ignazio Angelini returned to Däbrä Tabor and captured it on 29 April 1936. Soon Ayalew came from Gayint and submitted to the Italians at Däbrä Tabor.[22] With the landing of two seaplanes (hydroplanes) on Lake Ţana on 27 April, air transport between the Masawa naval base and Lake Ţana was started; the Italians commenced the construction of a seaplane base at Gorgora, Dälgi and Baher Dar.[23]

Thus, the Italians did not face resistance in their advance and conquest of Bägémder and Semén. They recorded the collaboration of some local officials in Gojjam and Wällo.[24] However, writers like Käbädä Täsäma and Anthony Mockler exaggerated the ease with which the Italians had occupied Bägémder. They noted that since many people of Bägémder were discontented with the death of *Ras* Gugsa at Ančim, they did not put up resistance against the Italian invasion.[25] Tamrat Wasihun, however, argued that there was no unity among the local people in support of Gugsa against the central government at Ančim. Hence, this did not lead the people to follow a

[21] Gärima, 14; Badoglio, 134; Newman, 198; Edward Hamilton, 102, 122.
[22]Seltene Seyoum, "A History of Resistance in Gojjam (Ethiopia):1936-41"(PhD Diss, AAU, 1999), 90; Gärima, 14.
[23] Newnam, 233; Edward Hamilton, 113.
[24]Maniazewal Assefa, "The Resistance in Bägémder, Gojjam and Wellega" (BA Thesis, Department of History, HSIU, 1970), 27; Barker, 262.
[25] Mockler, 120 - 121; Käbädä, 114.

passive attitude towards the Italian invasion of 1936.[26] I also agree with Tamrat's argument. It was not the Battle of Ančim but rather the effective propaganda and subversive work carried out by the Italian consulate in Gondar prior to the war which was instrumental in making the notables of Bägémder sympathetic towards the Italians. The propaganda injected earlier created disunity among the local people. This helped the Italians to control Bägémder and Semén easily.[27]

The other factor that accounts for lack of resistance against the Italians in Bägémder was the horrific nature of the Italian military attack in the northern fronts that discouraged the people to oppose the Italian invasion. Georg Baer noted "[…] the northern command conclusively defeated the Ethiopians in set battle, routing their forces so completely as to make impossible any regrouping into organized opposition."[28] Similarly, Alberto Sbacchi says "The people too, after the defeat of the imperial army, lost their will to fight. The debacle had also undermined the authority of their feudal chiefs. The average Ethiopian still under shock, did not at first oppose the Italians but maintained an attitude of suspicious and wait-and-see".[29]

Thus, the Ethiopian army both in the northern and southern fronts was defeated because the Italians had better logistics, weapons and airforce superiority. On 5 May 1936, the Italian army under Marshal Pietro Badoglio captured Addis Ababa and this marked the beginning of Italian military occupation of Ethiopia.[30]

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[26]Tamrat Wasyihun, "The Patriots of Gayint, 1936-1941" (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 1999), 12.
[27]Garima, 13.
[28] George Baer, *Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia and the League of Nations* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 216
[29] Sbacchi, *Ethiopia* …, 36.
[30]David Shirreff, *Bare Feet and Bandoliers: Wingate, Sandford and the Patriots and the Part they Played in the Liberation of Ethiopia* (London and New York: the Radcliffe Press, 1995), 5; Bahru, *A History*…., 158 - 160; Badoglio, 170.

Italy's Colonial Policy

Following the establishment her empire named Italian East Africa (IEA) that included Ethiopia, Eritrea and Italy Somaliland, the Italian colonial administration set up six major ethnic-based governorates in the empire. Amhara was one of these and it included Bägémder, Semén, Gojjam, Wällo, and Northern Šewa with its capital at Gondar.[31] Each governorate was sub-divided into regional commissionerships (*commissariats*) run by commissioners, while the commissariat were further sub-divided into *residenze* (districts) run by officers. Depending upon local conditions, some *residenzes* were divided into *vice-residenzes*.[32]

Italy appointed governors to the Governorate of Amhara and started to implement her colonial policy. The four successively Italian governors of the Governorate of Amhara during the occupation were Generals Alessandro Pirzio-Biroli (June1936-Dec.1937), Ottorino Mezzetti (Jan.1938-Dec.1939), Luigi Frusci (Jan.1939-Aug.1940), and Guglielmo Nasi (Sept.1940-Nov.1941). These governors employed different approaches in implementing Italy's colonial policy in Amhara Governorate. While Mezzetti was too racist in approaching the local people, Nasi was humane and kind. Initially, the Amhara Governorate was organized into six commissariatships. These were Semén, Gondar (from Reb River to Mätäma), Bägémder Proper (from Reb to Bäšilo Rivers including Wag and Lasta), Wällo, Gojjam, and North Šewa. Their capitals were at Däbarq, Gondar, Däbrä Tabor, Däsé, Däbrä Marqos and Däbrä Berhan respectively. Later on, Gojjam was organized into three commissariatships;[33] and Wag was transferred from the Amhara Governorate to the Governorate of Eritrea to weaken the local

[31]Steiner, 884 - 893; Selten, "A History of Resistance …", 94; Ferdinando Quaranta, *Ethiopia: An Empire in the Making* (London: P.S. King & Son Ltd, 1939), 1 - 2.
[32] Arthur Steiner, "The Government of Italian East Africa," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.XXX, No. 5 (Oct., 1936), 895 - 896; Quaranta, 2.
[33]Seltene, "A History of Resistance …," 84, 94 - 95.

resistance led by *Däjjazmač* Haylu Käbädä.[34] Under this arrangement, Chilga sub-province was put under the commissariat of Gondar.

Italian colonial policy was based on the principle of "divide and rule." The religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Ethiopia was a fertile ground for implementing such a policy.[35] Under this policy, the Italians developed anti-Amhara and anti-Orthodox Christian policy and victimized the Amhara and Orthodox Christians in the country.[36] Soon after they conquered Bägémder, the Italians summoned the *balabats* of the province, held meetings with them in the urban centers and started to disseminate anti-Ahmha and anti-Orthodox Christian ideas. They made their best effort to capitalize on the religious, linguistic, ethnic, and class differences that existed to create internal disunity among the local people. Like other Ethiopian Muslims, the Italians informed the Muslims of Bägémder how Christian Ethiopians had made them landless, exploited and oppressed them prior to 1935 and how the Italians had liberated Muslims. The Italians also informed the poor farmers of the region how noblemen and clergy exploited them and how the Italians had freed them from various tributes. They also informed the *balabats* and *mäkuannents* how the Šewan officials dominated and ruled them by restricting their title only up to the level of *däjjazmač,* but the Italians had allowed them to hold titles above it. In the end, the

[34]Wudu Tafete, "Dajjazmac Haylu Kabbada and the Patriotic Resistance Movement in Wag, 1935-41," In Katsvyoshi Fukui et al (eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective:Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto 12-17 December,1997.* Vol. I (Kyoto: Shokado Book Sellers, 1997), 102; Alberto Sbachi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed Books, 1985), 92.
[35]Ahmed Hassen, "Italian Local Politics in Northern Shäwa and its Consequences, 1936-1941," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (December 1995), 1.
[36]Wudu Tafete, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, The Ethiopian State and the Alexandrian See: Indigenising The Episcopacy and Foreign National Identity, 1926-1991" (PhD Diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Chamgaign, 2006), 88.

Italians preached to all sections of the society to fully submit to Italy and support its colonial government.[37]

The Italians found Chilga sub-province an ideal space to apply such a policy because of its ethnic diversity. The Italians represented themselves as the champions of the oppressed nationalities from Amhara domination.[38] In consequence the majority of the various ethnic groups like the Qemant, Wäyţo, Bétä Israelites, and Gumuz and several Amhara individuals either accommodated themselves to the Italians or collaborated with their rule. Thus, the Italian propaganda and political work in Chilga sub-province had some success. There were various reasons why these ethnic groups and individuals accommodated themselves to Italian rule. Salome Gabre Egziabher classified the Italian collaborators into four groups: "certain Gondaris who were bribed, certain people of Tigre and people with obligations preventing them from joining the patriotic movement, groups who were politically underprivileged, and the Šanqellas[sic]."[39]

The majority of the Qemant were among the Gondarine people who were bribed and actively collaborated with the Italians. An Italian officer called Signor Tore Bari Pierro was said to have played an important role in getting the support of the Qemant to Italian colonial rule. He informed the Qemant as if they had a similar legendary history with the Romans by inventing a narrative that says a wolf feeding breast brought up Remus and Romulus, who were the founder of Rome. In a similarly way, the Säsa (Ethiopian Klipspringer or Oreotrag) brought up Aynär, the legendary ancestor of the Qemant, in Kärkär (in Armacheho). The Italian official also

[37]Gärima, 23 - 24.
[38] Shumye Wolde Sellasie, "The Patriots of Ţagade 1936-1941"(BA, Thesis, AAU, 1985), 33.
[39] Salome Gabre Egziabher, "The Ethiopian Patriots: 1936-1941," *Ethiopia Observer,* Vol. XII, No. 2 (1969), 66.

informed them to protect the Säsa like their wolf and gave a banner having its effigy standing under a fig tree. He showed them the banner on the board and ordered them to go to their localities to show it to the rest of the Qemant.[40]

Initially, however, there was difference between the two Qemant leaders regarding the invented narrative. *Qäňazmač* Ţašu Engeda, the leader of Kärkär (Armacheho) Qemant, refused to accept the narrative because he understood that accepting this propaganda would alienate them from Ethiopia. Ţašu, therefore, decided to consult with Armacheho Qemant who confirmed that they would not accept the narrative that never existed before among their forefathers, but they would live under the Italian flag as they had lived under the Ethiopian flag in the earlier years. Ţašu then accommodated himself to Italian rule and became a collaborator. On his part, *Qäňazmač* Alämayähu Bitäwa, the leader of Chilga Qemant, accepted the narrative and took the banner to his locality where he hoisted it, prepared a banquet, and informed his Qemant followers.[41]

Various factors accounted for the decision of the majority of the Qemant to accommodate them to Italian colonial rule. Their geographical condition was one possible factor. The Qemant mainly lived in lands that were not fertile for crop production as compared to the nearby Amhara owned lands. In 1937/38, locust invasion also occurred in the area and there was shortage of food crops among the local people. This might have forced them to collaborate with the Italians to get provisions. The poem at the end of this chapter partly confirms this case. Moreover, since Chilga and Tekel Dengay were Italian garrisons, the Italians could easily patrol the Qemant lands. And this seemed to have made the engagement of Qemant in the resistance difficult. Moreover, in

[40]Gärima, 24 - 25; Salome, 87; Informants: Abuhay Taddäsä, Abära Šaräw.
[41]Gärima, 24 - 25; Salome, 88.

history, it is said that most of the Qemant were accommodated easily to governments of Ethiopia. They never fought against any Ethiopian ruler; they simply accommodated to rules of Ethiopian governments.[42] This was their history since the 14th century when they peacefully submitted to the 'Solomonic' state. Therefore, their submission to the Italian colonial rule and their collaboration reflected their age-old history, it was not unique to the Italian occupation period.

Moreover, the two Qemant leaders were hereditary rulers in their localities and the Qemant might have simply followed their rulers in becoming Italian collaborators. Ayalew Berru was their former overlord and his collaboration might be another possible factor for their choice.[43] There have also been some grievances and land disputes between non-Christian Qemant and the surrounding Christians mainly Amhara for years. Non-Christian Qemants sometimes faced religious discrimination from Christians and lost lands to the church. When the anti-Amhara and anti-Orthodox policy of the Italians arrived in the area, the majority of the Qemant therefore collaborated with Fascist rule.[44]

Some writers also indicate that Wubnäh Täsäma's action was a factor that forced the Qemant to accommodate them to Italian rule. It is said that some Qemant started to join the resistance at the beginning of the occcupation. However, Wubnäh was said to have imprisoned them since he hated the Qemant because a Qemant man had killed his elder brother named Bezunäh and Wubnäh had become a bandit to avenge his brother's blood. Wubnäh's imprisonment of Qemant

[42] Informant: Sisay.
[43] Solomon, "The Career…," 15-16.
[44] Ibid; Informant: Alämnäh.

resistance fighters discouraged other Qemants from joining the resistance.[45] I think, this might not have been an important factor because Wubnäh was known in encouraging local people to stand up against the Italians.

The Italians also applied the policy of divide and rule on the Wäyţo of Bägémeder and the Wäyţo's accommodation to Italian rule was adopted as a survival strategy. Since they had been 'Muslims" and considered as an "untouchable" group by the surrounding Amhara population, the Wäyţo were sympathetic to Italian propaganda and accommodated themselves to the new masters relatively easily. Their livelihood depended on hunting hippopotamus on Lake Ţana, and it was said that the Italians had tried to stop hunting of hippos to keep them from extinction. On the other hand, the Italians created job opportunities for the Wäyţo who sold fish to them. Before the occupation, the Wäyţo did not have a chance to sell fish to the surrounding Amhara population. The anti-Amhara and anti-Orthodox Church policy of the Italians was also a good opportunity to the Wäyţo. Moreover, the Wäyţo did not have the tradition of living in the mountains and jungle areas where the anti-Italian resistance emerged but they did not also own rifles for fighting. Since they were "untouchable", the Wäyţo could not get provision from the local people to join the resistance.[46] All of these seem to have contributed to Wäyţo's accommodation to Italian rule.

The majority of the Gumuz were the other ethnic group that accommodated themselves to Italian rule in Chilga sub-province. However, there were some Gumuz like *Belata* Gäfi and his family who were considered of being anti-Italian and suspected of propagating anti-Italian ideas among

[45] Shumye, 33 - 35; Solomon, "The Carrer…," 15 - 17.
[46] Informants: Alämnäh Bälay, and Haylé.

the Gumuz. They were also suspected of giving shelter to Wärqu Senqé, the resistance leader of Quara, were executed by the Italians.[47] Despite this, the majority of the Gumuz adapted themselves to Italian rule. Salome states "there were the border people called Šanqella [sic], who in the period of slave trade, has been sold as slaves, and accordingly, had a grudge against the Ethiopian Government; when the new government came and promised freedom and equality, for which they had been waiting, they tended to accept the Italian Fascist government."[48] Although the Ethiopian government prohibited the slave trade in the 1920s, the practice of domestic slavery had continued among the Gumuz and other frontier populations of the country until the mid-1930s. With their arrival, the Italians had tried to control the practice of domestic slavery. In April 1936, Badoglio declared that slaves were free and punishment would be taken on those who were found guilty of breaking the law. Slaves were allowed to remain with their former masters under Italian officials' supervision. Slaves were also settled freely in individual holdings and engaged other activities.[49] This was a great relief to the Gumuz who accepted the anti-Amhara propaganda and anti-Orthodox and anti-slavery policy adopted by the Italians.[50]

The majority of the Bétä Israelites were the other ethnic group who were sympathetic to Italian rule since Italian officials promised better treatment to them under their rule. In February 1936, Carlo Conti Rossini addressed an appeal to the Italian Jews by saying "Italy, after conquering Abyssinia would take the most benevolent interest in the moral and the material welfare of the

[47] Garima, 152.
[48] Salome, 66.
[49] Perham, 231 - 233.
[50] Informant: Sisay.

Falashas."[51] Following their occupation of Addis Ababa, Italian officials gave financial support to the Bétä Israelites school. Thus, many leaders of the Bétä Israelites declared their loyalty to the Fascists. Italian officials also planned to transfer the Bétä Israelites school from Addis Ababa to Gondar and to convert it into agricultural-technical school. Although the proposed school in Gondar was not implemented, the Italian occupation benefited the Bétä Israelites in many ways. They learned new blacksmith techniques, obtained land ownership right, food from Italians, religious freedom, financial support and employment opportunities as soldiers and interpreters.[52] I believe that more than other ethnic groups of Bägémder, Italian colonial policy benefited the Bétä Israelites who had faced religious and socio-economic discrimination for centuries. Thus, they accommodated themselves to Italian rule easily.

However, some of those Bétä Israelites located in remote areas sometimes offered shelter to the resistance forces and a few of them joined them. Bétä Israelites made several reference to their resistance activities in official correspondence in the post-liberation period. For example, in one of their petitions to the imperial government in 1959, the Bétä Israelites mentioned the death of their people due to Italian military action in a village of Märäba where Wubnäh Täsäma, a resistance leader, was suspected to have sheltered.[53]

In addition to the majority people of aforementioned ethnic groups, several former local Amhara officials and people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings accommodated themselves to the Italians. Ayalćw Berru was at the forefront of the local officials who collaborated with the

[51]Daniel Summerfield, "The Impact of the Italian Occupation of Ethiopia on the Beta Israel," In Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (eds.), *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel: Studies on Ethiopian Jews* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), 51 - 53.
[52] Summerfield, 51 - 57.
[53]NALAE code 1.1.20.01, a petition of *Däbtära* Gété Aseräs and Andargé Ţegabé (Bétä Israelite Representatives) to Emperor Haile Sellassie I, dated 4 Hamlé 1951 E.C.

Italians. Angered by the Emperor's decision not to confer on him the governorship of Bägémder after the Battle of Ančim, Ayalέw Berru was quick to submit to the Italians in May 1936.[54] Ayalέw's defection forced Asfawäsän Kasa to transfer his base of resistance from Däbrä Tabor area to Sälalé (northern Šewa)[55] and encouraged other noblemen to defect to the Italian side. These noblemen included *Däjazmačes* Kasa Mäšäša (grandson of Emperor Tewodros II) of Enfranz, Mäsfen Gämäč (the former governor of Quara), Bäzabeh Zälälάw of Tänkäl, Gäbré Kasa of Gayint, *Käntiba* Matäbé Däräso of Andabét, and *Fitawrari* Nägädä Zägäyä of Gayint. Thus, most of the former Bägémder and Semén officials submitted and accommodated themselves to Italian rule.[56] Several possible reasons explain their action. These include: getting better state positions, money, higher honorable titles, and also as a survival mechanism to save their lives from Italian attacks. These officials served the Italian military occupation as *banda* (irregular soldiers), language interpreters, local judges, administrators, and advisors. Their service to the Italians also varied in terms of the length of time from one to five years.[57]

Some of the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings also accommodated themselves to the Italians and became their collaborators. *Abuna* Abraham, the bishop of Gondar who was at the time old and going blind, was one of prominent collaborator clerics. Not only did he deny receiving money that *Ras* Emeru had entrusted to his safe keep when he was marching to the Šeré front for purchasing provisions to his army but he preached to the people to submit to the invaders. He was appointed as Archbishop by the Italians in November 1937 in place of *Abbuna* Qirlos who refused to work

[54]Gärima, 166; Tsegaw Agegn, "The Patriots of Libo (1936-41)" (BA thesis, HSIU, 1973), 1.
[55] Seltene, "A History of Resistance …," 65.
[56] "Kä-Bägémder ena Semén Gar Mätäwawäqiya," IES Ms. no 1264.
[57] Ibid; Tamrat, 15; Informants: Alämnäh, Haylé and Sinor.

with the Italians after the massacre of the clergy of Däbrä Libanos in May 1937. Although the Alexandria Synod excommunicated *Abbuna* Abraham for his collaboration with the Italians,[58] he continued to serve as archbishop until his natural death on 31 July 1939. *Abbuna* Abraham's collaboration might have influenced some clergymen to accommodate themselves to the Italians. For example, *Abba* Ešäté of the Mahbärä Selasé Monastery was one such clergyman who switched to the Italian side and preached to the monks of the monastery and the local people to submit to the Italians until Tagäle Admasu, a resistance leader, killed him.[59]

Although Chilga sub-province was an ideal place for the implementation of the Italian policy of "divide and rule" due to the presence of different linguistic and ethnic groups in the region, it also emerged as a key area for the development of anti-Italian resistance in northwestern Ethiopia. This was related primarily to its useful geographical location along the border with the Sudan for the resistance forces. Its inaccessible land features due partly to its terrain and lack of roads turned Chilga sub-province as a shelter as well as an inlet and an outlet to the Sudan for resistance leaders from Bägémder and Gojjam. For example, *Däjjazmač* Mängäša Jämbäré of Mécha transferred his army from Gojjam to the area between Mätäma and Säraqo shortly after the Italians occupied Baher Dar. He stayed in the area for some months as a rebel before his defection to the Italian side. Shortly after, he returned to resistance against the Fascist rule.[60] Since the lowland parts of Chilga were infected with malaria, the resistance leaders preferred to shelter in the highland areas and used the lowlands as a retreat space whenever the Italians arrived with an overwhelming force.[61]

[58]Haddis, 100 - 105; Gärima, 83 -85; Del Boca, 240.
[59]Gärima, 48 - 49; 83 - 85.
[60] Seltene, "A History of Resistance …," 56, 61, 66, 88 - 89.
[61] Informants: Haylé, Alämnäh, Abuhay, Sisay, and Qoyä Täfära.

Anti-Italian Resistance and Italian Strategies to Control it

The historiography on the resistance in Ethiopia against Italian rule is divided conventionally into two phases. The first phase which was an extension of the war lasted until February 1937 involved frontal warfare under the leadership of the higher nobility. The second phase that began in February 1937 and lasted until the liberation of the country in 1941 was characterized by guerrilla warfare mostly under the leadership of the junior nobility.[62] However, the resistance in Chilga sub-province had a different feature from these two phases. This is because of absence of continued war led by the higher nobility and because the resistance leaders throughout the occupation period were predominantly peasants who held no government position before the invasion.

Italian disarmament policy was the first cause that triggered opposition to Italian rule in Chilga sub-province and other areas of Bägémder.[63] On 5 May 1936, Marshal Badoglio declared the following proclamation in Addis Ababa:

> Peoples of Ethiopia! The troops of the powerful king of Italy today entered Addis Ababa. Normal life returns to the cities and villages. No action will be taken against those who abandon their weapons and resume their fruitful labor. Under the shadow of the victorious tricolor of Italy, the peoples of Ethiopia will have peace, justice, and prosperity.[64]

To control and pacify the country, the Italians believed that it was essential to disarm the local people. Therefore, they ordered the people to hand over their arms to them and imposed severe penalty on those who disregarded the order. The Italians were able to collect several arms in the accessible areas of Chilga sub-province and other parts of Bägémder. However, the order led to

[62] Bahru, *A History*…, 167.
[63] Gärima, 20; Seltene, "A History of Resistance...," 52 - 53; Informants: Gared Čäkol, and Alämnäh.
[64] Steiner, 885 - 886.

opposition among several individuals in the area.[65] This was primarily related to the important place fire arms had in local culture in the frontier areas of Chilga. The culture of holding arms had many values and respect among the people in the sub-province, especially along the those who lived in the escarpment. Since it served as a zone of retreat for outlaws and shelter for bandits, the frontier people of Chilga sub-province equipped themselves with arms to protect their property and lives. They also used arms to defend their lives from foreign invaders. Since it was a frontier area located along the border with the Sudan, the local people had experienced successive invasions and raiding by the Sudanese and Egyptians for centuries. Thus, holding arms had become a necessity for the survival of the frontier population. As a result, the Italian disarmament policy was seen with displeasure by them.[66] Most arms holding people in the sub-province, therefore, refused to submit their arms and went to the wilderness to fight against the Italians. Most of these individuals had no administrative positions before the invasion and they were farmers known only in their respective villages.[67] Some of them like Abära Bärihun, Taräqä Bärihun, Tägäñä Bärihun, and Bayabel Dästa were *šifta* before the invasion.[68]

The first fighting between the Italians and the local people in Chilga sub-province took place in late May 1936 at Bézaho when the Italians tried to disarm people by force. Especially, Ayälä Täsäma, Abära Räda, and their relatives refused to hand in their arms. The fighting inflicted high casualty on the local people due to Italian superiority in arms.[69] Areas along the escarpment were also scenes of the earliest fighting between the Italians and the resistance leaders. The Italian army fought against the resistance force under Wubnäh Täsäma at Dawa (in Chilga district) in

[65]NGAZ patriot document, 145; Seltene, "A History of Resistance ...," 52 - 53; Informants: Garäd, and Alämnäh.
[66] Informants: Alämnäh, Sisay, Sinor, and Qoyä.
[67] Gärima, 16 - 20; Informants: Abuhay, Abära, and Bäläţu.
[68] See the last parts of chapter one.
[69] NGAZ patriot office document, 145; Gärima, 144 - 145; Salome, 87.

July 1936. The geographic factor helped Wubnäh escape a disaster in the hands of the superior Italian army which was ruthless towards the resistance leaders. The Italian army defeated the resistance force under Behona Nägaš at Dawa in September 1936 and killed many members of the resistance. They also captured Behona and others and hung them at Chilga.[70] The Italians also attacked churches and massacred clergymen whom they suspected of sheltering rebels who refused to submit their arms to the Fascists. For example, they burned Mahbärä Selasé Monastery and killed between 24 to 50 monks in 1937.[71] This incident intensified opposition against the Italians among the local people.

Beyond refusal to submit arms, there was little opposition against Italian rule in the first year of the occupation in Chilga sub-province like most areas of Bägémder and Semén. There were several factors for this. The first was that individuals who returned from the northern front had not yet recovered psychologically from the shock of the engagements. There was also lack of arms and shortage of followers to organize an opposition against Italian rule.[72] Moreover, unlike some other provinces where the higher nobility led the fighting against the Italians until the end of 1936, in Chilga sub-province it was a fighting of refusing to submit arms. The only anti-Italian opposition which was a continuation of the formal war in the northern theater in Bägémder led by the upper nobility was the one led by *Däjjazmač* Wändwäsän Kasa in the Täkäzé Valley until he was killed on 11 December 1936.[73]

[70]Gärima, 47; Salome, 87.
[71]Gärima, 48 - 49; Joachim Persoon, "Mahbärä Sellase', in *Encyclopedia AEthiopica* Vol. III (Harrassowitz Verlage, 2007), 653.
[72] Solomon,"The Career…," 11.
[73]Alberto Sbacchi, "Ethiopian Opposition to Italian Rule, 1936-1940," In Robert L.Hess (eds.*), Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies, Session B, April 13-16, 1978* (Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1979), 587; Gärima, 169 - 170.

The Italians carried out various activities to contain the resistance in Chilga and its surroundings. First, since it was a military occupation, they established several garrison centers in areas like at Dälgi (in Ţaqusa), Šahura (in Aläfa), Aykäl (in Chilga), Saliya (in Quara), Maţäbiya and Mätäma.[74] Since Chilga sub-province was usefully located on the main route and along the border with the Sudan for resistance force, it played a great role to and from the Sudan for not only the resistance leaders of Bägémder but also for those from Gojjam and Šewa during the occupation. Thus, these garrison centers together with the local collaborators played a key role in controlling and punishing the resistance leaders not only in the area but also those patriots from Šewa while traveling to and from the Sudan via Chilga sub-province. For instance, after their failed attempt to kill Graziani on 19 February 1937 at Addis Ababa, Mogäs Asgedom and Abraha Däboch tried to escape to the Sudan via Chilga sub-province. However, they were captured in Quara (local sources say by the Kunfal) and handed over to the Italians at Saliya who then hung them in a locality called Dasa in October/ November1938.[75] The death of Mogäs and Abraha was said to have increased local opposition against the Italians in Quara and its surroundings. Several people also began to join the resistance band of Wärqu Senqé.[76]

After the attempt to kill Grazziani, the relations between the Italians and the Ethiopian high nobility acquired a hostile form. The Italians suspected the higher nobility who have submitted to them of having played a role in the failed attempt. They therefore began to consider them as

[74] Gärima,14 - 15.
[75] Quara Wäräda Culture and Tourism office, YäQuara…; Tadässä Zäwäldé, *Qärin Gärämäw: Yä-Arebäňoč Tarik* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Priting Press, reprinted in 2008 E.C), 235 - 238; Informants: Haylé, Jämbäru Gälaye, Mulugéta Abuhay, and Qoye; Ian Campbell, *The Plot to Kill Graziani: The Attempted Assassination of Mussolini's Viceroy* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2010), 350 - 352.
[76] Informants: Haylé, Jämbäru, Mulugéta Abuhay, and Qoyä.

enemies and began deporting them (including Ayalέw Berru) to Italy.[77] The deportation of the high nobility, the death of Wändwäsän and his brothers (Abära and Asfawäsän) at Fečé in December 1936, and *Abbuna* Pétros in Addis Ababa (on 30 July 1936) built up the resentment against the Italians in the country, especially in the Governorate of Amhara which was the "heart of Ethiopia" according to Sbacchi.[78] The Kasa brothers were well-known in Bägémder and their death was resented by some of their former colleagues who had submitted to the Italians in Bägémder. These men stopped their collaboration and joined the resistance beginning in 1937.[79] Some of these men were Asfaw Bogalä of Kämkäm, Daňäw Täsäma of Bäläsa, Molla Mäšäša of Ebenat, Nägaš Wärkqenäh of Semén, Nägädä Zägäyä and Gäbré Kasa of Gayint.[80] This brought about change in leadership in the resistance in many areas of Bägémder and Semén, although there was no such alteration in Chilga sub-province. Moreover, the number of fighters joining the resistance increased and took the form of coordinated action. Thus the opposition evolved from refusing to submit arms to a full-fledged anti-Italian resistance.

Scholars point out several causes for the intensification of the resistance in Amhara after the attempt to kill Graziani. The causes were the inhumane treatment of the local people by the Italians, the massacre of the inhabitants at the capital in February 1937 and the monks of the Däbrä Libanos Monastery on 20 May 1937. The Italians also practiced racial and economic discriminations and destroyed the statue of Emperor Menelik II at Addis Ababa.[81] The news of

[77]Alberto Sbacchi, "Italy and the Treatment of the Ethiopian Aristocracy, 1937-1940," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,*Vol. X, No. 2 (1977), 209 - 210.
[78] Sbacchi, "Ethiopian Opposition…," 587.
[79] Informants: Alämnäh, Mulugéta Abuhay, and Jämbäru Ţelayä.
[80]Tsegaw, 6, 13, 25; Tamrat, 22 - 23.
[81]Sbacchi, "Ethiopian…", 591; Harold G. Marcus, "Ethiopia (1937-1941)," In D.M.Condit et al (ed.), *Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict. Volume III. The Experience in Africa and Latine America* (Washington: Center for Research in Social System, 1968), 3, 8; Del Boca, 241.

Italian crimes was said to have led to the development of anti-Italian sentiment among the people of Bägémder including Chilga.

In addition to establishing military garrisons, the Italians used different mechanisms to contain the resistance in Chilga sub-province. Terror and repressions, as in other areas, was one of the strategies especially during the viceroyship of Graziani. They murdered individuals suspected of hiding arms and gave support to rebel groups in different ways. For example, in May 1937 they killed and beheaded Bayabel Dästa, a resistance leader in Ačäfär and Aläfa, and displayed his head to the people of Aläfa at Šahura market as a warning to other opponents of the regime.[82] They also imprisoned several individuals in Nocra (Dahlak Islands) in Eritrea, Danane in Somalia, and Lake Lago in Wällo. Among them Bäzabeh Zälälaw (for a year), Dämes Bärihun and Alämu Mängäša were mentionable.[83] The Italian use of terror was extended by showing the people of Gondar films in open fields focusing on the horror of defeat of the Ethiopian army in the northern front and Italy's greatness.[84]

The inaccessible geographical feature that contained partly rugged terrain, dense forests, and poor road network was one of the obstacles that hindered the Italians in defeating the opposition forces in Chilga sub-province from the very beginning. Thus, in addition to improving some of the roads they constructed in the course of their invasion in 1936, the Italians constructed new roads. Gondar was connected with Mätäma via Chilga, with Humära via Armacheho by dry-season roads, with Asmara via Däbarq and Šeré, and with Däbrä Tabor and Däsé by all-season roads. Gondar was connected with Baher Dar with dry-season roads via Yifag-Hamusit and via

[82] Gärima, 147-154; Seltene, "A History Resistance…,",77, 101.
[83] Informants: Sinor, Haylé, and Alämenäh.
[84] NGAZ patriot office, 61; Informants: Alämnäh, and Mogäs; Gärima, 72-73; Solomon, *A History*…, 35.

Dälgi on the western shores of the lake. Boat transport over Lake Ţana from Gorgora to Baher Dar was started. Along the border lowlands adjacent to the Sudan, the Italians constructed a dry season road from Humära-Abdärafi-Mätäma to Guba.[85]

Although the Italians constructed these roads and opened heath centers and clinics in Chilga and its surrounding to render service to their soldiers and administrators, the local people obtained some opportunity to receive service from them. In some urban areas like Gondar the Italians also opened a separated hospital for the local people. Sometimes with the help of *yäwusţ arebäňoč* (underground patriots) who were in the service of the Italians but supported the resistance force secretly in different ways several local people including resistance fighters were able to get health treatment from the Italians. Rendering such services to the local people helped the Italians to get a positive sentiment from several people in the area. The Italians also gave provisions mainly bread and clothes to several poor people. By doing such activities, several local people regarded the Italians as "modernizers".[86]

Despite these Italian strategies, the fighters joining the resistance increased from time to time in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings for several reasons. The role of ascetics (locally called *bahetawi*), anti-Italian war-songs and music composed by the local people and minstrels at wedding ceremonies played an immense role in strengthening the resistance in the area. Many ascetics and Islamic educated men encouraged the resistance leaders to stand up against the Italians and told prophecies to the local people that the Italian rule would only be for a few short years. Among the known ascetics were *Abba* Eraqut and *Abba* Wäldä Gäbrél in Chilga, and *Abba* Qerqos in Armacheho. As a means to contain anti-Italian songs, the Italians ordered the

[85]Solomon, *A History* …, 29 - 30.
[86] Informants: Abuhay, Sisay, Haylé and Sinor.

people to not chant them and collected the instruments of the ministrels. However, this Italian action did not contain the intensification of the resistance.[87] One of the poems that was said to have been composed by the ascetics run as follows:

ጎበዝ አሪ በሉ በየወንዛወንዙ በየሸንተረሩ፤
ዉሻ እንኳን ይጮሀል ጭር ሲል መንደሩ።
በየፋናዉ ፋኑ ለምነት ላገራችሁ፤
እግዚያብሄር ይቆማል ከፊት ከኋላችሁ፤
እሱ ነዉ ለናንተ መድፍና ታንካችሁ፤
እመኑን አትፍሩ ድል ታደርጋላችሁ።[88]

Brave men shout along rivers and mountain ranges
Even dogs bark when villages become silent
Wander everywhere for your religion and country
God would stand in front and behind you
It is he who is your cannon and tank
Trust us, do not fear, you would achieve victory!

The above poem indicates that ascetics were against Italian colonial rule. They condemned Italy's anti-Orthodox church colonial policy and preached to the local people to stand up against Italy. They also preached to them that their fighting against the Fascist rule was for their religion and country (Ethiopia). The ascetics also realized the military superiority of the Italian army which was equipped with heavy guns like tanks and cannons. However, the local people had no such weapons and the ascetics preached to them that God would help them and it was God who is their weapon.

The local people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings also encouraged the resistance leaders to struggle against the Italians by bestowing on them honorable titles such as *däjjazmač* and *fitawrari.* The local people believed that fighting against the Italians would be successful when the resistance leaders who had the honorable titles of *däjjazmač* and *fitawrari* led the army

[87]Gärima, 21 - 23; Salome, 88; Informants: Sisay, Sinor, and Haylé.
[88]Informants: Qoyä, Haylé, and Abuhay; Andargé, 16.

in the fighting. They also believed that the enemy also would fear the resistance force when it was led by those who had such titles. As stated earlier, unlike most areas of Bägémder, there was no change of leadership in Chilga sub-province during the second phase of the resistance. The leaders were peasants who refused to hand in their arms to the Italians. Thus, the local people bestowed titles on them taking into account the number of fighting men and experience of fighting against the enemy that each leader had. Among others, the title of *ras* was given to Wubnäh Täsäma of Armacheho, who was initially considered by the resistance leaders as their head in Bägémder. [89]

The Italians on their part also took a similar activity of granting titles (including religious) and monthly salary to their collaborators in Chilga sub-province and other areas of Bägémder and Semén. The title of *däjjazmač* was given to the Qemant leaders, Ţašu Engeda and Alämayähu Bitäwa. The titles given from the rank of *fitawrari* up to *balambaras* were said to have been excessive,[90] as Gen. Mezzetti, the governor-general of Amhara, acknowledged. Since there were collaborators who had the title of *däjjazmač* before the occupation in Bägémder, the Italians did not give the title of *ras* to them except to Ayalćw Berru in September 1939. As compensation, however, they were paid attractive monthly salaries. For example, Ayalćw Berru received 16,000 lire, Admasu Berru 3,000 lire, Mäsfen Gämäč 3,280 lire, and Kasa Mäšäša 3,000 lire. The Italians also paid monthly salary to other collaborators like Zäwdu Ayalćw who received 1,100 lire, Täfära Bäyänä (mayor of Gondar) 1,500 lire, Mohammed El Alamin (Qadi, Islamic Judge, of Gondar) 800 lire, and Mohammed Usman (Qadi of Mätäma) 1,000 lire.[91]

[89] Gärima, 138 - 140.
[90] Gärima, 140 - 142.
[91] Sbacchi, *Ethiopia* …, 137, 150 - 153.

Fightings between the resistance leaders and the Italians intensified in Chilga sub-province after the rainy season of 1937. In these engagements the Italians were victorious due to their military superiority. A superior Italian banda force under Ayalnäh Gäsäsä defeated Wärqu Senqé's resistance force at Säraqo in September 1937. While many resistance fighters were killed, Wärqu lost one of his eyes and escaped. The resistance force of Quara and Aläfa under Wärqu, Abära Berhanu and Bäza Ašäber fought the Italians on 15 October 1937 at Mogäda, in Aläfa. This force was defeated, Abära was wounded while Bäza was killed and beheaded. As warning and to terrorize the population, Bäza's head was displayed at Šahura to the local people. An Italian army with the support of Qemant collaborators defeated the resistance force of Chilga led by Ayälä Täsäma, Räda Täsäma, and Abära Räda at Amanit in September 1937. Following the fighting, the Italians killed civilians of Daza Giorgis, captured the aged *Qäňazmač* Täsäma Aseräs (the father of Räda and Ayälä), and returned to Aykäl. Täsäma died in prison at Gondar due to the inhuman treatment he received from the fascists.[92]

The resistance around Chilga sub-province was also consolidated after the rainy season of 1937 mainly due to change of leadership in other areas of Bägémder. This not only encouraged the resistance force of Chilga, but it also attracted the resistance leaders of Wag and Wällo to enter Bägémder. Following the death of *Däjjazmač* Haylu Käbädä in September 1937, the resistance fighters from Wag crossed the Täkäzé and entered Bäläsa (in Bägémder), in the later months of 1937.[93] The resistance force of Wällo under *Lej* Yohannes Eyasu also entered Bägémder Proper in the early months of 1938 and he was acknowledged as the leader of the resistance in the area

[92]Gärima, 145 - 149; NGAZ Patriots document, 167 - 168; Informants: Abära, Abuhay, Bäläţu, Sinor, and Qoyä.
[93] Wudu, "Dajjazmac Haylu…," 105; Tamrat, 34 - 36; Tsegaw, 19.

due to his royal status. Yohannes also granted titles up to *däjjazmač* level to patriots' leaders and called himself "king of kings".[94]

Although Graziani argued that the consolidation of the resistance in the Governorate of Amhara in the later months of 1937 was due to the weakness of its governor-general Gen. Pirzio-Biroli,[95] it was Graziani's terror and suppression on Ethiopians that intensified the resistance. The Duke of Aosta replaced Graziani as the viceroy of IEA in November 1937 and he started negotiation with the resistance leaders by promising to give them position if they discontinued fighting and gave their arms to the Italians.[96]

The year 1938 brought mixed results for the resistance forces of Chilga sub-province. While it was disastrous defeat for the resistance fighters in Aläfa-Ţaqusa, the armies of Quara and Chilga districts scored victories against the enemy. In March of the same year, Wärqu Senqé defeated a banda army at Jaho Bär (in Säraqo) and killed its leader Fäläqä Engeda. Subsequently, with the support of the surrounding resistance leaders like Ayanayä Čäkol from Lower Armacheho, Abäbä Wändé from Chaqo, Tagäle Admasu from Tänkäl, and Bäqälé Wändé of Armacheho, Wärqu encircled Saliya fort from 3 to 9 April 1938. The Italians brought a large army from Mätäma, broke the siege, and repulsed the resistance force to Säraqo.[97] The superior Italian army crushed the resistance force of Ţaqusa under Taräqäň Bärihun and Aläfa under Abära Bärihun in May of the same year. While many resistance fighters were killed, the Italians beheaded Taräqäň and displayed his head to the local people at Dälgi market. Abära and his wife (Wärqu's sister, Fäntayä Senqé) were killed and beheaded and their heads were displayed at Šahura as a warning

[94]Tamrat, 35 - 40.
[95] Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under...*, 79.
[96] Marcus, "Ethiopia…," 20.
[97] Salome, 88; Gärima, 149 - 151; Informants: Haylé, Sinor, and Qoyä.

to others.[98] Räda, Taddäsä and Ayälä attacked the Italian army at Walidava while marching to from Chilga to Mätäma in May 1938; several individuals were killed on both sides. The resistance force also defeated a Qemant banda force and killed its leader Zäläqä Bitäwa at Amanit, in June 1938. The resistance force also ambushed the Italian army at Wähni, on the road to Mätäma, in December 1938 and inflicted high casualties on the enemy.[99] After the engagements, Ayälä was said to have bragged about his deed using the following poem:

ነጭ ሰዉ ገዳይ ከሮም የመጣ፤
እንደ ጠላ ጋን ጢስ የሚጠጣ፡፡
ጭልጋም እኛን ምሰል ናራም እኛን ምሰል፤
አየለ አባ ጓዴ ያደርግሃል ክሰል፡፡[100]

Killer of white men who came from Rome
Who smokes fume like a pot of a local beer
Chilga and Nara join the resistance
Otherwise, Ayälä *abba* Guadé would destroy you

The above poem indicates that the resistance force received great admiration when they killed an Italian and Ayälä boasted by doing that. Moreover, Ayälä gave warning to the people of Nara (a locality in Chilga) and Chilga since they were Italian collaborators to join him in the fight against Italy. Otherwise, he would attack and turn them into charcoal.

Since Chilga sub-province was usefully located on the frontier along the border with the Sudan, it played a significant role as a door to and from the Sudan for the Ethiopian resistance. Especially beginning in 1938, refugee patriots in the Sudan like Asägahäñ Are'aya, Gétahun

[98]Gärima, 151; NGAZ Patriot office document, 173-174; NGAZRO, a petiotion letter from *Fitawrari* Dämes Bärihun to Lt.Col. Tamrate Yegäzu (*Enderasé* of Bägémder and Semén), dated 8 Säné 1957 E.C; Informants: Sinor, Haylé, and Qoyä.

[99] Informants: Abuhay, Abära, and Bäläţu; NGAZ Patriots office document, 171-172; Gärima, 145-147.

[100] Informants: Abuhay, Bäläţu, and Abära. It was said that after this fighting that an Italian, *tenete* Dafaso, gave a nickname to Ayälä Täsäma as "Abba Guadé". በዚህ በወህኒ ጦርነት የቲኒንቲ ዲፋሶ በብርቱ ስለተደበደበ አየለን በማድነቅ ካለዘሬ ጓደኛ አላገኘሁም ብሎ ተናገረ ይባላል፡፡ ምነዉ ጓደኛየ በሆኑ ማለቱ ነበር፡፡ የአየለ ተሰማ ፈረስ በዚህ አባባል ተነስቶ አርበኛዉ አባ ጓዴ ሲል ሰየመዉ፡፡

Täsäma, Gärima Tafärä, Takälä Wäldähawariyat, *Šaläqa* Mäsfen Seläš, and Heywät Hedaru arrived in Chilga sub-province and Armacheho. They brought medicine, tried to reconcile the quarrel among resistance leaders, and reconnected the exiled emperor with the local people. They contributed a lot for the intensification of the resistance in the area. While *Šaläqa* Mäsfen with his group went via Säraqo to Gojjam, many of the messengers stayed in Bägémder moved to and from the Sudan.[101] *Kuaja* (meaning rich in Arabic) Haylu Täsäma (an Ethiopian lived at Doca, in the Sudan) helped these men by providing them with money, cloth, and provisions. Gärima estimated that he had given the patriots more than $ 44,000 *berr*.[102]

As in most parts of the country, the year 1939 witnessed a stalemate between the Italians and the resistance forces in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings for different reasons. First, the Fascist state removed the general-governor of Amhara Gen. Mezzetti, who was cruel, racist and anti-Amhara. He also led in several campaigns to suppress revolts in Bägémder and Gojjam, killed civilians, and burnt down churches, although he was not successful to suppress the resistance. His approach was criticized highly and replaced by Gen. Luigi Frusci as of January 1939.[103] Frusci tried to implement in Bägémder the conciliatory policy that the Duke of Aosta had introduced towards resistance leaders in the country. Second, the Italians returned some of the exiled upper nobility to their home and tried to use them to help with the mediation efforts with the resistance leaders in the country. Ayalew Berru, who was awarded the title of *ras* in September 1939, was sent to Gondar for this purpose.[104]Ayalew and other local Italian collaborators like *käntiba* Matäbé Däräso and Mängestu Tayä toured Bägémder and Semén for

[101]Gärima, 52 - 57, 154 - 155; Heyiwot Hedaru*, Yač Qän Täräsač* (Addis Ababa: Berhan ena Selam Printing Press, 1967 E.C); Salome, 89-90; Tadässä, 264 - 268.
[102] Heyiwot, 264 - 268 ; Salome, 89 - 90; Gärima, 52 - 57, 154 - 155.
[103] Sbacchi, *Ethiopia Under*….,160; Gärima, 204 - 206.
[104] Sbacchi, "Italy and …," 220 - 231.

that purpose. Since most of the resistance leaders in these regions were formerly his officials, Ayalew said to have approached them without difficulty. Moreover, since they faced shortage of arms and food supplies, most of the resistance leaders in the province also welcomed Ayalew's efforts at reconciling them with the Italians.[105] The shortage of provision in Chilga and its surroundings in 1939/40 was related to the bad harvest of 1938 caused by locust invasion.[106] Moreover, although there was no disagreement among the resistance leaders in Chilga sub-province, there was no smooth relations between Amoraw and other resistance leaders like Beré Zägäyä in Armacheho in 1939 due to power rivalry. This internal problem among the resistance leaders hindered them from taking coordinated action against the Italians. For example, they could not implement their earlier plan to attack the Italians in Mätäma.[107]

The Italians promised the resistance leaders that Italy was willing to run the government with them. In return, they advised them to end fighting, ambushing cars and road workers. The resistance leaders saw this as a welcome opportunity to get a breathing space and consolidate their power. However, Ayalew was not successful in his mediation task because there was no resistance leader who submitted to the Italians in the province. The resistance leaders knew the Italians to be ruthless from their first-hand experience in the early days of the occupation when many of them collaborated with them and they had no trust that Italy would bring peace and stability in Ethiopia.[108] Some of the resistance leaders also suspected that the Italians initiated the reconciliation process as a ruse to eliminate them and hence they absented themselves from the

[105] Gärima, 76 - 77.
[106]Informants: Haylé; Käbädä; Heyiwot, 218.
[107] Solomon, "The Career...," 23 - 25; Heyiwot, 207.
[108] Heyiwot, 218; Gärima, 212 - 214.

meeting place on the days set for mediation. Some like Daňäw Täsäma, a resistance leader in Bäläsa, went to the extent of detaining the Italian reconciling party.[109]

One of the socio-economic programs of the Italians in Chilga sub-province was the attempt to introduce mechanized cotton farming. They set up the Cotton Institute for Italian Africa and their experts explored suitable areas in IEA for implementing the project. A group of Italian scientists led by Professor Dainelli extensively explored the Lake Ţana area and gathered anthropometrical, ethnological and agricultural data. They collected about 25,000 plant specimens in the area and sent it to Italy for further laboratory investigation. The area around Lake Ţana and Mätäma were among the areas identified in the country for cotton production and was given to *Compagnia per il cotone d'Etiopia,* one of the companies established for cotton growing in the country. The cotton sample produced in Mätäma had a superior quality and the Italians planned to cultivate cotton in the area with the help of local farmers by giving technical, medical and instructional aids. The local farmers were required to sell their cotton to the Italian companies relatively at a lower price. The Italians had also a plan to set up a cotton ginning factory at Gorgora.[110]

The Italians cotton cultivation program in the area, however, was not implemented for unknown reason. It might have been due to the fact that it was attempted in the later years of the occupation when the resistance had intensified in the area. Moreover, realizing the Italians attempt to settle their citizens at Wägära and Achäfär, the local farmers in the areas might have not been interested to cultivate cotton with the cooperation of Italians since it was a danger to their *rest* land right. In addition, the farmers might have feared attack by the resistance force

[109] Gärima, 212 - 214.
[110]Quaranta, 59 - 63, 90.

since the cultivation of cotton with the help of Italians would be considered as collaboration with the Fascist and the resistance force would have attacked and raided the Italian collaborators of the area.

Intensification of Anti-Italian Resistance Following the Arrival of *Azaž* Käbädä Täsäma and the British Army

The outbreak of the Second World War (WWII) led to a new chapter in the anti-Italian resistance in Chilga sub-province as elsewhere in Ethiopia. Italy joined the Second World War against Britain in May 1940 and the British colonies adjacent to Ethiopia faced the risk of Italian military attacks.[111] The British, therefore, prepared to support the Ethiopian resistance which they believed was crucial in the liberation of the country. Gen. William Platt, the commander of the British East Africa Force, dispatched a letter to the leaders of the resistance in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in June. Partly his letter says, "Peace be unto you. England and Italy are now at war. We have decided to help you in every way possible to destroy the common enemy. If you are in need of rifles, ammunition, food, or cloth, send as many men and animal as you can spare to the place which our messenger will tell you."[112]

Since Chilga sub-province was located along the border with the Sudan, its resistance leaders were the first to receive arms from the British in Sudan. Wärqu Senqé arrived in Gallabat in June 1940 with about 200 resistance force from Quara and received about 350 single-shot Martini

[111] Richard Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Patriots and the Collapse of Italian Rule in East Africa, 1940-1941," *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (1969), 95.
[112]Christine Sandford, *The Lion of Judah Hath Previaled* (London:J.M Dent and Sons Ltd, 1955), 87; Great Britain, *The Abyssinian Campaigns:the Official Story of the Conquest of Italian East Africa* (London: Majesty's Stationary Office, 1942), 56.

rifles from the British.[113] Subsequently, the British in the Sudan gave about 2000 single-shot rifles, 2,195 magazine rifles, and 676,000 rounds of ammunition to the resistance forces of Chilga and its surroundings by the end of September 1940.[114]

On their part, the Italians took different actions against this British military support. They conducted propaganda to deter the resistance forces from traveling to the Sudan. The Italians announced that their troops had killed many resistance fighters on their way to the Sudan and those who managed to reach the Sudan were recruited forcefully into the British army.[115] The Italians also consolidated their force in Chilga sub-province to stop the movement of the resistance forces to and from the Sudan. At Mätäma, the Italians had the 27th Colonial Battalion army, mainly consisting of Eritrean native troops, commanded by Lt. Col. Castagnola. They also added the 25th and 77th Colonial Battalions there. Moreover, the Italian banda army unit named *First Gruppo Bande di Confine* that had detachments stationed at Maṭäbiya, Saliya, and Mätäma, was one of the units assigned for this particular purpose. It consisted of about 1600 mixed Ethiopian and Eritrean troops under Captain Giovanni Braca.[116] Moreover, the Italian army units named the Black Shirts, who were mostly placed in major towns in IEA to guard the Italians, were predominantly stationed in Bägémder and there were twelve battalions of this army in the province in 1940.[117] The Italian army also invaded the British Somaliland and some areas in the Sudan and Kenya in the rainy season of 1940. The Italians at Mätäma supported by the air force attacked the small British force at Gallabat on 4 July 1940 and occupied it for some time. This

[113]Great Britain, 56; Mockler, 217, 256.
[114] Mockler, 266.
[115] Haile Sellassie, *Heyewoté ena Ya Iteyopiya Eremja*.Vol. II (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1966 E.C), 249; Gärima, 244.
[116] Shifferr, 38 - 40.
[117] Georg L. Steer, *Sealed and Delivered: A Book on Abyssinian Campaign* (London: CPI Anthony, 1942), 158–159.

one platoon British army under *Bimbashis* Wilfred Thesiger and Arthur Hanks evacuated the place because of difficulty of resisting the Italian assault.[118] At the same time, an Italian army defeated the resistance forces of Chilga and Armacheho at Jebel Negus, near Mätäma town.[119]

The role of Emperor Haile Sellassie in the final year of the liberation movement in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings was considerable. After his arrival in Khartoum on 3 July 1940, the emperor made a proclamation to the Ethiopian people about his coming, British support to Ethiopia, and the need to form a unity among Ethiopians against Italy. He sent leaflets and letters to the resistance leaders as well as collaborators of the area.[120] His propaganda unit printed a newsletter named *Bandiračen* and distributed it to the resistance leaders and Italian garrisons. This encouraged several resistance leaders to intensify their struggle against Italy and many collaborators to desert the Italians. As a countermove, the Italians dropped leaflets over Sudanese territory describing their good administrative system in their African colonies, Mussolini's respect for Muslims, and that Italy's war was not with the Sudanese but rather against the British. The Italians also distributed anti-British propaganda leaflets in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings.[121]

Some of the resistance leaders in Bägémder, however, did not welcome British support for the Ethiopian liberation movement. The most influential person in this regard was *Belata* Takälä Wäldähawariyat who came from the Sudan and joined the resistance in Armacheho in 1939. He expressed his fear to the resistance leaders of the area that Britain would impose her own rule

[118]Leonard Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War* (London: Morrison and Gibb Ltd, 1955), 97-99; Great Britain, 14; The Royal African Society, "The Sudan Defence Force and the Italian East African Campaign," *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. XLI, No. 164 (Jul., 1942), 162 - 164; Shifferr, 35; Mockler, 229 - 231.
[119] Gärima, 234 - 235; NGAZ patriots office document, 186 - 187.
[120]Haile Sellassie, *Heyewoté* …,Vol. II, 195 - 199, 252; Käbädä, 208 - 213.
[121]Mockler, 235, 284.

over Ethiopia after the expulsion of the Italians.[122] Before British intervention in Ethiopia against Italy, there was a movement against the exiled emperor among some refugee patriots in Khartoum who sought to form a republican government in Ethiopia under *Lej* Yohannes Iyasu. The proponents of this idea were Takälä and Abäbä Damţäw. Emperor Haile Sellassie heard about Takälä's activity and sent message to the resistance forces to support the British force against Takälä. Because of his anti-Haile Sellassie outlook, Takälä also had no cordial relations with Wubnäh (Amoraw) and Heywät Hedaru. It was said that the exiled emperor sent a secret letter to Wubnäh to kill Takälä.[123] Due to Takälä's idea and since they did not know the role of the British force in Ethiopia clearly, Amoraw and some resistance leaders in Chilga sub-province were reserved in taking arms from the British force in the Sudan until the arrival of the emperor in Khartoum July 1940.[124]

The contribution of a military mission called Mission 101 under Col. Daniel Sandford and *Azaž* Käbädä Täsäma in the liberation of Chilga sub-province and its surroundings was vital after it entered Ethiopia from the Sudan through Lomina, about 12 miles south of Mätäma town, on 12 August 1940. The main task of this mission was to intensify the resistance against the Italians that had cooled down in 1939, distribute arms to the resistance fighters and facilitate the emperor's return to his country.[125] The resistance leaders of Chilga sub-province namely Wändemagäňähu Säţargäw from Mahbärä Selasé, Räda Täsäma from Chilga, and Wärqu Senqé

[122]Mockler, 231 - 234; Tesfaye Ababa, "The Life and Career of Däjjazmach Täkäla Wäldä Hawariat" (BA Thesis, HISU, 1971), 38 - 39; Heyiwot, 239 - 241, 273.
[123]Tesfaye, 40 - 45; Heyiwot, 239 - 241, 273; Solomon, "The Career…,″ 37.
[124]Garima, 232.
[125]Käbädä, 217 - 223; Albert Merglen, "Subversive Warfare and Conventional Conflict: The Ethiopian Campaign (1940-1)," In A.Merglen (ed.), *Surprise Warfare* (London: Georg Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1968), 72 - 73; Shifferr, 39; Mockler, 259; Christine Sandford, *Ethiopia Under Haile Sellassie* (London: J.M Dent and Sons Ltd, 1946), 107; Haile Selasie, *Heyiwoté*…, vol. II., 220.

from Quara escorted this mission on its journey.[126] The Italians tried to harass this mission and suspecting that the Mission 101 was sheltered in Chaqo, their aircrafts dropped bombs on a village and burnt down several houses.[127] *Azaž* Käbädä distributed the emperor's letters and proclamations to several collaborators in the area calling on them to desert the enemy. The Saliya fort that contained mainly Eritrean and Somali colonial troops under Major Parodi[128] was the one that was especially targeted by the emperor. Leaflets were dispatched to these troops urging them to desert the Italians and join Wärqu's resistance.[129] However, these troops remained silent until they evacuated the area in January 1941 after fighting against the resistance force.

The British army started its assault on the Italian army at Gallabat after the rainy season of 1940. The British Royal Air Force and the 10th Indian Infantry Brigade army commanded by Brigadier J. Slim attacked the Italian army at Gallabat on 6 November 1940. Since the Italians had strengthened their post with a strong fort, it was difficult for the British army to crush them easily.[130] The British army was defeated and this news dashed the hopes of many resistance forces of defeating the Italians and liberating the country.[131] The Italians used their victory at Gallabat for propaganda purpose by telling the people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings about the army's invincibility. They informed the people that the advent of the British's Sudanese army was part of a plan to convert the Christian people to Islam and to destroy churches and was akin to the Mahdist invasion.[132] Although this did not end the support

[126] Käbädä, 206, 222 - 227; Shifferr, 41 - 42; Steer, 61; Sandford, *Ethiopia*…, 108.
[127] Gärima, 252.
[128] Käbädä, 229 - 233.
[129] Haile Sellassie, *Heyiwoté*…,vol, II, 227 - 228.
[130]Great Britain, 26; Shifferr, 52 - 53; Mockler, 272 - 279; Wilfred Thesiger, *The Life of My Choice* (London:Harper Collins Publishers, 1987), 317 - 318.
[131] Mockler, 279.
[132] Gärima, 246, 253.

of the resistance force to the British in Chilga sub-province, it was perhaps due to this Italian propaganda and Takälä's anti-British stance that Daňäw Täsäma and Bälay Täsäma, the resistance leaders of Esté and Bäläsa, refused to cooperate with the British army in March 1941 when it entered Bägémder from Gojjam. Daňäw and Bälay, for example, were not willing to sell or hire out pack animals to the British army.[133]

In addition to the Italian garrison stationed in the region, parts of the Gumuz population who had served as collaborators with the Italians were an obstacle to the resistance force in Chilga sub-province. Armed by the Italians, the Gumuz controlled the road, attacked the resistance force, and spied for the Italians.[134] George Steer, who accompanied the emperor in his sojourn to Ethiopia in 1941, says, "[t]he Gumuz were a perfect political barometer […] the Gumuz were now spying for the Italians. Setting like monkey, in the forks of trees, they reported every convoy beating through the grass."[135] It was believed to be these Gumuz who suddenly ambushed and killed Wärqu in November 1940 while he was returning to Säraqo after defeating and expelling the Italian garrison at Maṭäbiya. Wärqu's death on the eve of the liberation of the country was a great loss to the resistance of Quara and its surroundings since he was one of the charismatic resistance leaders who was feared much by the Italians.[136]

The resistance in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings was weak in the later months of 1940 for various reasons. While Col. Sandford advanced to Gojjam in the later months of 1940 with most of the members of Mission 101, Major Bentinck with his group also called Mission 101 North went to Armacheho and its surroundings to organize the resistance. However, until the

[133] Orde Wingate, *Appreciation of the Ethiopian Campaign* (Cairo:, np, 1941), Appendix "B", 6.
[134] Käbädä, 243 - 244.
[135] Steer, *Sealed*…, 61.
[136] Gärima,150; Shirreff, 60. Wärqu is the father of Mängästu, the legend of Ethiopian football.

early months of 1941, Bentinck's group could not organize a full-scale resistance against the Italians due to the small number of the resistance force in the area and the firm support the Qemant gave to the Italians. The small number of the resistance force was partly because the leaders were in the Sudan to see the emperor and they returned with arms to their territory only in November 1940 accompanied by *Şähafitezaz* Haylé Wäldärufé, the emperor' agent in the north. Moreover, since several resistance fighters returned from the Sudan with malaria, they were unable to fight the enemy.[137]

One of the strategies of Italy following the arrival of British army on northwestern Ethiopia was transferring Gen. Guglielmo Nasi, its best and experienced general, as the governor of the Amhara Governorate in September 1940 from his command in Somalia. Nasi replaced Frusci and commanded the Western Command that included Gojjam and Bägémder provinces. He was in Gojjam in charge of containing the advance of Mission 101 and the resistance until the end of 1940 and them he moved to Gondar.[138]

The first month of 1941 was a crucial period for the liberation movement in Chilga sub-province. First, the British's Ninth Indian Infantry Brigade under Second Lt. Singh Nhagat defeated the Italian army at Gallabat/Mätäma fort on 11 and 12 January 1941 and chased the retreating Italian army to Aykal.[139] However, this Indian Infantry Brigade was needed in Kärän and transferred to Eritrea; and a new force consisting of the Eastern Arab Corps of the Sudan Defense Force under Lt. Col. Johnny Gifford was deployed along Chilga at the end of March. The Third Ethiopian Battalion led by Lt. Col. Ker, formed from deserters from the Italians in Gallabat and Kassala in

[137] Mockler, 283, 293- 294; Sänayit Haylé, *Jägenenät Biwäräse* (Addis Ababa: Aläfa Matämiya, 1991 E.C), 83 - 87.
[138] Shifferr, 47; Steer, *Sealed…,* 110; Great Britain, 58 - 59.
[139] Great Britain, 136 - 138.

the earlier wars, was also added along Chilga front.[140] The second factor was the siege and evacuation of the Italians garrison from Saliya. The resistance force of Quara laid a siege in early January 1941. Initially, Gen. Nasi tried to reinforce the encircled garrison by sending a banda unit under Kasa Mäšäša from Gondar.[141] Then another relief army under Braca from Kumär was sent and the Italians evacuated Saliya on 29 January after fighting against the resistance force.[142] The evacuation of Mätäma and Saliya garrisons was an important step in the liberation of Chilga sub-province. Third, the emperor with the British force called 'Gideon Force' under Major Orde Wingate entered Ethiopia and hoisted the Ethiopian flag at Um-Idla on 20 January 1941. Many resistance forces from Chilga sub-province and its surroundings went to Um-Idla and Bälaya, met the emperor and returned home with gift of arms.[143] This encouraged the resistance force morally and materially to intensify fighting against Italy. Initially, the re-entry of the emperor was designed to follow *Azaž* Käbädä via Bägèmder. However, the various circumstances in Bägèmder like the consolidation of the Italian army around Gondar and Qemant collaborators might have forced them to change his way of entry to Um-Idela and Gojjam for his safety.

One of the major features of the anti-Italians resistance in Chilga and its surroundings in the early months of 1941 was the defection of the major Italian collaborators to the side of the liberating force. These included Ayalέw Berru, Kasa Mäšäša, Mäsfen Gämäč, Bäzabeh Zäläläw, Ţašu Engeda, and Are'aya Gäbrämäden. They had initially promised Nasi to defend Gondar if they received better arms and were supplied with these arms and camped in different areas after

[140]Johnny Gifford, "The Sudan at War: The Composite Infantry Battalion of the Eastern Arab Corps, Sudan Defence Force, in the Abyssinian Campaign," *Journal of the Royal African Society,* Vol. XLII, No.169 (Oct., 1943), 159-160; Shifferr, 226 - 227; Great Britain, 136 - 138.
[141] Mockler, 296.
[142] Shifferr, 75 -77.
[143]Haile Sellassie, *Heyiwoté*…, vol. II, 279 - 280; Mosley, *Gideon*..., 107, 17 - 119; Wingate, see Appendix "A"; Christopher Sykes, *Orde Wingate* (London: Collins Clear Type Press, 1959), 258.

they received arms.[144] However, without fighting, they switched to the sides of the composite liberating force in early April 1941.[145] Their defection was partly the effort of *Şähafi te'ézaz* Haylé Wäldärufé who was appointed by Emperor Haile Sellassie in Khartoum to organize the resistance with Major Ringrose in Armacheho and its surroundings. Haylé wrote successive letters to these men to help the liberating force against the Italians.[146] They also defected partly due to the news of the liberation of Addis Ababa from the Italians, akin to their submission to the Italians following the fall of Addis Ababa in May 1936. The defection of Ţašu Engeda with his Armacheho Qemant force was encouraging for the resistance in Chilga and its surroundings. However, Alämayähu Bitäwa, Chilga Qemant leader, remained on the side of the Italians until the end of the occupation and remained one of the obstacles for the liberation in Chilga district and *Şähafi te'ézaz* Haylé sent a letter to the emperor as "…**የደኃች ቢተዋ ልጅ ፊታውራሪ አለማየሁ የሚባለዉ ለጣሊያን ዋና ሁኖ የተቀመጠ ነዉ ስላሉኝ በወንድሙ እጅ (ቀኛዝማች ደመላሽ) ወረቀት ጽፌ ልኬበታለሁ እሱም ተስፋ ሰጭኛል እሱ የከዳ እንደሆነ በቅማንት በኩል ያለዉ ጉዳያችን አለቀልን ማለት ነዉ።።"**[147] (People told me that *Fitawrari* Alämayähu, the son of *Däjjazmač* Bitäwa, is the main Italian collaborator. I have sent a letter to him through his brother, *Qäňazmač* Dämälaš, who has given me some hope. If Alämayähu defects to our side, our concern regarding the Qemant will be over).

Although they lost many battles and collaborators in the early months of 1941, the Italians firmly stood to defend Gondar where the resistance force and the British army fought the greatest battles against the Italians in the history of the liberation war. To this end, they strengthened the

[144] Gärima, 241 - 243; NGAZ patriots document, 520.
[145] Sänayit, 152, 157; "YäFitawrari Haylé Wäldärufé Däbdabéwäč", IES Ms.no. 1952 and Ms.no. 1953.
[146] "YäFitawrari Haylé …", IES Ms.no. 1952 and Ms.no 1953; Sänayit, 96-160.
[147] "YäFitawrari Haylé …", IES Ms.no. 1952.

garrisons near the city like the Fourth Colonial Brigade at Chilga (Aykäl). The Italian army under Col. Torrelli was defeated in Dangela, retreated to Baher Dar and then to Gondar in the early months of 1941.[148] Parts of this Torrelli's army was sent to Chilga as reinforcement before the resistance forces of Chilga and the SDF started fighting against the Italian army on 16 May. The Italians supported by Qemant banda, counter-attacked the composite force and pushed it back after three days of fighting. Casualties were high on both sides. The casualty together with a shortage of food forced the composite force to withdraw from the front to the west taking hundreds of Italian captives.[149] Thus, due to its good geographical location on the hills around Aykäl and the help of the Qemant, the Italian army was successful in defending its fort at Chilga and delayed the advance of the composite force towards Gondar. Soon after this the warfare on Chilga front was interrupted because of the coming of the rainy season. While the Third Ethiopian Battalion stayed the rainy months around Chilga patrolling the Italians, the SDF returned to the Sudan for rest and reinforcement, by leaving a company force at Gändawuha and Gallabat, and came back in late September for the liberation of the area.[150]

One of the features of Italian military occupation in Chilga and its surrounding was cattle raiding belonging to the Qemant collaborators. Like other areas where the resistance forces looted the properties of Italian collaborators, the resistance forces of Chilga and Armacheho including half-Qemant resistance leaders like Bälay and Räda Täsäma raided repeatedly cattle that belonged to the Qemant collaborators during the occupation.[151] Since the Qemant supported the Italians and

[148] Wingate, Appendix "c".
[149] Shifferr, 226 - 230; Gifford, "The Sudan …," 160 - 161; Great Britain, 136 - 138.
[150] Shifferr, 230; Gifford, "The Sudan …," 161.
[151] Heyiwot, 206.

fought against the SDF, the SDF punished them by raiding their cattle in June 1941. Col. Gifford stated the incident as follows:

> …Then the Battalion turned its attention to the south side, where the Kamant tribe had been giving trouble. It was decided to teach them a lesson, and on 7th June a cattle raid was laid on. No. 5 (Nuba) Company watched the cattle movements for three days and then caught them at mid-day when their owners were busy sowing and planting. Two sections slipped down; one section drove, the other section gave covering fire, assisted later by a third, while the remainder picketed the heights and laid down covering fire. It was a most exciting hunt; the Kamant put up a good fight, but the Nubian driving and shooting alternately put the herd of seventy through a gap in the hills at a hand-canter, where they were picked up by the mounted scouts No.3 Idara and taken triumphantly to camp at a gallop.[152]

The above quotation indicates that the Qemant farmers were Italian collaborators and gave a strong support to them. Thus, the Italians were successful in defending Chilga and the road to Gondar. The raiding was conducted in day light while the Qemant engaged in agricultural works. The Qemant tried their best effort to bring back their cattle. However, since it was a planned action made by the SDF, they could not get back their cattle.

In addition to consolidating Chilga garrison, the Italians guarded Gondar city with two other major forts along the main roads linking the city. To the north, on the road to Asmara, it was Wulkefit; and to the south, on the road to Däbrä Tabor, it was Qulqual Bär. The resistance force fought the Italians repeatedly at Wulkefit; however, it was not possible to crush them using the local resistance forces. Even the Italian army attacked the force of Ayalew Berru at Däbarq and captured him in June 1941. The warfare on Wulkefit was interrupted because of the advent of the rainy season. On the other direction, the British and resistance army marched to Gondar after the defeat and surrender of the Italian garrison at Däbrä Tabor commander by Col. Ignazio Angelini

[152] Gifford, 161.

in July 1941. However, due to the arrival of the rains the campaign was interrupted after the liberating force arrived and camped near Qulqual Bär.[153]

The operation to liberate Gondar town and its outskirts was resumed after the rainy season of 1941. Gen. Platt carried out the early operations against the Italians in Gondar from the north. Beginning on 22 September 1941 the East African Command (12th African Division) under Maj. Gen. Fowkes took over this task. After consecutive operations, the Italian army under Lt.Col. Mario Gonella was defeated and surrendered at Wulkefit on 27 September 1941. This victory opened up the road to Gondar and gave the British air force access to landing ground.[154] New liberating force was also deployed along the western shores of Lake Ţana. The Second Ethiopian Battalion from Däbrä Marqos under Col. Benson and Captain Elles arrived at Dälgi in October 1941. Among the Ethiopian officers in this force were *Gerazmač* Asfaw, Wärqu Dästa, and Haylä Mareyam. This force started to disrupt communication and blocked the movement of supplies between Gondar and Gorgora. On 11 November 1941, assisted by the South African air force, it attacked the local banda garrison under Lt. Ugo Collarini at Gianda and controlled it. However, since the Italians fought in a well-constructed fort, liberating force suffered heavy casualty; *Gerazmač* Asfaw and Haylä Mareyam were killed. Some of the Italian banda retreated to Azäzo and the majority took shelter at Gorgora.[155]

The year November 1941 was decisive in the liberation movement of Gondar and its surroundings. The resistance and British army started the operation against the Italians at the

[153] Great Britain, 138-139; W.E.D.Allen, *Guerrilla War in Abyssinia* (London: Hunt, Barnard and Ltd, 1943), 123 - 124; Eric Rosenthal, *The Fall of Italian East Africa* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1941), 74 - 75; Shifferr, 165 - 170, 234 - 239.
[154] Rosenthal, 75; Great Britain, 140.
[155]Shifferr, 251 - 252; Gandar Dower, *Abyssinian Patchwork: An Anthology* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1949), 195 - 196; Great Britain, 140 - 141; Rosenthal, 77 - 78, 196.

strategic fort of Qulqual Bar on 12 November 1941. Soon, Gen. Fowkes deployed the 25th East African Brigade from north of Gondar to Qulqual Bär to strengthen the attacking force. After a protracted resistance, the Italian army under Lt. Col. Augusto Ugolini was defeated and Ugolini was captured on 21 November.[156] Shifferr says the Battle of Qulqual Bär was "an epic battle" for the Italians; and Dower says it is the strongest war that the "southforce" or the King's African Rifles (KAR) had fought against the Italians and it will be remembered as their glorious victory.[157]

The composite liberating Ethiopian and Sudanese force attacked the Italians at Chilga on 20 November 1941. Although the road to Gondar was cut and interrupted, the Italians were successful in their defensive war and the allied force withdrew from the fighting on the next day. The city of Gondar was liberated from the Italians and Nasi surrendered on 27 November.[158] The next day, an airplane dropped a letter on Chilga fort to inform them that Nasi had ordered the garrison to give up fighting and surrender. With the mediation of local elders, the Italian garrison at Chilga surrendered on 29 November.[159] Col. Gifford says, "[t]his Italian 4th Colonial Brigade was very proud of its record of being first in and last out of action in the East African Campaign,"[160] Gifford also noted the situation in Chilga immediately after the surrender of the Italians as follows:

> …The prisoners had to be kept in Chilga for several days because the I2th Division in Gondar had so many to deal with that they had no room. The disarming went on

[156]Great Britain, 141-142; Dower, *Abyssinian…*, 194 - 195; Gandar Dower, *Askaris at War in Abyssinia* (Nairobi: East African Standard Ltd, 1941), 51 - 53; Rosenthal, 88; Mälké Gétahun (Bri.Gen.), *YäTegele Feşamé* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 2004 E.C), 40 - 42.
[157] Dower, *Askaris*, 53; Shifferr, 267.
[158]Shifferr, 261, 270 - 273; Gifford, 162-163; Great Britain, 141-142; Dower, *Abyssinian…*, 194-196; Rosenthal, 88; Addis Zämän, "Iteyopeya Yämächäräšawun Del Selämageňätua - Kä Gondar Yätälakä Wäré", Hedar 20 1934 E.C.
[159]Gifford, 164; Addis Zämän, "YäGondar Mäyaz-YaGondar Yäţore Gembar KäAyäre Ţore Säfär YäGazéţa Šum Yätäṣafä", 27 Hedar 1934 E.C; Mälké, 43 - 44.
[160] Gifford, 163 - 164.

> for several days; finally, all the Italians were sent off in sixty-four lorries, and all the remaining native troops, with their women and children, were marched along the road from Chilga to Azozo under a small guard; they made a record march of twenty-three miles the first day. The total number of prisoners in the garrison was nearly 1,000 white Italians and 2,200 native troops. Representatives of the Composite Battalion went into Gondar to attend the parade held and inspected by the East African Command. Christmas Day was spent in Chilga, and on New Year's Day the Battalion started its journey back to Gedaref.[161]

When the Italian army evacuated Chilga and left for Gondar, a Qemant woman who was an Italian collaborator was said to have composed the following poem:

መተማ ተነስቶ ጎንደር ምሳ መብላት
ይህ አለም ነዉ እንጅ ምንድን ነዉ ሰዉ ማማት።።
ለበረደዉ ጁባ ለጠማዉ ነቢት
እንዴት ጣሊያን ይህድ የደሀዉ እናት።።[162]

Departing from Mätäma in the morning we arrive at Gondar at lunch time
This is happiness; why badmouth the Italians
They donate clothing to those who are cold and beverages to those who are thirsty
Why did Italy-the mother of the poor- leave Chilga?

The poem demonstrates sections of the people of Chilga sub-province had accommodated themselves to Italian rule and that especially Qemant collaborators viewed the Italian occupation positively. The period of Italian occupation was considered as the beginning of modernization among the frontier people of Chilga sub-province. The Italians constructed the dry-season road from Mätäma via Chilga to Gondar. This made the journey of the people short. In the pre-Italian period, the journey took several days on foot and pack animals. However, after the Italians constructed the road it was possible to arrive from Mätäma to Gondar within half a day by car. Moreover, the Italians gave soft drinks and cloths to not only their collaborators but also to some

[161] Gifford, 164.
[162] Informants; Abuhay, and Abära.

destitute people. Thus, some of the people in Chilga like the Qemant collaborators were disappointed by the expulsion of the Italians.

Conclusion

For various reasons, Ethiopia's attempt to defend itself from the 1936 Italian invasion was not successful. With its military superiority and collaboration of many Ethiopians, Italy defeated Ethiopia and occupied for about 5 years until 1941. Like many areas of the country, the various individuals and the majority of the people among ethnic groups in Chilga sub-province accommodated themselves with the Fascist Italian rule and many of them became its collaborators. However, many resistance forces fought the Italians repeatedly and they shaded their blood for the liberation of the country. Despite this, the liberation campaign in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings might have not been realized without the support of the British army. While Addis Ababa was liberated in April 1941, Gondar and its surrounding areas including Chilga district remained under Italian rule until November of the same year. This was due to the arrival of the rainy season, the support of the Qemant to the Italians, and the strong Italian military defense. Although the Italian occupation of Chilga sub-province lasted for five years, it created grudge between collaborators and resistance fighters. This bitterness had a great impact on the local administration and the relationships among the local people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in the post-liberation period.

CHAPTER III

The Imperial Government and Society in Chilga *Awraja*, 1942 to the early 1960s

Introduction

After liberation from the Italian military occupation, the imperial government was restored and began the task of re-establishing control over the country. Centralization of the administration system was one of the manifestations of the restored government. Centralization was an act of reducing the power of provincial governors by giving the highest power to the emperor at Addis Ababa. However, partly due to the impact of Italian rule, the restored government faced difficulties in administering the provinces properly. Chilga sub-province was one of the areas in the country the imperial government faced a serious challenge in restoring order after liberation. This chapter examines how the imperial government tried to implement its centralization policy in the province of Bägémder and Semén and how the local people reacted to that policy from 1942 to the early 1960s. The emphasis of this chapter is on the first two decades of the restored imperial government. The early 1960s is taken as a cut-off date for ending this chapter because of the introduction of various interrelated socio-economic developments in Chilga sub-province. These were community development works, the introduction of commercial farming, banditry and local instability, and contraband trade that will be discussed in the next chapter. I argue in this chapter that the effort of the imperial government to centralize the administration system was unsuccessful in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings and the governors of the sub-province did not administer the area based on the rules and regulations of the central government. This was partly because of the incompetency of the governors, partly the reaction of the local people, and partly lack of infrastructural developments in the area to connect it with the center. I will

demonstrate how the state's centralization policy in Chilga *Awraja* had little success by focusing on the issue of local administration, taxation system, the livelihood of the Bétä Israelites, and local trading activity.

Local Administrative Challenges, 1942 to 1946

In the immediate years following liberation from Italian military occupation, most parts of Ethiopia experienced a state of disturbance and instability because of the existence of many armed patriots and former Italian collaborators.[1] Since there were numerous armed groups in the provinces, foreigners believed that the exiled emperor could face serious problem in regaining his throne and establishing stability across the country. Despite the numerous problems that he faced, the emperor regained the throne with little challenge and started the task of restoring peace and order in the country.[2] Different authors gave slightly varied reasons on how and why the emperor was able to take the throne easily. Margery Perham argued that the task was made largely because the emperor returned with a strong support of the British army and resource.[3] Harold Marcus, on the other hand, gave much credit to the skill of the emperor by saying "[a]bove all, Haile Sellassie was a pragmatic politician who did what was necessary to retain power and authority".[4] Christine Sandford and Christopher Clapham argued that it was made possible because of the skill of the emperor and the support of the Ethiopia people.[5] Although the emperor was able to regain the throne, the outbreak of brigandage was common in most parts of

[1]Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*. 2nd ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 343 - 344; Angel Del Boca, *The Negus: The Life and Death of the Last King of Kings.* 2nd ed. (Trans. Anthony Shugaar) (Addis Ababa:Master Printing Press PLC, 2012), 217.
[2] Sandford, *Ethiopia*…, 119; Sandford, *The Lion*…, 111 - 112; Perham, 343 - 344.
[3] Perham, 343 - 344.
[4] Harold G. Marcus, "Haile Sellassie's Leadership," In Harold G. Marcus (ed.), *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies: Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University, 5-10 September 1994.* Volume I (Lawrenceulle: Red Sea Press Inc., 1994), 840 - 845.
[5] Sandford, *The Lion*…, 112; Christoper Clapham, *Haile--Sellassie's Government* (London: Longmans Green and Co Ltd, 1969), 19.

the country in the early 1940s and it became a problem to the security of the local people and to the local administration in the provinces.[6]

The consolidation of state power and centralization of the administration system was one of the major features of the post-1941 imperial government. These processes manifested themselves in regional administration, fiscal reform and military organization of the government.[7] The 1942 decree on administrative regulation was the basic instrument through which the imperial government reserved power at the center and restricted the power of the provincial governors. The decree re-organized the administrative system of the country and drew provincial boundaries taking into account the pre-1936 boundary regarding the northern provinces and administrative convenience in the southern parts of the country. The decree set up twelve provinces called at the time *awraja*.[8] The emperor appointed on each *awraja* one governor-general, one director and one principal-secretary. The director was under the governor-general as an assistant. The principal-secretary was below the director and his duty was to serve as a record keeper who managed the inward and outward flow of letters in the province.[9]

Bägémder and Semén was one of the twelve *awrajas* established by the 1942 proclamation and it was structured into three *wärädas* (districts) simply named as from Reb to Bäšilo, Täkäzé to Bambilo (commonly called Semén), and Reb to Mätäma. The districts were further organized into 16 *abägaz* (at the time also locally called *qäbälé* territory) that were further organized

[6] Perham, 343 - 344.
[7] Bahru, *A History*…, 201.
[8]Negarit Gazeta, Decree No 1 of 1942,"Administrative Regulations"; John M. Cohen and Peter H. Koehn, *Ethiopian Provincial and Municipal Government* (Michigan: Michigan State University, 1980), 19.
[9] Negarit Gazeta, Decree No 1 of 1942,"Administrative Regulations".

into150 *meketel-mesläné* territories.[10] The district from Reb to Mätäma to which Chilga sub-province was a part was organized into seven *abägazes*. They were Gorgora, Aläfa, Quara, Dägoma (Bäläsa), Tekel Dengay, Ţara Gädam, and Ebenat. The area from Lake Ţana to Mätäma (after 1946 called Chilga *awraja*) was part of this district and was divided into Aläfa and Quara *abägazes*. *Däjjazmačes* Hagos Täsäma and Bäzabeh Zäläläw were the first governors of Quara *abägaz* and Aläfa *abägaz* respectively. The first governors of Gorgora, Ţara Gädam, and Ebenat *abägazes* were *Däjjazmač* Kasa Mäšäša, *Fitawrari* Molla Mäšäša and *Däjjazmač* Käbädä Engeda respectively.[11] The above *abägazes* except *Däjjazmač* Hagos were former Italian collaborators. *Däjjazmač* Hagos was a well-known resistance leader during the Italian occupation. In addition to his position as *abägaz* of Quara, Hagos was made the commander of the local *näch läbaš ţor* (local militia) from the Reb to Mätäma territory.[12]

As part of the centralization policy of his government, Emperor Haile Sellassie did not appoint a native governor-general to the province. Rather he decided to administer Bägémder and Semén together with Wällo *awraja* under the Crown Prince Asfawäsän. Although the emperor noted in his letter to his son that his appointment as governor of Bägémder and Semén was designed to give him experience by governing the large province,[13] it was evident that the emperor lacked a loyal governor native to the province to employ his centralization policy. Asfawäsän delegated *Däjjazmač* Mäsfen Gämäč, a former Italian collaborator who was serving as a judge at the time, over Gondar *Awraja* (it was the name of Bägémder and Semén in the crown prince period) in

[10]Solomon, *A History* …, 62; *Yä-Agär Gezat Ministér Mäşehér*. 1st year No.1, dated 16 Hamlé 1953 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.24.05, a letter from Ministry of Pen to Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 202/1, dated 1 Ţeqemet 1935 E.C.
[11] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg Mämeriya Meker Bét Amakariwäč, "YäBägémder ena Semén Gezat Yagär Akuahuan", a report to the Ministry of Interior, Addis Ababa, dated 13 Nähasé 1935 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, Kä-Reb Eskä Mätäma…
[12] "Kä-Bägémder ena Semén Gar Mätäwawäqiya" IES Ms. no 1264.
[13]"BäWällo ena BäBägémder Ţäqelay Gezatoč Endihum BäDäbrä Sina Akababi Yänäbärä Astädadär", IES Ms.no. 3532.

January 1942. Mäsfen served in that position until October of the same year,[14] when *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa succeeded him as *endärasé* to the crown prince in the province.[15]

One of the key features of local governance across Bägémder and Semén in the post-liberation period was the dissatisfaction local officials exhibited towards the restored imperial government. One source of grievance was the appointment of officials to government posts without discriminating between resistance leaders, former Italian collaborators, and exiles (who lived abroad during the war and were therefore unknown in the province). Although Solomon Addis says that most of the officials appointed in the province as a whole were patriots and local *balabats*,[16] and the report of the member of Chamber of Deputies of the province to the Ministry of Interior in August 1943 stated that the appointment of officials was made by considering mainly their service in the resistance period, I argue that their service was not given much emphasis in their appointment. Let me take a couple of examples to substantiate my argument. *Fitawrari* Nägädä Zägäyä, a former Italian collaborator in the first years of the occupation period, was the first governor of the district from Reb to Bäšilo that had five *abägazes* underneath it with its center at Däbrä Tabor,[17] and he remained in the position until April 1954. Although his father was originally from Gayint, Nägädä was born and grew up in Harär and he worked there until the Italian invasion. *Däjjazmač* Nägaš Wärqenäh was the first governor of the district from Täkäzé to Bambilo River that had four *abägazes*. However, he did not have smooth relation with his lower officials called *abägazes* since they had killed people from both sides during the Italian military occupation. In August 1944, Nägaš left his position to *Däjjazmač*

[14]Addis Zemen, "YäAfänegus Mäsfen Gämäč Eräft", 12 Nähasé 1954 E.C.
[15] Negarit Gazeta, General Notice No.10 of 1942.
[16] Solomon, *A History*…, 62; NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg…
[17]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from *Fitawrari* Nägädä Zägäyä (governor of Reb to Bäšilo) to Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Gezat, dated 5 Pagumé 1937 E.C; YäGondar Awraja Yäheg Mämeriya ...

(*Wagšum*) Admasu Wäsän of Wag who governed the district until 1946.[18] Moreover, the governors of the eight *abägazes* from Reb to Mätäma, except *Däjjazmač* Hagos, were Italian collaborators. The former Italian collaborators like *Qäñzemač* Are'eya Gäbrämäden and *Fitawrari* Alämayähu Bitäwa were also appointed *mesläné* over Wägära and Chilga respectively.[19]

In addition to appointment to principal positions, former Italian collaborators were appointed to positions in different administrative structures of Bägémder and Semén province. One of these offices was the regional advisory body set up in Gondar in 1942 which exclusively consisted of former Italian collaborators. The members were *Afänegus* Aţenafé Sägäd, *Käntiba* (*Däjjazmač*) Matäbé Däräso, Šumyä Guangul, and Käbbädä Engeda. Their task was to give advice to the governor of the province and they had a monthly salary of $350, $300, $200, and $200 *berr* respectively.[20] Soon Aţenafé, who was of Šewan origin, was made president of the Higher Court of the province. This indicates how much the top provincial positions were dominated by Italian collaborators and how this led to a feeling of resentment on the part of those who had taken part in the anti-Fascist struggle.

The other source of local resentment on the part of local officials was the deliberate removal of some of the well-known resistance leaders from the province and their appointment to other areas and positions. Good examples are *Däjjazmač* Daňäw Täsäma and *Däjjazmač* Wubnäh

[18]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg …; Nägarit Gazeta, General Notice No 38 of 1944; Addis Zemen, "Tarik Yaläw Aymotem Kebur Wagseyum Admasu Wäsän", 2 Genbot 1944 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Lädäjač Nägaš Wärqenäh Şälot Fetat Tädärägä", 19 Miyaziya 1960 E.C.
[19]Informants: Alämnäh, Jämbäru, and Sinor; NGAZRO, a letter from *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay (governor-general of Bägémder and Semén) to *Däjjazmač* Hagos Täsäma (Governor of Chilga *Awraja*), Ref.no.6/329/62, dated 1 Genbot 1939 E.C; a letter from Hagos Täsäma to *Fitawrari* Alämayähu Bitäwa, Ref.no.6399/62, dated 1 Genbot 1939 E.C.
[20]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg…

Täsäma (Amoraw). While Wubnäh was made a member of the Senate (1942-1944),[21] Daňäw was appointed governor of Ambasel in Wällo, with the title of *Janţerar* until he returned as governor of Reb to Mätäma district following the death of Ambačäw Gäsäsä at the end of 1943. After a short stay, in 1945 Daňäw was transferred to Addis Ababa as a member of the Senate.[22]

Some of the resistance leaders in Ethiopia considered the exiled men during the occupation as deserters who should not receive government posts and opposed the emperor's appointment of such individuals to administrative positions.[23] This condition was strongly visible in the province of Bägémder and Semén. For example, *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa, *Däjjazmač* Mäsfen's successor as *endärasé* of the Crown Prince in Bägémder and Semén, and *Däjjazmač* Ambačäw Gäsäsä (the first governor of the district from Reb to Mätäma) were not native to the province and were not known well among the local people. Asratä was the son of *Ras* Kasa and he lived in exile during the occupation period. *Däjjazmač* Ambačäw was the son of Gäsäsä Wäldä Hana (Empress Ţaytu's nephew). He was born in Yäjju and grew up at the palace in Addis Ababa. The Italians captured and imprisoned him for four years during the occupation.[24] Thus, the local officials and the resistance fighters of the province did not look positively at their appointment as top officials of the province. Moreover, Ambačäw and Asratä were corrupt and misused their powers. For instance, Asratä misused $10,000 *berr* that was sent to the province for the maintenance of the

[21] Solomon, "The Career..", 57.
[22]NALAE Code17.1.13.24.05, a letter from *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay (governor-general of Bägémder and Semén) to *Däjjazmač* Daňäw Täsäma, Ref. no 15051/25, dated 26 Nähasé 1941 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Yakebur Däjač Daňäw Täsäma Zéna Eräfet", 24 Yäkatit 1952 E.C.
[23]Charles McClellan,"Observations on the Ethiopian Nation, Its Nationalism, and the Italo-Ethiopian War," *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. III, No. 1 (1996), 64.
[24]Addis Zemen, "SeläKebur Däjač Ambačäw Gäsäsä Mote", 6 Tahsas 1936 E.C.

Gondar-Däbrä Tabor-Däsé road in the early 1940s.[25] By so doing, Asratä contributed his own share for the failure of Haile Sellassie's centralization policy in the province because the road was not repaired and the province continued as a periphery linked with the center only through the Gondar-Šeré road. Against the rule of the Ministry of Finance that gave tax collection to its workers, *Däjjazmač* Ambačäw collected tax from the inhabitants in the district from Reb to Mätäma and local tax collectors without formal receipt.[26] He received warning letters from the High Court of the province to stop his illegal actions and repay the money and that otherwise the court would take administrative actions against him.[27] Thus, the appointed officials from the center themselves partly hindered the centralization effort of the imperial government in Bägémder and Semén in the early 1940s. This was because roads are very important to link the frontier area with the center and hence contribute positively in the centralization process of frontier areas. On the other side, the authority to collect tax was given to financial workers, not to administrators, and it was a violation of the 1942 regulation.

The ineffectiveness of the centralization of the local administration in Chilga sub-province was partly manifested in lack of security to the local people. Banditry was widespread in the province especially in the district from Reb to Mätäma. A report to the Ministry of Interior says "**ከርብ እስከ መተማ ባለዉ አገር የተሾመዉት ደጃዝማች አምባቸዉ ገሰሰ ከሌሎች አገረ ገዥዎች በመልካም አገዛዝ ለመመረጥ ይጣጣራሉ ይሁን እንጅ በአገሩ ብዙ ወስላታ ስላለበት የሚያስበዉን ሁሉ አከናዉኖ**

[25]NALAE code 17.1.13.23.06, letters from Zäwdé Gäbrä Selasé (Minister of Public Works and Communications) to Mäkonnen Habtäwold (Minister of Finance), Ref. no.2/6727/17/47, dated 18 Nähasé 1947 E.C, Ref. no.36261/45, dated 8 Hedar 1948 E.C and Ref. no.2/88/17/48, dated 24 Mäskäräm 1948 E.C.
[26]NALAE code 17.1.13.23.07: a letter from *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa (governor of Bägémder and Semén *Awraja*) to *Däjjazmač* Ambačäw Gäsäsä, Ref. no. 667.አ /12, dated 8 Ţeqemet 1937 E.C; a letter from Ambačäw Gäsäsä to Alämayähu Gola (Reb to Mätäma District Gemja Bét Office), Ref.no. 155, dated 12 Ţeqemet 1936 E.C.
[27]NALAE code 17.1.13.23.07: a letter from Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Higher Court office to Asratä Kasa, Ref. no.130, dated 7 Ţeqemet 1936 E.C.

ለመስራት (ለማሳየት) ብዙ ጊዜ ይወስድበት ይመስላል።"[28] (The governor from Reb to Mätäma, *Däjjzmač* Ambačäw Gäsäsä, tries to install good governance. He works to emerge as a better governor among the governors of other districts. However, since the district has many bandits, it seems he would need time to accomplish all that he wants to do). A group of bandits around Mätäma also crossed the border and raided about 105 Sudanese cattle near Gallabat, in May 1943. The British Embassy in Addis Ababa wrote a protest letter regarding the raid. Soon officials of Bägémder tried to capture some of the brigands and returned about 60 cattle to the Sudanese after the rainy season of the same year. In the subsequent years, efforts were made to return the remaining cattle.[29]

Since the laws of the imperial government for centralization were not properly implemented there was mistreatment of local people. For instance, the Gumuz in Quara were treated in the early 1940s in a way similar to the situation they were before the Italian occupation. Domestic slavery was sometimes practiced in the district. Due to this, the Gumuz said that Italian rule was better to them than the post-liberation Ethiopian government,[30] like some of the people in southern Ethiopia and western Oromo who preferred Italian rule to the restored imperial government.[31] Since the administrative structure was not well organized in the early 1940s in the province, this seems to have created a favorable environment for some local people in Quara to enslave the Gumuz. Gumuz slaves were mainly exchanged with rifles at Mätäma.[32]

[28]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07: YäGondar Awraja Yäheg …
[29]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.02, a letter from *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay to Wäldägiorgis WäldäYohannes (Minster of Pen), Ref.no.1111, dated 19 Nähasé 1938 E.C; a letter from British Legation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopian, Ref.no.124/24/46, dated 14 December 1946 G.C.
[30]NALE code 17.1.13.24.07, YaGondar Awraja Yäheg…
[31] McClellan, "Observations…," 65.
[32] Solomon, *A History*…., 67- 68.

Lack of modern education and administrative skill among local officials across Bägémder and Semén, like most parts of the country, was part of the cause for the unsuccessful of the centralization of the administration. This was a challenge for local officials to implement the new administrative regulations of the government. Partly due to this factor, there was continuous transfer of officials in the province from one position to another position.[33] Even the 1942 administrative regulations were not dispatched to local officials on time and this made the local administration problematic. For instance, *Däjjazmač* Hagos, the governor of Quara *abägaz* and the commander of the *näch läbaš ţor* from Reb to Mätäma, wrote in August 1945 to the Ministry of War as "…**በበጌምድር ክፍል ከርብ እስከ መተማ ግዛት የነጭ ለባሽ የጦር አዝማችነቱን ከልዑልነታቸዉ በቁጥር** 126 **ስለተሰጠሁት በአዲስ ደንብ አስተዳደር የስራዉን አካሄድ መከታተል ስለሚያስፈልግ የህግ መምሪያዉን ደንብ እንድሰጥ** [**አሳስባለሁ።**] " [34] (I have received the commandership of the local militia men from Reb to Mätäma from the Crown Prince in a letter referenced number 126. I request that it is essential to get the new administrative regulation to run the administrative work in the area and sent it to me).

As at the national level, therefore, it was not the resistance leaders but rather the former Italian collaborators who were appointed to higher positions in Chilga sub-province and other areas of Bägémder and Semén.[35] In fact, the emperor made it clear at the time of his re-entry to Ethiopia in 1941 that he had no plan of punishing the Italian collaborators after liberation.[36] Although the ostensible reason given by the imperial government for giving better positions to former Italian collaborators was that they had received administrative experiences from the Italians during the

[33] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg…
[34] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.08, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to the Ministry of War, dated 28 Hamlé 1937 E.C.
[35] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, "YäGondar Awraja Yäheg…"
[36] Haile Sellassie, *Heywoté*…, vol. II, 228.

occupation period,[37] in actual fact these collaborators were not given higher positions and did not get administrative experience from the Italians. Thus, the actual reason behind this decision seems to have been the emperor's desire to check the power of the resistance leaders by incorporating collaborators and by playing off the competing groups in the administration against each other to consolidate his personal power.[38]

Most of the resistance leaders were assigned to posts at the grass root level of the provincial administration; they were therefore dissatisfied and demanded higher positions. There were disputes between such patriots and former collaborators who were appointed relatively to better positions.[39] In the area later called Chilga *awraja* most of the resistance fighters were appointed mainly to lower levels of the administration. For example, while *Däjjazmačes* Bäzabeh Zälläläw, an Italian collaborator, was appointed as governors Aläfa *abägaz*, Ayälä Täsäma and Räda Täsäma, who were resistance leaders in Chilga district, were appointed as *meselänés* in Chilga. They expressed their disappointment at what they considered to have been an unfair situation in the following poem:

ክፉ ቀን አዉጭ እንደ ዘንጋዳ
እኛ በሞትነ ይገዛል ባንዳ።
እኛ ቀን ከሌት በተዋጋነ
ዉለታዉ ከንቱ ሆነን ቀረነ።[40]

As durra helps people to withstand the days of faime
We died for liberation but the bandas became the rulers
Though we fought for days and nights
we did not get credit for our deeds

[37] Maniazewal, 55.
[38] Clapham, 20, 73; McClellan, 63.
[39] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg …
[40] Informants: Abära and Bäläṭu.

The selection and appointment of administrative officials in Chilga sub-province and other areas of Bägémder and Semén was a difficult task for the imperial government since there were many resistance fighters who were not appointed to administrative positions. Actually, it was impossible to give administrative posts to all resistance fighters. Most of the resistance fighters were the product of propaganda work of the emperor in 1941 when he returned from the Sudan. The emperor promised to the people that they would get rewards after liberation if they fought the Italians.[41] This was however not realistic and he was not able to keep his promise.

The local people's cultural perception of government positions was also one of the factors that made the appointment of local officials very difficult across Bägémder and Semén after liberation from Italian rule. Most resistance fighters from the province considered government positions as a source of livelihood and social status. They had a strong interest in getting government positions and were not interested to engage in other kinds of livelihood activities like trading and farming. It seems that out of envy, those who had no government position demanded the elimination of the *meketel mesläné* position from the administrative hierarchy in 1943. *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa discussed the idea with more than 30 *mäkuanents* (lit. nobility whose rank was earned by service) of the province and they decided on the continuation of the position of *meketel mesläné.* Dissatisfied resistance fighters were also inclined to take up banditry and robbery as source of livelihood. Members of the Chamber of Deputies from the province reported this problem in August 1943 to the Ministry of Interior as follows "**አርሳችሁና ነግዳችሁ ብሉ ብሎ ቁርጠኛ መልስ እንዳንሰጣቸዉ ብረታችሁን ይዛችሁ ከዱር ግቡ ብሎ ከማሰናበት**

[41] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg…

እንዳይቆጠር ሰጋን።”[42] (We found it difficult to tell the resistance fighters to lead a life of farming and trading because we feared that this would be like telling them to turn into bandits). The intense desire for government positions on the part of the population of the province was observed by Donald Levine, the well-known sociologist, who conducted field research in Gondar in the 1950s. He noted that the Gondarine people had a higher inclination to get government positions culturally. This was because of the fact that Gondar had been an imperial center for long period and this had a profound impact on the culture of the people to get government positions.[43] In other words, it is to say that Gondar was the capital from the dawn of the 17th to about 1870 and governing Bägémder that surrounded the capital was a key position to the state. In this long period, the local people had served the governors in various ways mainly as fighters and many of them received administrative positions. As a result of this, the local people through time developed a military culture and immense interest in government positions.

Different provincial officials expressed the importance of giving government positions to the resistance fighters in the province. For instance, Hagos Täsäma, the governor of Quara *abägaz,* expressed as follows: “…**ዳግም ኢትዮጵያን ጠላት በያዛት ጊዜ ለጠላት መሳሪያ አንሆንም ብለዉ ብዙዎቹ ለጠላት መሳሪያ ሁነዉ ሲደሰቱ አምስት አመት ሙሉ ያለማቋረጥ እኩሉ በስደት እኩሉ በአርበኝነት ላገለገሉ ሰዎች ሚገባቸዉን ዋጋና ደረጃ በክቡር የጦር ሚኒሰቴር ወይም በክቡር ያገር ግዛት ሚኒሰቴር እንዲያገኙ በጥቂቱ ሳይሆን በብዙዉ እያመለከትሁ** [**አመለክታለሁ**]…።”[44] (During the five years Italian military occupation of Ethiopia, many people submitted to them and became their tools with happiness. However, many others refused to collaborate with them and spent part of

[42] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg….
[43]Donald N. Levine, *Wax & Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965), 42.
[44]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.08, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to the Ministry of War, dated 28 Hamlé 1937 E.C.

them as refugees and part of them as resistance fighters. I appeal at large that give rewards to them they deserved via the Ministry of War or Ministry of Interior).

Moreover, Hagos, together with some notable resistance leaders of the province, was said to have advised the patriots who had no government positions that they fought the Italians not to get government positions but rather to liberate the country from the Fascist Italians.[45]

The other source of resentment of local officials towards the restored imperial regime was the lowering of the titles the resistance leaders had obtained from the local people during the occupation. Their titles were returned to the pre-Italian occupation period and rewards of medals were not given to them from the government until 1946. This action disappointed several resistance leaders of the province.[46] (However, most local officials used their titles illegally in letters they exchanged before recognition was made from the government). In fact, a committee headed by Hagos Täsäma was set up to select resistance fighters who would deserve titles and medals in the province in the early1940s. However, this was not approved until October 1946 when the emperor visited the province. The resistance leaders in Chilga district like Ayälä Täsäma was given only the title of *barambaras*, Räda Täsäma did not receive a title and Bälay Mäkonnen was given the title of *fitawrari*.[47]

The appointment of governor-generals to the province who were not native to the area but rather came from Šewa was another factor that contributed to local dissatisfaction in Chilga sub-province and other areas of the province throughout the imperial period. All of the governor-

[45]Andargé Mäsfen, *Arebäňa ena Banda Bä-Enat Guada* (Addis Ababa, 2009 E.C), 165.
[46]NGAZRO, "Kefel Ande YäGondar Keflä Hager Säfi Hezeb Enqeseqasé Qedemä Abiyot" (Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Gondar, 1976 E.C), 10; Andaregé, 159-160; Informants: Alämnäh and Sisay.
[47] Märese'hazän, *Geremawinätačäw*….., 89 - 97.

generals from liberation to the 1974 Revolution were from Šewa and many of them had matrimonial or blood relations with the emperor. Like Emperor Menelik II, Emperor Haile Sellassie I appointed the Šewans as governors of the provinces of the country and loyalty to him was the main criterion in this appointment.[48] Bägémder and Semén, like Gojjam, had also the smallest numbers of senior officials at the national level after liberation. Although Clapham mentioned lack of modern educated men in the province as one probable reason for this absence,[49] the basic reason was the centralization policy of the government under Šewan domination. This shows that Bägémder and Semén was a frontier area in the post-liberation imperial regime in relation to power distribution with the center/Addis Ababa. The appointment of officials from Šewa led some notables of the province to remember what the Italians told them during the occupation about Šewan domination. However, the displeasure and resentment of local officials against the imperial regime was because of the absence of a native governor-general to the province who was loyal to the emperor.[50] The feeling of discontent which emanated from failure on the part of the state to appoint a native governor-general for Bägémder was nicely captured in the following local poem:

የበጌምድር ላሞች ቁመታቸዉ ትልልቅ ጠጉራቸዉ የነጣ፡
ዐይነ-ናስ አላቸዉ ከማሀከላቸዉ ኮርማ የሚያሳጣ፡
ሁልጊዜ ይግዛቸዉ ከሸዋ እየመጣ።[51]

Though the cattle of Bägémder are tall and their skins white
They suffer from the evil eye that hinders them from keeping a bull among them
Hence the bull always come from Šäwa and leads them.

The existence of a huge number of firearms was the other contributory factor behind the administrative difficulty and local instability that was witnessed across the province in the early

[48] John Markakis, *Ethiopia:Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 293.
[49] Clapham, *Haile - Sellassie's* …, 76.
[50] Informants: Alämnäh and Sisay.
[51] Informants: Alämnäh and Sisay; Andaregé, 16.

1940s. Many of these firearms were distributed to local collaborators by the Italians and to resistance fighters by the British forces and the emperor in the course of liberation campaign. The local people also looted arms from the Italians.[52] The people used the arms for illegal activities and refused to accept the order of government officials. In August 1943, members of the Chamber of Deputies from the province proposed that the government should collect firearms by buying it from the local people in different ways. Otherwise, they noted that it would be difficult to install peace and stability in the province.[53] Disarming the local people by force was impossible as Hagos Täsäma stated in July 1945: "… **እንዲሰበሰብ ለማድረግ በግዴታ ሳይሆን በገንዘብ ግዥ አስመስሎ መቀበል ይሻላል በማለት እያሳሰብሁ፤ ይህንም ያልኩበት በሱዳን አገር ጠረፍ ወስጄ ሳይለይ ይሄዳል ማለትን ስለሰማሁ ነዉ ስል በማክበር አመለክታለሁ።**[54] (…I appeal that it is better to collect these arms from the people through purchase and not by force. I say this since I heard that people would go to the frontier along the Sudan refusing to submit arms if forceful measures were taken). Although officials proposed the government should buy and collect arms from the local people, it was not practiced probably due to lack of finance or lack of interest among local people.

Paradoxically, the Ethiopian army regiment stationed in Gondar also contributed to the local instability in the city and its surroundings in the early 1940s. The army had no provisions, cloth and other supplies sent from the Ministry of War in 1942 and 1943. The office of the governorate-general tried to alleviate the difficulties of this army by lending it money from its small annual budget. However, some of the members of the army turned to activities that brought

[52]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.08, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to the Ministry of War, dated 28 Hamlé 1937 E.C.
[53]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg ….
[54]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.08, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to the Ministry of War, dated 28 Hamlé 1937 E.C.

local instability. They deserted with their rifles, sold their arms to the local people, robbed and killed peaceful travelers, destroyed houses to sell off the tin roofs, insulted the government, and looted the local people.[55]

Dissatisfaction of the local officials with the restored imperial government paved the way for peasants in various localities to refuse to pay tax to the government and rebel sporadically led by local chiefs. Fighting then followed between the peasants and government forces. For instance, the peasants of Janora and Janifänqära under *Qäňazmač* Daňäw Andargé rebelled in 1943; the peasants of Fogära, Kämkäm and Qaroda rebelled in June and August 1945, the peasants of Gayint rebelled in 1945; and the peasants of Mäqäţawa under *Fitawrari* Haylu Däjäné rebelled in August 1946. However these local uprisings were crushed by government forces.[56]

Not only peasants but also local officials were unwilling to help finance workers in collecting taxes from the local people based on the 1942 regulation. Therefore, they hindered one of the ways by which the imperial government tried to centralize the regional administration. The provincial treasury office could not collect tax properly from the local people in the early 1940s.[57] *Belata* Şähay Dästa, head of Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Treasury Office, wrote to the Ministry of Finance in July 1944 as follows:

> **… የየአዉራጃዉ ግምጃ ቤቶች ምክንያቱን ለማወቅ እንዳይችሉ የቀበሌ ግምጃ ቤቶች፤ የአገር ግዛት ባለስልጣናቶች፣ አበጋዞችና ምስለኔዎች ናቸዉ ግምጃቤቶቹ፣ ከክቡር የገንዘብ ሚኒሰቴር በተቀበሉት ደንብ እንዲሰሩ ስልጣናቸዉ አይሰማም፡፡ በየወረዳዉ ያሉት ጥቅም የሚያስገኙት ገበያዎች ለቀበሌ ግምጃ ቤቶች የግል ማድ ቤታቸዉ ሁነዋል ቢባል**

[55]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg ….
[56]NALAE code 2.2.68.03**መ**, a letter from Col. Asratä Kassa to Crownprince Asefawäsän, Ref.no.508, dated 2 Ţeqemet 1936 E.C; NALAE code 2.2.68.02, a letter from Crownprince Asefawosen to Emperor Haile Sellasie, Ref.no.450/431, dated 8 Ţeqemet 1936 E.C; NALAE Code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from Bägémder (and Semén) *Awraja* to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.61/4, dated 9 Ţeqemet 1938 E.C.
[57]NALAE Code 17.1.13.23.07, a letter from Şähay Dästa to the Ministry of Finance, Ref.no. 3288, dated 2 Nähasé 1936 E.C.

> **አያሳፍርም፡፡ ይህን የመሳሰለዉ የስራ እንቅፋት እንዲወገድላቸዉ የአዉራጃ ግምጃ ቤት ለአዉራጃዉ ገዥ ዋና ጽ/ቤት በራፖር ለማመልከት አላቋረጠም ነገር ግን አልተፈፀመለትም፡፡[…] ይህን በመሰለ አኳኋን ለህዝቡ ሳይቀርለት ወደ መንግስት ሳይደርስ የሀገሩ ሀብት ሳያንስ ደንብ ተከትሎ የሚሰራ ባለመኖሩና ግምጃ ቤቱ ባዶ በመሆኑ የሚላኩትን ቡድገፆች በየወሩ ለመክፈል ስላልቻሉ ሁልጊዜ የበጌምድር አዉራጃ ግዛት ከአዲስ አበባ ዋና ግምጃ ቤት ተበዳሪ ሆኖ ይኖራል፡፡…”** [58]
>
> … for reasons unknown to the treasury office of this *awraja*, it is officials of the Ministry of Interior, *abägazes*, *qäbälé* treasuries and *meslänés*, who are the treasuries. The treasury workers are not allowed to carry out work according to the regulation they received from the Ministry of Finance and their authority is not accepted by local governors. It would not be shameful to say that valuable markets found in the districts are their private treasuries. To solve such obstacles, the *awraja* treasury office reported continuously to *awraja* administrative office; however, it is not practiced…. By such activities, the revenue of the province collected from the people do not reach to the government treasury. Since there is no one who work based on the regulations, the *awraja* treasury is empty and unable to pay the monthly salaries of officials. Thus, Bägémder *Awraja* is always borrowing from the central treasury office at Addis Ababa….

From the above it is clear that there was abuse of power among administrative workers of the province. By violating the 1942 regulation that gave the authority of tax collection from the local people to treasury office. Treasury/finance workers were prohibited from executing their task of collecting taxes. It was the local officials who used illegally the collected taxes for their own purpose. As a result, it was impossible to cover the salary of government officials with the revenue collected in the province. In fact, not only in the 1940s, but also throughout the imperial period, like other provinces of the country like Gojjam, Bägémder and Semén was subsided by the central government. As a report towards the end of the imperial period (in 1972) indicated, Bägémder and Semén province was given a subsidy of about $5, 268, 650 *berr* annually from the central treasury.[59]

[58]NALAE Code 17.1.13.24.11, a letter from Şähay Dästa to the Ministry of Finance, Ref.no. 3140, dated 24 Hamlé 1936 E.C.

[59]Bägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat, “Hulätäňaw YäEdegät Ena Lemat Seminar” (Gondar: Artistic Printing Press, 1964 E.C), 177.

The transfer of the land south of Ayima (Dinder) River to Gojjam province was also one of the sources of opposition by the local people and officials of Chilga sub-province towards the imperial government in the early 1940s. As in the pre-1935 period, Guba was governed under Bägémder under Quara *abägaz* in 1942 and 1943.[60] Its governor, *Däjjazmač* Mähamäd Banjaw, paid about 40 *wäqét* (one wäqét was equal to 28 grams) tax annually to Chilga (Bägémder) treasury. In addition to Guba, Chilga officials collected taxes and tribute including buffalo horn and ivory from areas like Abromola, Al Mänki and Aba Mändi.[61] This tradition of paying tax to Bägémder is clearly stated by *Däjjazmač* Hagos Täsäma, governor of Quara *abägaz*, as "**ጥንት ሲሰራ ሲሰማራ ተያይዞ ኩታ ገጠም ሁኖ ከኛ የደረሰዉ ጉባን ለወርቅ አብሮሞላን ለጨርቅ ክክራሆን ለማር ቋራ ደጋዉን ለመቀመጫ ነዉ።**"[62] (Since earlier times, when the land south of Ayima was our administrative domain. The tribute collected was said that Guba was for gold, Abromola for cotton, and Kekeraho for honey and the highland of Quara for administrative seat). Lack of a clear cut decision from the imperial government led a protracted struggle between Bägémder and Gojjam officials to control Guba. The imperial government transferred the area south of Ayima to Chilga sub-province at one time and to Gojjam at another time in the early 1940s.[63] After protracted dealings, the area south of Ayima River was transferred to Gojjam as of 1947,[64] and added to the newly formed Mätäkäl *Awraja*.

[60]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to Bägémder and Semén Governor-General, Ref.no. 449, dated 10 Ţer 1937 E.C.
[61]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Täsäma (governor Chilga *Awraja*) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref. no.52/1859, dated 18 Mägabit 1939 E.C; a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Andargačäw Mäsay, Ref.no. 23/3712, dated 11 Hedar 1941 E.C.
[62] NGAZRO, a letter from *Däjjazmač* Hagos Täsäma to Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Governor Office, Ref. no. 499, dated 14 Ţer 1936 E.C.
[63]NGAZRO, a letter from Ministry of Interior to *Ras* Haylu Bäläw (Governor-Gereral of Gojjam *Awraja*), Ref.no. 7617/1, dated 10 Ţer 1937 E.C.
[64] NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Andargačäw, dated 11 Hedar 1941 E.C.

Different sections of the society in Chilga sub-province opposed the decision by the imperial government to transfer the area south of Ayima to Gojjam. The local people, governors and *balabats* repeatedly expressed their opposition about the move to the various government offices. They claimed the area was their *rest* land established by their ancestors during the 14th century in the reign of King Säyfä Ared.[65] The local officials also claimed that Quara was inseparable from the area south of the Ayima and demanded the return of these areas to Quara governorship under Chilga *awraja*.[66] It was even reported that the inhabitants of Quara instead of losing these areas and living in the highlands of Quara, they would rather transfer to Gojjam together with their *rest* lands found to the south of Ayima.[67] The local people and officials blamed the governor-generals of Bägémder and Semén for the loss of the land,[68] although the governor-general Andaregačäw Mäsay had made his best effort to keep Bägémder control over the area.

Because of the aforementioned factors, there were local instability that made the local administration difficult in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in the early 1940s. Banditry expanded especially in the area between Lake Ţana and Mätäma, where caravan merchants were frequently robbed.[69] *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa and officials under him could not bring peace and stability in the province. He was also repeatedly absent from Gondar. This encouraged the outbreak of local rebellion in various parts of the province. In February 1944, when Asratä was not at Gondar, an official of the province wrote to the Ministry of Interior the need to appoint a

[65] NGAZRO, a petition of Quara *ballabats* (Hagos Täsäma, Kasa Mäšäša and others) to Andargačäw Mäsay, dated 18 Tahsas 1941 E.C.
[66] NGAZRO, a petition of Quara *ballabats* … , dated 18 Tahsas 1941 E.C.
[67] NGAZRO, a letter from *Qäňazmač* Alämu Mängäša (governor of Quara-Um Idla district) to Hagos Täsäma (governor of Chilga *Awraja*), Ref.no. 1170/5, dated 7 Säné 1942 E.C.
[68] Informants: Sinor, Qoyä, and Abuhay.
[69] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from *Belata* Şähay Dästa (Bägémder and Semén Gemeja Bét Office) to *Ras* Emeru Haile Selasé (Governor-General of Bägémder *Awraja*), Ref.no. 63, dated 18 Mäskäräm 1938 E.C.

popular governor on the province to bring peace and stability.[70] Then the central government appointed *Ras* Emeru Haylä Selasé as governor-general of the province in May 1944.[71] Moreover, realizing the dissatisfaction of the local people and the administrative difficulty in the province the imperial government appointed *Däjjazmač* Wubnäh Täsäma as director-general of the province in December 1944 and he served in that position until March 1948.[72]

Ras Emeru's appointment was received with relief by the local people who had suffered from Asratä's incompetent administration. Although Emeru was from Šewa, the local people and officials were said to have been happy with his appointment since they had heard of his efficient and good govern ship while he was in Gojjam in the early 1930s. Unlike Asratä's period, the *abägazes* was said to have motivated and executed their work in an accountable fashion in the period of Emeru. However, since he did not arrive in Gondar for seven months, the local people were disappointed because they were governed by a *ţebeq* (lit. care taker) governor.[73] One of the factors that delayed Emeru's arrival was lack of communication system between Gondar and Addis Ababa. Until the opening of air transport to Gondar in 1946, governors of the province mostly travelled by car from Addis Ababa to Asmara and then Šeré to Gondar covering more than 1300 kms. In October 1944, *Afänegus* Aţenafé Sägäd, advisor of Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, reported the discontent of the people as follows: "…**ምናልባት ለሃገሩ መሉ ስልጣን የተሰጡት አገር ገዥ ባለመምጣታቸዉ በቀን ብዛት ሰዉ አመል እንዳያወጣና ከሀገሩ ዉስጥ ሁከት እንዳይነሳሳ በቅርብ ቀን ዉስጥ ክቡር ራስ እምሩ ቢመጡ የተሻለ ነዉ ስል ለክቡርነተዎ**

[70] Solomon, *A History* …, 68.
[71] Negarit Gazeta, General Notice No.26 of 1944.
[72] *Yagär Gezat Mäşehét*, 3rd year, no. 4 (1957 E.C), 10.
[73]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.11, a letter from Bägémder and Semén Treasury Office to the Ministry of Finance, Ref. no.3140, dated 24 Hamlé 1936 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.24.05, a letter from *Afänegus* Aţenafé Sägäd to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 341, dated 12 Ţeqemet 1937 E.C.

አመለክተለሁ።"[74] (since the authorized governor-general of the province did not come, through time the people may develop temperament and it would bring strife in the province. Thus, I appeal that it is better to send his Excellency *Ras* Emeru to this province in the near day).

The most pressing task that *Ras* Emeru confronted on his arrival in Bägémder and Semén was restoring law and order. Emeru, a liberal aristocrat, tried to suppress banditry and other criminal activities in the province. He took severe measures to root out banditry sometimes going to extent of hanging a thief who has stolen a shawl (a cotton cloth) at Azäzo.[75] Like Emeru, *Qägnazmač* Are'aya Gäbrämäden, the *meseläné* of Wägära, was famous for flogging bandits and other criminals with sticks.[76] In application of sever measures they took towards thieves and bandits, the inhabitants of Gondar composed the following poem for the two of them:

እምሩ በገመድ አርአያ በዱላ፣
ሌቦ ተፈጸመች ከንግዲህ በኋላ።[77]

Emeru hung thieves by rope and Are'ya beat them with stick
This is the end of thieves in the area

Ras Emeru tried to improve the administrative system of the Bägémder *awraja* (it was the name of the province during Emeru's reign). In the period before his arrival most orders of the government were not implemented at grassroots level, there was lack of responsibility and accepting order among the hierarchy of provincial officials. Various government offices like courts were not set up at *abägaz* level in the district from Reb to Mätäma. All these were showed

[74] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.05, a letter from *Afänegus* Aţenafé Sägäd to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 341, dated 12 Ţeqemet 1937 E.C.
[75]Ababa Kiflayasus, "The Career of Liul Ras Imeru Häylä Silläse"(BA Thesis, HSIU, 1973), 73; Daňäw Wäldä Selasé, *Wuţa Wuräd Yäbäzabät Hiywät* (Addis Ababa, 1987 E.C), 19; Informants: Haylé, Sisay, and Alämnäh.
[76]Informants: Haylé, Sisay, and Alämnäh; Solomon, *A History* …, 68; NGAZRO, a document by a record personnel who ordered by the governor-general to investigate Aye'aya's file, dated 12 Mägabit 1962 E.C.
[77] Solomon, *A History* …, 68.

improvement in the period of Emeru.[78] However, Emeru's governorship in Bägémder and Semén was short lived. He served as governor until January 1946, when *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay, the son-in-law of the emperor, was appointed governor-general of the province.[79] Emeru's transfer from the province within a short time reveals how much the emperor gave care largely to his throne, not to the local administration.

The resentment and dissatisfaction of the local people towards the imperial government was relatively minimized following Emperor Haile Sellassie's visit to Bägémder and Semén in October 1946. During his visit, the emperor addressed several key issues of the period in the province. He awarded the patriots with *nišan*, medals, and titles. He declared a proclamation that cancelled ¼ of the 1946 *asrat* (tithe) owed to the state in recognition of the loyalty of the people of the region to Ethiopia during the Italian Occupation A tribute called *melemel* (paid in goats and sheep among the lowland people) was also cancelled. The emperor promised free education and financial support to those whose families died in the war against the Fascists. The proclamation also gave amnesty to bandits who lived in the forests. The bandits were advised to return the properties they had stolen and to reconcile with the owners of these properties until 29 January 1947.[80] Subsequently, several bandits gave their hands to the government. This was a contributory factor for the reduction of local instability in Chilga *Awraja* and its adjacent areas until about 1960.

Administration of Chilga *Awraja*, 1946 to the early 1960s

[78] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from Reb to Mätäma District Administrative Office to Bägémder *Awraja* Administration Office, dated 2 Ṭeqemet 1938 E.C.
[79] Negarit Gazeta, General Notice no. 63 of 1946.
[80] Addis Zemen, "Enkuan Dähena Gäbulen", 9 Ṭeqemet 1939 E.C; Märséhazän, *Geremawinätačäw*.., 14-15, 99-100.

Local administration in Chilga sub-province showed improvement following the introduction of administrative arrangements in 1946. The imperial government reorganized the administrative structure of the provinces in June of the same year by amending the 1942 administrative regulations. Accordingly, the *awraja*, *wäräda*, and *mesläné* administrative units were elevated to *ţäqelay gezat* (governorate-general or province), *awraja* (sub-province) and *wäräda* (district) administrative units respectively. Each *wäräda* was divided into *meketel-wärädas* (sub-districts).[81] Subsequently, Bägémder and Semén became a *ţäqelay gezat* and was structured into 27 *wärädas*, 121 *meketel-wärädas*, and six *awrajas* until the establishment of a new *awraja* named Libo in 1956.[82] The reorganization increased the administrative structure and the number of government officials in the province. This had a positive contribution to local administration since the districts and *awraja* administrative units were organized relatively in a manageable way for the local officials compared to the earlier years. The districts from the pre-1946 period were organized into six *awrajas* (Chilga, Wägära, Gondar, Semén, Däbrä Tabor and Gayint), and the 16 *abägazes* were organized into 27 districts. This administrative rearrangement was made taking its extensive size into consideration. Hence, relatively, the stability and administration of Chilga sub-province and its surroundings from 1946 to early 1960s was better than the early 1940s and the last decade of the imperial period.

Chilga *Awraja* was established in 1947 by merging the former Quara and Aläfa *abägazes*. It consisted of the districts of Chilga, Mätäma, Quara-Um Idla, and Aläfa-Ţaqusa. The *awraja* extended from Guang River bordering Armacheho in the north to part of Jawi and Bäläs River in the south, and bordering the Sudan in the west to Lake Ţana in the east. The administrative

[81] Negarit Gazeta, Decree 6 of 1946, "Administrative Regulations Amendment".
[82]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.05, a letter from Andargačäw Mäsay to Wäldä Giorgis Wäldä Yohannes (Minister of Interior), Ref. no. 930/40, dated 21 Tahsas 1939 E.C; *Yagär gezat* ..1st year, No.1.

center of Chilga sub-province was at Aykäl town.[83] Initially, the sub-province had about 19 sub-districts (and governors called *meselänés*) including four sub-districts in the area south of Ayima River. There was also territory under the jurisdiction of Mahbärä Selasé monastery inside this *awraja*. After the land south of Ayima transferred to Gojjam, Maţäbiya was added to Mahbärä Selasé, and Chaqo and Wähni sub-districts amalgamated into one sub-district named Chaqo. In consequence, Chilga came to have 13 sub-districts.[84]

The first governor of Chilga *Awraja* was *Däjjazmač* Hagos Täsäma (1946-June1951), a native of Upper Armacheho and a younger brother of *Däjjazmač* Wubnäh Täsäma. The first secretary of the *awraja* was Ayälä Čäkol, and Abära Rädda was appointed as *šum* (lit. municipal appointee) of Aykäl town.[85] It was due to his experience as governor of Quara *abägaz* that the imperial government appointed Hagos governor of Chilga sub-province. He was a popular governor among the local people and he made strong effort to install law and order in the area. He took measures on his inefficient officials.[86]

[83]NALAE Code 17.1.13.24.05, a letter from Andargačäw Mäsay to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no 17/2, dated 5 Ţeqemet 1940 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.17.27, a letter from Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office to Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 18688/621, dated 21 Nähasé 1946 E.C.
[84]NALAE code17.1.13.17.27, a letter from Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office to Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 18688/621, dated 21 Nähasé 1946 E.C.
[85]NGAZRO, a letter from *Däjjazmač* Hagos Täsäma (governor of Chilga *Awraja*) to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, Ref.no,504/39, dated 5 Ţeqemet 1939 E.C.
[86]Informants: Abuhay, Alämnäh, and Sisay; Angaregé, 176-177.

Däjjazmač Hagos Täsäma, governor of Quara *Abägaz* (1942-45) and Chilga *Awraja* (1946-1951). Source: NGAZRO Patriotic Association office

Removing them from their position and transferring them from one position to another position was common in Chilga sub-province like other areas in the province. Since the local officials had no modern education, they lacked the determination to execute the responsibilities mentioned in the administrative regulation.[87] Most of the local officials governed the people in the form of the earlier period. They collected money and gifts from the people despite the injunctions against this in the 1942 regulation.

Some of the local officials were incompetent and irresponsible and hence there was local opposition against them. For instance, *Fitawrari* Täšagär Abetäw, the governor of Chilga district, was said to have been corrupt, collected bribe and tribute from the local people and was in disagreement with his colleagues. He was removed and replaced by Abreha Mäšäša two years later. Similarly, *Qäňazmač* Käbädä Wändemagäň, the governor of Chaqo sub-district, and *Qäňazmač* Fäläqä Yimär, the governor of Wähni sub-district, did not take measures to stop the local brigands from robbing caravan merchants while traveling to and from the Sudan. Thus,

[87] Informants: Abuhay, Alämnäh, and Sisay.

Käbädä and Fäläqä were removed from their positions in May 1947.[88] The two sub-districts amalgamated as Chaqo sub-district and *Gerazmač* Agedäw Täkola was appointed its governor. Täfära Wasé, governor of Quara-Um Idla in 1946/47, imposed various tribute and forced the people of the district to construct administrative offices. He also forced the Gumuz to pay a higher amount of tribute by changing one *qel mar* tribute which was paid before annually into three *qel mar* tribute: one *qel* in October, one *qel* in March and one *qel* in June. He was also forced them to pay $ 8 *berr* from each house to *färäsäňas* (or *gult gäž*).[89]Soon Täfära Wasé was transferred as governor of Mätäma district in 1949 while Dämes Bärihun was appointed as governor of Quara-Um Idela. Similarly, Ayälä Täsäma, the governor of Aykäl sub-district, illegally increased the amount of the 1949/50 *asrat* that the *awraja* officials first allotted on the sub-district. The local people brought petitions and charged Ayälä to the *awraja* administrative office and Ayälä was fined.[90] In 1954, he was transferred from Aykäl to Jända sub-district, in Dämbiya, in Gondar *Awraja*.[91]

Not all local officials in Chilga sub-province were incompetent. Some of them were mentioned as being responsible and capable. For instance, *Fitawrari* Beţul Täsäma, the first governor of Aläfa-Ţaqusa from 1946 to1947, worked hard in hunting bandits and bringing peace and stability in the district. Before his transfer to the governorship of Aläfa-Ţaqusa, he was a judge of the district of Mätäma to Reb. In 1948, he was promoted as the first judge of Bägémder and Semén

[88]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, Ref. no. 43/3792, dated 16 Nähasé 1939 E.C.
[89]NGAZRO, a petition from Quara people representatives to the Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, dated 8 Miyaziya 1940 E.C.
[90]NGAZRO, a meeting minutes chaired by Hagos, dated 4 Yäkatit 1942 E.C and 21 Yäkatit 1942 E.C; a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Chilga District Administrative Office, Ref. no.2762/40, dated 8 Mägabit 1942 E.C; a meeting minuts chaired by chaired by *Ato* Käbbädä Abozen (the principal secretary of the governorate), dated 18 Nähasé 1943 E.C.
[91]NGAZRO, a letter from Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office to Kasa Mäšäša (governor of Gondar *Awraja*) Ref. No. 9795/62, dated 14 Mägabit 1943 E.C.

province and he served in that position until 1955. Similarly *Fitawrari* Haylu Täsäma, the governor of Mätäma district from 1946 to1949, who was a *nägadras* and chief of the Mätäma custom post in the early 1940s, was said to have been an capable governor, familiar with the new administrative system, experienced and kind to the local people.[92] He is still popular among the inhabitants of Mätäma. As was the case at national, provincial and *awraja* levels, the governors of the four districts of Chilga *Awraja* from 1946 to the early 1960s remained in their positions for a short period.

Most *awraja* governors in Bägémder and Semén Province during the post-liberation period were frequently transferred from one *awraja* to another *awraja*. This gave a chance to the governors to employ a similar administrative system in the *awrajas* they were appointed. Some of them became governors of an *awraja* for the second time as in Gäsäsä Räta's case in Gayint and Däbrä Tabor *awrajas* indicates. In some *awrajas,* governors held the position until he retired. For instance, *Däjjazmač* Kasa Mäšäša was the governor of Gondar *Awraja* from 1946 to1966 and *Däjjazmač* Adanä Mäkonnän was the governor of Wägära *Awraja* for about 27 years (first from 1946-1951 and a second time from 1953 to 1974).[93] However, for unknown reason, there was no governor who was appointed for the second time and they were not native to Chilga sub-province until the end of the imperial period. This indicates that Chilga *Awraja* was a frontier area in the provincial administration of Bägémder and Semén, since center-periphery relations is manifested not only in geographical terms but also it is marginalization in the power relations.

[92] NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Täsäma to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Administrative Office, Ref. no. 43 /3792, dated 16 Nähasé 1939 E.C.
[93] various archival documents.

Governors of Chilga *Awraja* frequently changed in the early 1950s. *Däjjazmač* Hagos, the popular governor of Chilga *Awaraja*, was transferred from Chilga to Semén *Awraja* in June 1951 and he remained in that position until his natural death in December1956. The main factor for his transfer was the expansion of banditry in Semén. Bandits robbed caravans and cars travelling from Gondar to Asmara, the only all-weather road of the province.[94] *Däjjazmač* Adanä Mäkonnän, a native of Wälqayt-Ţägädé, replaced Hagos as governor of Chilga *Awraja* in June 1951 and he remained in tenure until October 1952, when he returned to the governorship of Wägära *awraja*.[95] Since Adane's period was for a year and a few months, it is difficult to discuss his administration in Chilga *Awraja*. On the other direction, *Däjjazmač* Molla Mäšäša, a native of Ebenat and the governor of Wägära *Awraja*, was transferred to the governorship of Chilga *Awraja* in October 1952 and remained in his tenure until April 1957.[96] *Däjjazmač* Molla was not popular in his administration of Chilga *Awraja* since he was an Italian collaborator in the first year of the occupation. The local people disrespected him and he did not control bandits and local instability began to expand, especially along the lowland bordering the Sudan.[97] Molla also sometimes communicated directly administrative cases with sub-district officials by circumventing district governors and this created administrative difficulty among local officials. Sub-districts' officials became irresponsible to the district governors.[98] Subsequently, he was transferred to the governor of his native and newly founded Libo *Awraja* in April 1957 and Aye'aya Gäbrämäden was appointed governor of Chilga *Awraja*.[99]

[94] Negarit Gazeta, General Notice no 165 of 1953; Andargé, 18; Informants: Abuhay, and Alämnäh.
[95] Negarit Gazeta, Genral Notice No.147 of 1951; Negarit Gazeta Generala Notice No.158 of 1952.
[96] Negarit Gazeta, Notice No.158 of 1952; Addis Zemen, "Zéna Eräfet - governor Molla Mäšäša", 18 Ţer 1961 E.C.
[97] Informants. Sinor, Abuhay, and Sisay.
[98] NGAZRO, a letter from Dämes Bärihun (governor of Chilga District) to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, Ref. no.516/62/48, dated 19 Tahsas 1948 E.C.
[99] Nägarit Gazeta, General Notice no. 227 of 1957.

The administration of Chilga sub-province should be examined in connection with the governor-generals of the province to analyze further the center-periphery relations. At the national level, there was shifting of provincial governors constantly from one province to another after liberation as "caution against entrenchment and potential political consequences."[100] Based on this, the governor-generals of Bägémder and Semén province after *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay (Jan.1946 - Sept.1952) were constantly changed until the early 1960s. *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa (for the second time, Sept.1952 - Feb.1956), Maj. Gen. Märed Mängäša (Feb.1956 - Dec.1957), *Däjjazmač* Keflé Dadi (Dec.1957 - Feb.1961), and *Däjjazmač* Ameha Abära (Feb.1961 - May 1962) were appointed successively over the province.[101] They stayed on their positions for a short period and left it without knowing well the character of the local people and its officials. Most of them spent their time confined in their office without visiting the various areas of the province, although the 1942 administrative regulation required them to visit and inspect every district twice a year. The contemporary work of Donald Levine, who was in Gondar for field research in the late 1950s, strengthens how the local officials and the people did not cooperate with them as follows:

> In accord with Haile Sellassie's program of centralization, the chief provincial administrators in Gondar are not local men. This has created a subtle problem for the national government. […] As a result, Shoans in high offices at Gondar have found themselves boycotted by the natives. Their wishes have frequently been ignored by local subordinates or the local populace. They have not been invited to take in the social life of the Gondaries. All this has made the lots of Shoan emissaries in Gondar frustrating and lonely.[102]

[100] Markakis, *Ethiopia*…, 293.
[101] Negarit Gazeta, General Notices No.154 of 1952, no. 218 of 1956, no.234 of 1957, no.286 of 1961, no.305 of 1962, no.341 of 1965.
[102] Levine, *Wax & Gold…,* 47.

Thus, it is difficult to describe and analyze broadly a system of administration that the governor-generals carried out in general on Bägémder and Semén and in particular on Chilga *Awraja*. Some of them were corrupt. For instance, like his first phase, in his second governorship of the province, *Däjjazmač* Asratä embezzled about $5,757.80 *berr* from the money sent for the maintenance of Fasil Castles,[103] although he later on paid back it with litigation process. Most of them did not install law and order in the province. Especially the local instability on the lowlands along the border with the Sudan, in and around Mätäma, persisted throughout the imperial period. Maj.Gen Märed Mängäša, Asratä's successor, considered local criminal activities that were committed in the province as a normal and common practice by saying "**ከዚህ ጠቅላይ ግዛት ከሚታወቀዉ ከተለመደዉ የእርስ በርስ ወንጀሉ በስተቀር ጠቅላላ ጸጥታዉ ደህና ነዉ።**"[104] (In this province, as it is known, except the common crimes committed among the people, the general security is well). Märed might have considered the security of the province only as it was free from opposition against the government; he did not consider public security which was the main task of governors. Despite his letter, Märed set up a new *awraja* named Libo in 1957, by taking Ebenat district from Däbrä Tabor *Awraja* and Bäläsa and Kämekäm-Qaroda districts from Gondar *Awraja*.[105] Märed realized that the geographical wideness of the six *awrajas* in the province was one of the factors that the *awraja* governors faced the difficulty to administer the area. This was coupled with lack of all-weather road network that connected the sub-provinces. Hence they had to be arranged in a manageable way.

[103] NGAZRO, a letter from *Däjjazmač* Keflé Dadi (*Endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén) to the Ministry of Finance, Ref. no.18061/23/51, dated 2 Miyaziya 1951 E.C; a letter from Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no 1563/2/52, dated 20 Tahsas 1952 E.C.
[104]NALAE code 2.2.97.09, letter from Maj. Gen. Märed Mängäša to Crown Prince Asefawäsän, no Ref.no. dated 8 Hedar 1949 E.C.
[105]Addis Zemen, "YäBägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat: Yä Libo Awraja Gezat", 20 Ţer 1952 E.C.

Some of the governor-generals tried their best to handle administrative difficulty and local insecurity. As the available sources indicated, *Däjjazmač* Keflé Dadi (Dec.1957-Feb.1961) was relatively a better governor-general than his predecessors. He was the first governor-general to visit Chilga *awraja* as far as Mätäma. He encouraged Are'aya, the governor of Chilga, in repairing and opening the road that Italy constructed during the occupation.[106] When Keflé returned to Gondar from Mätäma, his car was unable to travel the difficult road and he returned on horseback. When he arrived at Säraba, he renamed it as Gänät Mädhaniyalem, to show how much the road from Säraba to Mätäma was difficult for motor transport.[107]

Däjjazmač Keflé also helped the Gumuz, Kunfäl and Qemant representatives to submit their complaints and petitions to the emperor in his May 1959 visit of Bägémder and Semén province, although this was not unique to him. After expressing their happiness with the establishment of schools, churches and embracing Christianity, the Gumuz requested the emperor to abolish *amešo*, tribute in honey and goats (*melemel*) that were cancelled by the emperor as of 1946. They indicated that although the various tribute of the pre-1935 was cancelled across the country after liberation, they have continued to pay in Quara and they requested their rescinding. The emperor promised them that officials would not collect these and ordered them not to pay tribute that had no legal bases.[108] The Qemant traditional religious leaders expressed to the emperor the discrimination they had faced from the surrounding Christians in the course of following their traditional religion. The emperor promised them that no one should prevent them from practicing their religion. In addition to giving medal, *nišan*, honorable titles, and money incentives to the

[106] Informants: Haylé, Sisay, and Abuhay; Addis Zemen, "Gondar-YäMätäma Mängäd Täkäfätä", 7 Sänä 1950 E.C.
[107] Informant: Abuhay.
[108]NGAZRO, a petition from Gumuz representatives to the Emperor, dated 11 Genbot 1951 E.C; a petition from Kunfäl and Gumuz representatives to Bägémder and Semén governor-general office, dated 23 Hedar 1952 E.C.

former resistance fighters, the emperor also declared to the people of the province that the arrears of taxes and *asrat* from 1947 to 1957 was cancelled.[109] By so doing, the emperor, as he did in 1946, tried to minimize the discontent of the local people on the government.

Realizing the problem of banditry and local instability on the areas along the border with the Sudan and the importance of increasing *awrajas* in the province for administrative suitability, *Däjjazmač* Ameha Abära (February 1961 – May 1962), Asratä's nephew, tried to set up a new *awraja* in the area. Learning from Maj.Gen.Märed's work, *Däjjazmač* Ameha proposed to set up a new *awraja* that would include the districts of Quara, Mahbärä Selasé, Mätäma, Tač Armacheho and Sätit-Humära with an administrative center to be at Mätäma town.[110] However, the proposal was not adopted probably due to lack of finance to cover the administrative cost.

The administration of Chilga sub-province under the governorship of Are'aya Gäbrämäden (gov.1957-1966) was characterized by a mixture of positive and negative features. Are'aya was born in Däbrä Tabor and grew up in Wägära where he was the district governor before his transfer to Chilga *Awraja*. Although Aye'aya was himself an Italian collaborator, he was popular among the local people for punishing bandits,[111] and his appointment in Chilga *Awraja* was designed to tackle bandits. Aye'aya's period in the sub-province is remembered among local elders in various ways. He governed the sub-province for a relatively longer period until 1966. He was known in the area for his effort to eliminate bandits and thieves and tried to bring stability especially in his early years. Using the technique of *aferesata* (a system of identifying thieves and bandits through gathering of local people in villages), he put many thieves and

[109]Mastaweqiya Ministry, *YäAbay Wuha Lemat Mäjämäriya Mäsärät* (Addis Ababa: Neged Printing Press, 1951 E.C), 133, 167.
[110]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu to the Ministry of Interior, no.Ref.no, dated 13 Tahsas 1960 E.C.
[111] Debash, 90.

bandits in prison. He had different sizes of sticks named by Saints and Angels of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as "YäMädehaniyaläm dulla", "YäGäbrél dulla" and "YäMika'él dulla" for flogging bandits and thieves. He beat them depending on the physical size of a bandits and a thief; "YäMädehaniyaläm dulla", which was said to be bigger in size was for muscular bandits and thieves, and "YäGäbrél and YäMika'él dulla" were for physically weak bandits and thieves.[112] Instead of spending his time in administering the *awraja* properly, Are'aya was interested and engaged in farming his extensive lands in Chilga district. He had many hectares of farming lands in the district and harvested *ţéff*. He ordered the local farmers to cultivate his land. It is said that hundreds of oxen farmers were engaged in plowing, seeding, and weeding and several cattle were slaughtered for the farmers involved in such tasks. He also gave *ţäj* and *ţälla* (local beer) to the farmers.[113]

Are'aya also encouraged the local people to involve in local development works. He led the people in repairing the Italian constructed road from Aykäl to Mätäma and then to Guang River annually. With the contributions of the local people in the form of money and labor, Are'aya constructed several government offices in the sub-province.[114] However, Are'aya was criticized for using forceful practices in these activities. He was accused of using corvee labor which was against the 1955 revised constitution that had eliminated forced labor. Are'aya forced the people to pay $11 *berr* per house for the construction of government offices. If individuals did not participate in repairing roads, they were fined $5 *berr* per house.[115] Engedaw Asfaw and

[112] Informants: Sisay, Haylé, Abuhay, and Taddäsä.
[113] Informants: Sisay, Haylé, Abuhay, and Abära.
[114] NGAZRO, a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämäden to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, Ref. no.3427/44, dated 3 Miyaziya 1954 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Haylé, and Abuhay.
[115]NGAZRO; a letter from Engedaw Asfaw to the Chamber of Deputies Office, Ref.no 74/54, dated 5 Miyaziya 1954 E.C; a letter from Senešaw Bitäw to Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.5/54, dated 27 Mägabit 1954 E.C.

Senešaw Bitäw, members of the Chamber of Deputies representing Chilga *Awraja*, informed the people of Chilga presenting themselves on markets and funeral ceremonies that forced labor is unconstitutional and they should not work without their consent. As a result, the people refused to work forcefully and it was difficult to complete the works already started.[116]

The other criticism of Are'aya's period was his passiveness in controlling his lower officials while they imposed burden of taxes and tribute on the local people and this is assessed in the next sub-section that examines the incompetence of the imperial government in centralizing the financial sector/ taxation in Chilga *Awraja*.

Taxation and Tribute

The burden of tax and tribute was one of the source of grievances of the people in Chilga *Awraja* in the post liberation period. The types of taxes that land owning peasants paid to the government were land tax, *asrat* (tithe), education tax (since 1947), and health tax (since 1960). As archival records indicate, partly because the amount of tax paid was high, peasants were not able to pay it on time. Therefore, there were arrears of tax among the people year after year and these arrears were mostly cancelled when the emperor visited the province. Although the imperial government repealed all customary forms of services and tribute paid to local officials and the peasants were required to pay tax only to the government by the revised 1944 land tax proclamation,[117] the payment of various forms of tribute to local officials had continued. The feudal classes opposed the abolition of the customary forms of tribute that the peasants paid to the *färäsäňa* or *gult gäž* (lit. governor of a *gult* land in a parish). They were successful in their resistance and continued to

[116]NGAZRO, a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämäden to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, Ref. no.3427/44, dated 3 Miyaziya 1954 E.C.
[117] Negarit Gazeta, "Land Tax Proclamation", Proclamation No. 70 of 1944.

receive tribute partly since they manipulated the peasant attitude in the struggle against the center.[118]Thus the feudal classes were one of the obstacles to the imperial government effort to centralize the financial system in frontier areas like Chilga *Awraja*.

The types of tribute that people paid to local officials varied from locality to locality in Chilga sub-province. The tribute was converted into an estimated cash and paid in *berr*. One of these tributes was *amešo* which was a one-fifth of the farmers' produce paid to the *gult gäž* or *färäsäňa*. They were official who holds *gult* rights over an estate. A *färäsäňa* was a local official appointed on a locality of every church parish (except in a monastery parish) by local government officials and their main task was to maintain law and order, collect taxes, hunt criminals, implement justice and government order in their respective church parishes. Until the introduction of *aţebiya daňa* (local judge in a parish) in 1947, they were also authorized to resolve local disputes. Like the *aţebiya daňa,* there was no *färäsäňa* assigned in a monastery parish. *Amešo* was considered as *madäriya* for the *färäsäňa*.[119] The term of his service was either temporary or hereditary. When his task (*gult* right) became hereditary, it was termed as *restägult* and it was commonly given to the members of ruling family and the higher nobility.[120] Several nobility in Bägémder and Semén obtained *restgult* after liberation from the Italians. As the available source indicates, in Chilga sub-province *Däjjazmač* Bäzabeh Zälläläw had *restgult* on three parishes (Kebina Mareyam, Dengolesa Mareyam, and Menébakes Mikael) and a woman

[118] Markakis and Nega, 36-39.
[119] *Yä-Agär Gezat Ministér Mäşehét* (Bulletin) 1st year No.5 (Addis Ababa, 16 Tahesas 1954 E.C), 13; Allan Hoben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 5-6, 208-209.
[120]Markakis, *Ethiopia*…, 83-84.

named *Emeté* Yetaketu Guangul had *restgult* on nine parishes in Tänkäl sub-district, granted in 1949/50.[121]

The Gumuz and Kunfäl of Quara-Um Idla were among the people of Chilga sub-province who were forced to pay various tribute to local officials despite the regulations regarding the end of tribute across the country. The burden of tribute and tax especially after 1947 was a source of grievance. The transfer of land south of Ayima into Gojjam province in the late 1940s led to not only local opposition against the imperial government but also the decline of the tax to Quara treasury and tribute to Quara officials. It might be to compensate the loss that local officials of Quara increased the amount of tax and tribute on Gumuz and Kunfäl. In 1948, Täfära Wasé, the governor of Quara, changed the annual one *qel mar* (lit. a calabash of honey) tax that was paid among the Gumuz in each house in the earlier years into three *qel mar*: one *qel mar* in October, one *qel mar* in March, and one *qel mar* in June. He also forced them to pay $ 8 *berr* from each house to the *färäsäňa*. Moreover, Quara officials imposed annually a $2 *berr* tribute on a Gumuz adult boy who did not marry.[122] Since the district was a sparsely populated area, the tax collected from the local people and allocated government budget to the district were not sufficient to cover the administrative cost of the local officials. Thus, to pay for the expense of non-salaried local officials like *färäsäňa* various forms of tribute were imposed on the Gumuz and Kunfäl.

The Gumuz protested against Täfära Wasé's action and wrote petitions against Quara officials for forcing them to pay various kinds of tribute that have been officially revoked by the imperial government. They elicited a response from *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay, the governor-general

[121]NGAZRO, an incomplete document that indicated the name of the restgult holder, the *awraja*, sub-district and parishes that the restgult founded, and the date of the restgult granted.
[122]NGAZRO, a petition from Quara people representatives to the Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, dated 8 Miyaziya 1940 E.C.

of the province, who passed an order in March 1948 to Chilga *Awraja* and Quara governors regarding the collection of *asrat*, *amešo* and other tribute from the Gumuz. He changed the tribute in *mar* (honey) into cash form paid in *berr*. Accordingly, it was to be paid annually $5 *berr* for *asrat* to the government; and in place of honey tribute, $10 *berr amešo* was to be collected on every Gumuz house (*ʇis*) for the *färäsäňas*. Every Kunfäl house had to pay $5 *berr* as *asrat* and $6 *berr* as *amešo*.[123] This difference in *amešo* paid by the Kunfäl and Gumuz was due to the difference in the quality of the land resource between the two ethnic groups; the Gumuz lived in a more resourceful land and were better off economically than the Kunfäl.[124]

With the introduction of new government tax like education tax in the late 1940s, the burden of tax and tribute on the Gumuz increased further. In August 1949, the amount of *asrat* to be paid was raised to $ 7.50 *berr* ($ 2.5 *berr* added was for education tax); and the Gumuz and Kunfal paid tax for some years based on this regulation.[125] Since the amount of tax imposed on them was heavy, the Gumuz submitted petitions to the different levels of the provincial government demanding reduction of tax. Due to burden of tribute and taxes, some of the Gumuz deserted their localities in Quara for Gojjam in 1950.[126] However, Alämu Mängäša governor of Quara from 1949 to 1963, wrote to Gojjam officials as if the migrated Gumuz and Kunfäl were criminals who left Quara by committing crimes.[127]

[123]NGAZRO, a letter from Andargačäw Mäsay to the governor of Quara-Um Idela, Ref.no.5973/39, dated 4 Mägabit 1940 E.C.
[124]NGAZRO, a meeting minute of Bägémder and Semén Ṭäqelay Gezat higher officials, dated 21 Hamlé 1948 E.C
[125]NGAZRO, a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämäden to Bägémder and Semén ṬäqelayGezat, Ref. no. 1972/39, dated 16 Tahsas 1954 E.C.
[126]NGAZRO, letters from Chilga *Awraja* Gezat to Bägémder and Semén Ṭäqelay Gezat, Ref. no. 5095/12, dated 28 Hamlé 1942 E.C and Ref. no. 5652/12, dated 3 Pagumé 1942 E.C.
[127]NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Andargačäw Mäsay, Ref. no.29/19345, dated 30 Miyaziya 1944E.C; a letter from *Käntiba* Dästa Meteké (governor of Bälaya district) to Gojjam Governorate-General, Ref.no.190/7, dated 21 Tahsas 1944 E.C.

In the mid-1950s, the provincial and Chilga sub-province officials tried to improve by reducing the amount of tribute that the Gumuz and Kunfal paid. There were 39 *färäsäňas* in the two sub-districts of Quara in 1956. However, due to the flight of the Gumuz from Quara to other areas because of the burden of taxes and tribute, the number of *färäsäňas* in the district had been reduced from 39 to 33 *färäsäňas*. In the same year, the then governor-general, Maj.Gen. Märed Mängäša, with other officials, including Alämu Mängäša, discussed the issue of Gumuz tax and tribute. Finally, after warning and admonishing Alämu, Märed lowered the amount of *amešo* from $6 *berr* to $5 *berr* for the Kunfäl and from $ 10 *berr* to $6 *berr* for the Gumuz per house to be paid annually.[128] The admonition, however, did not deter Alämu Mängäša from introducing a new tribute on the Gumuz. He introduced about $ 10 *berr*, on each Gumuz house as *Yäsuri mätaţäqiya* (for trouser tie on), Yämar (lit.for honey) and Yäfeyäl (lit. for goat).[129] This shows that how much local officials on the frontier disregarded the centralization effort of the imperial government.

The imposition of various kinds of tribute and *amešo* on the Gumuz also brought opposition from *Mämeher* La'ekä Mareyam Berru, who was the head of the Mahbärä Selasé Monastery in the early 1950s and assigned to preach Christianity, construct churches and schools among the Gumuz as part of the state project of cultural integration or homogenization. La'ekä Mareyam accused Alämu Mängäša and his associates for the misery of the Gumuz in Quara and stressed

[128]NGAZRO, letters from Märed Mängäša (Governor-General of Bägémder and Semén) to governor of Chilga *Awraja*, Ref.no.8348/39, dated 9 Yäkatit 1948 E.C and Ref.no.15797/39-44, dated 27 Hamlé 1948 E.C; a meeting minute of Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelat Gezat higher officials, dated 21 Hamlé 1948 E.C.
[129]NGAZRO, a letter from the principal secretary of Bägémder and Semén Governorate to *Dajjazmač* Molla Mäšäša (governor of Chilga *Awraja*), Ref.no.10415/39/48, dated 12 Miyaziya 1948 E.C. *Yäsuri mätaţäqiya* was a kind of tribute imposed on the Gumuz by Alämu Mängäša in the name of girding on his trouser.

that they were obstacles for his work. And he asked the governorate-general for the possible improvement of the tribute paid by the Gumuz.[130]

Gumuz and Kunfal representatives continued to submit petitions to the government for the reduction of tax and tribute imposed on them. They had the opportunity to submit their petition directly to Emperor Haile Sellassie I in May 1959, when he visited Bägémder and Semén.[131] The emperor discussed the Gumuz's case with *Dajjazmač* Keflé Dadi (the then *endärasé* of the province) and decided that the Gumuz and the Kunfäl should not pay tribute in honey and goats (*melemel*). However, Keflé made it clear to the emperor that cancelling the payment of *amešo* was difficult because it had negative ramification on local security and administration.[132] For instance, there were 42 *färäsäňas* assigned to different Kunfäl and Gumuz localities in Quara in 1960 (30 and 12 *färäsäňas* on the Gumuz and Kunfäl respectively). These *färäsäňas*, who were all Amhara, were local officials engaged in administering and collecting tax from the local people. However, if *amešo* paid to *färäsäňas* was abolished, the position of the *färäsäňa* in the local administration would be abolished too and these *färäsäňa* would be without administrative position and source of income. Moreover, managing the security of the areas would be difficult without them because they played key role in keeping law and order.[133]

Dajjazmač Keflé even had a plan in which he proposed to increase the amount of *asrat* to be collected from the Gumuz and to cancel *amešo*. Then from the collected *asrat* he planned to pay

[130]NGAZRO, a petition from *Mämeher* La'ekä Mareyam to Bägémder and Semén Ṭäqelat Gezat Office, dated 11 Säné 1948 E.C.
[131]NGAZRO, a petition from Gumuz representatives to the emperor, dated 11 Genbot 1951 E.C; a petition from Kunfäl and Gumuz representatives to Bägémder and Semén governor-general office, dated 23 Hedar 1952 E.C.
[132] NGAZRO, a petition of Gumuz to the Bägémder and Semén Ṭäqelay Gezat Office, dated 14 Hamlé 1961 E.C.
[133] NGAZRO, a letter from Keflé Dadi to the Ministry of Pen, Ref. no. 9908 /39 /44, dated 28 Yäkatit 1952 E.C.

some annual salary to the *färäsäňas*.[134] It appeared, however, very difficult to implement the idea of Keflé for unknown reasons. Perhaps this was because his plan had no legal base or breached the regulation of civil servants. Employing individuals who had no qualification into the administrative structure and paying salary to them would create difficulty that the central government would not control. This might further deteriorate the effort of the central government to integrate the frontier.

Gumuz and Kunfäl representatives faced additional problem from Quara officials when they returned to their localities after presenting petitions to provincial officials in Gondar. In one of their petitions, they expressed this as follows:

> **በቋራ ወረዳ ግዛት የምንገኝ ቆለኞችና ባሪያ የማር ግብር ክፈሉ ተብለን ያላግባብ በየጊዜው እንከፍላለን፣ አሁንም በመክፈል ላይ ስለምንገኝ እንዳንከፍል ተዕዛዝ ይተላለፍልን ብለን በ 51ዓ.ም ግርማዊ ጃንሆይ በጌምድርን ለመጎብኘት ጎንደር መጥተዉ በነበረ ጊዜ አመልክተን የማር ግብር እንዳይከፍሉ የሚል ትዕዛዝ በቁጥር 12910/39/44 ግንቦት 24 ቀን 51ዓ.ም የተጻፈ ተሰጥቶን ወስደን ለወረዳዉ ግዛት ብንሰጥ እንኳንስ በትዕዛዙ መሰርት ግብሩ ሊነቀልልን ለምን ደብዳቤ አመጣችሁ ተብለን ብዙ መንገላታት ደርሶብናል ….**[135]
>
> We the Qoläňoč (Lowlanders or Kunfäl) and Baria [sic. Gumuz] live in Quara district are asked to pay honey tribute improperly and have been paying this regularly. In 1959 when *Janhoy* (Emperor Haile Sellassie) visited Gondar we submitted a petition asking for the abolition of this tribute. *Janhoy* gave us a letter which ordered that we should not be asked to pay honey tribute anymore. But when we gave this letter to the district governor, rather than removing the tribute, he further mistreated us for bringing the letter.

When they failed to get a proper response to their petitions, Gumuz and the Kunfäl representatives argued that their ethnic difference from the Amhara was partly the cause for their mistreatment in Quara. One of their petitions wrote in 1959 partly says:

> **[...] 1ኛ በቋራ ወረዳ አማራዉ ህዝብ የፈረሰኛ አበል አይከፍልም መሬቱ እንዳይባል ከቆላዉም አማራ አለ ከደጋዉም የኛ ወገን አለ ይኸዉም አማራዉና ቆለኛዉ ከአንድ ቤት**

[134]NGAZRO, a letter from Keflé Dadi to the Ministry of Pen, Ref. no. 9908 /39 /44, dated 28 Yäkatit 1952 E.C .
[135] NGAZRO, a petition of Gumuz to the Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Office, dated 14 Hamlé 1961 E.C.

የተቀመጡ እንደሆነ አማራዉ በአማራነቱ ብቻ ነጻ ሲያገኝ የኛ ሰዉ ቆለኛ ተብሎ ግብር ይከፍላል….[136]

The Amhara in Quara do not pay *amešo* for the *färäsäňa.* It cannot be said that this was due to the nature of the settlement pattern of the groups. There are Amhara who live in the lowlands and our people who settle in the highlands. Even when the Amhara and the Qoläňoč (Lowlanders or Kunfäl) settle in the same village, the Amhara due to their Amhara ethnicity are exempted from paying tribute while our people are called Qoläňoč and are made to pay tribute.

The above petition was partly wrong. Their claim that they had lived in the highlands of Quara is invalid. They had lived only in the lowlands. Their idea that the Amhara in Quara did not pay *amešo* for the *färäsäňa* is valid. The Amhara in Quara were privileged area in the local administration for being free from not only paying *amešo* for the *färäsäňa* but also other forms of tribute to local officials. This idea is strengthened by investigations made by officials under the order of *Dajjazmač* Ameha Abära (the governor-general), *Fitawrari* Bäqälä Zäläläw (director of the province) and *Dajjazmač* Are'aya (governor of Chilga *Awraja*) to investigate whether ethnic difference has been a basis for imposing different types of tribute over the population in Quara.[137]Are'aya rejected the allegation that ethnic difference has been a factor in tribute collection in the district. He reported the Amhara and Gumuz/ Kunfäl did not live together in a single village. He also noted that in the highlands of Quara, where the Amhara were settled there was no tradition of paying *amešo* to the *färäsäňa*.[138] Thus, according to Are'aya it was not ethnic difference but rather settlement pattern that was behind the difference in tribute payment in the

[136]NGAZRO, a petition of Kunfäl and Gumuz representatives to Bägémder and Semén Governor-General Office, dated 23 Hedar 1952 E.C.
[137] NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Are'aya Gäbrämäden, Ref.no. 6214/39/44, dated 13 Tahsas 1954 E.C.
[138] NGAZRO, a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämäden to Bägémder and Semén Ţäqelay Gezat, Ref. no.1972/39, dated 16 Tahsas 1954 E.C.

district. Although the imperial government cancelled the position of *gult* in 1966, the Gumuz and Kunfäl continued to pay these tribute until the end of the imperial regime.[139]

Outside of the Gumuz and Kunfäl localities, different kinds of tribute and tax were also collected from the people in Chilga sub-province in the post liberation period. Especially, in the period of Are'aya the amount of payment of tribute increased and the local people expressed their grievance on Are'aya's administration. One of the petitions of the population of Aläfa against Are'aya in 1961 reads as follow:

> … እርስተኛዉ ጭቅነት ሲሾም ለጉልት ገኘዉ $ 2 ብር ብቻ በዓመት ይከፍላል። […] አሁን ግን ያ ተሸሮብን $ ፮ ብር ከ50 ሳንቲም የማር የስራ ማስኬጃ እያሉ ይከፈሉናል [ያስከፍሉናል]፤ ፪ ኛ/ ግብዝና ስንሾም መንፈሳዊ ጉባኤ ዳኞች የአፄ በረከት እያሉ ከገበዙ $4 ብር ከ50 ሳንቲም ይከፈሉናል [እንከፍላለን]፤ 3ኛ/ ለፈረሰኛ ጥለት በአስራቱ ልክ [እንከፍላለን]፤ 4ኛ/ ከአስራቱ ጋር ተጨማሪ የምንከፍለዉ የትምህርት ታክስ ሀገራችን ጠረፍ በመሆኑና አስተማሪ ባለማግኘታችን ልጆቻችን በድንቁርና ተሸፍነዉ ይገኛሉ፤ 5ኛ/ ስለ ጤና ጥበቃ ተብሎ በ፼፪ ዓ.ም የተጨመረዉን ግብር ወይም ሆስፒታል ኑሮ በሽታችን አልዳንበት ወይም መኪና መንገድ ኑሮ በሽተኛዉን ሆስፒታል ወዳለበት ለመዉሰድ አልቻልን፤ ስለዚህ ከአንድ እስከ 5ተራ ቁጥር የተዘረዘረዉን ጉዳትና ተጨማሪ ግብር እንዲነሳልን በማክበር እናመለክታለን፤ አለፉ በሙሉ።።[140]

> … when *balabates* appointed as *chiqa Šum*, they were paid only $2 *berr* annually to *gult gaž* […] Now, however, this is cancelled and we pay $ 6.50 *berr* as honey and work follow up. Second, when *gäbäzes* are appointed they pay $ 4.50 *berr* as *aṣé bäräkät* to ecclesiastical council and judges. Thirdly, we pay to the *färäsäňa* equal to *asrat*. Fourthly, we pay education tax together with *asrat*, however, there is no school in our area since it is a frontier; we cannot teach our children and they are living with illiteracy. Fifth, we pay health tax since 1960, but there are no health centers in our area that could be used to cure from our diseases or there is no constructed road to use it to transport our patients to areas where hospitals are found. Therefore, we appeal to remove the additional tax and all the cases mentioned from one to five. All people of Aläfa!

[139]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu (*Endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén) to Färädä Ţerunäh (Governor of Chilga *Awraja*), Ref.no. 2835/4217/39, dated 7 Nähasé 1961 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.17.13, a letter from Lt. Yigzaw Asemälaš (Commander of Chilga *Awraja* Police) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate-General Police Office, Ref. no. 3/12/7/63, dated 21 Mägabit 1965 E.C.

[140]WMTMAC, folder no. **በጌምድር**, a petition of Aläfa people to Emperor Haile Sellasie, dated 5 Mägabit 1953 E.C; a petition letter from *Gerazmač* Ayälä Čäkol (Chilga people representative in the Chamber of Deputies) to *Gerazmač* Gäbrä Kerestos Wäldämickael (president of the Chamber of Deputies), dated 10 Miyaziya 1953 E.C

The above petition indicated that the people of Aläfa paid tax to the government and different kinds of tribute to local officials and church officials during the post-liberation period. They indicated that the amount of different kinds of tribute increased in the period of Are'aya. They also expressed how much their area was a frontier that lacked various infrastructural and social services. Therefore, they indicate paying tax for the government has been improper.

The people Chilga district also faced a similar grievance in paying tax to government and different kinds of tribute to local officials in the post-liberation period. Especially it was high in the period of Are'aya and the people criticized his administration. The farmers who went to the markets of Gäläděba and Aykäl towns to sell commodities were forced to pay tax. It was difficult to bring *abujaded* to the markets because government officials simply confiscated as if it was a contraband item.[141]

The provincial officials examined the petitions of local people in different districts of Chilga *Awraja* and took measures. For his oppressive administration in Chilga *Awraja*, higher provincial officials fined and censured Are'aya.[142] However, to cover his administrative incompetency, Are'aya was involved indirectly in the production of a fake petition which submitted to the Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu, *enderasé* of the province in December 1966. The petition expressed the administration of Are'aya in Chilga *Awraja* has been good to the local people and they wanted him to remain their governor.[143] Suspecting its validity, Tamrat Yegäzu referred the petition to the police for investigation. The police examined the petition and found out that it was forged by

[141]NGAZRO; a petition from Alämnäh Bälay and Täklé Räda (members of the Chamber of Deputies representing Chilga people) to the Ministry of Interior, dated 9 Nähasé 1959 E.C.
[142] NGAZRO, minutes of the governorate-gneneral discipline committee chaired by *Fitawrari* Bäqälä Zäläläw, dated 16 Miyaziya 1954 E.C, 30 Genbot 1954 E.C, 29 Yäkatit 1954 E.C, 30 Ţeqemet 1954 E.C.
[143]NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to the Commander of Governorate Police Office, Ref. no. 35/241/ 59, dated 13 Tahsas 1959 E.C; a petition submitted to the Governorate-General Office, dated 13 Tahsas 1959 E.C.

Are'aya's associates namely Engedaw Wäldägäbre'al and Alämu Bayuh.[144] His engagement in profitable farming and the money collected from farmers who obtained land for commercial farming in Mätäma seems to have been the factors behind Are'aya's interest to continue governor of Chilga *Awraja*. In the end, he was transferred to govern Semén *Awraja* by the end of 1966.

Now let us turn to the grievance of Bétä Israelites who were a section of the population in Chilga *Awraja* and other areas of the province in the post-1942 period. What makes this people different from other population of the province was they were not land owners and were not required to pay land tax to the government. However, like other people they were sometimes forced to pay tribute to the local officials. Furthermore, they faced religious, social and economic discrimination from the surrounding people. The unsuccessfulness of the imperial government effort in centralizing the administration system of the province was also revealed in the case of the Bétä Israelites. Thus, a separate sub-section is needed here to examine them in some detail.

The Bétä Israelites

Although they were not *rest* land owners, the Bétä Israelites were the other section of Chilga society who were badly treated by local officials and non-Bétä Israelite people in Chilga *Awraja* and other areas of the province in the post 1942 period. They were steadily returned to the conditions they had been before the occupation.[145] They were engaged in various works to support their lives. Men engaged in iron smithing and they also worked as tenant farmers by entering into share-cropping contracts with landowners. For their black smithing work, they were

[144] NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Seyum Gäsäsä (Commander of the Governorate Police) to the Governorate-General Office, Ref. no. 38/22/135, dated 2 Ţer 1959 E.C.
[145] Summerfield, 57.

also referred by such name as *baläji* and *ţayib* by the other people.[146] The Bétä Israelite women produced pottery items and sold these to middlemen at lower price than the market price. The Bétä Israelites disliked to sell their products at markets because of two reasons. First, most of the market days were held on Saturday, which was their Sabbath-observing day. Second, they were insulted as *buda* on the markets and hence they feared to go there.[147]

The Bétä Israelites were also called *buda* (evil eye) and the local people regarded them as killers. They even feared to go to health centers fearing this humiliation. When persons died in villages some of the local people believed the "Falasha" killed them. In return, sometimes the "Falasha" were killed and their properties were looted and destroyed. Sometimes their *mäsgid* (religious house), schools and houses were attacked and burnt. They reported that about 72 Bétä Israelites were murdered related to this case in the years between 1941 and 1946 in Bägémder, Semén and Lasta. They explained their various grievances to the emperor in 1946 when he visited the province. The emperor promised them to stop these problems by giving orders. However, they reported another 11 were killed in the areas from the emperor visited Bägémder and Semén in 1947 to 1957. They were also prohibited to use burial sites and the surrounding people cultivated their cemeteries. In one of their petitions, the Bétä Israelites say "…**ቀድሞ አባቶቻችን ጥፋት አጥፍተዉ ክርስት ቢነቀሉ መንግስት የነቀለዉን መንግስት ይተከዋልና ለድሆች የሚበጅ አንድ ቁሚ ትዕዛዝ ከለምለሚቱ ሰንደቅ ዓላማና ከገናናዉ ዙፋንዎ ስር ወድቀን ግርማዊነትዎን እንለምናለን**"።[148] (our forefathers were evicted from their rest land due to their mistakes of refusing to embrace Orthodox Christianity and since the eviction of one state can be reinstated by another state. We

[146]NGAZRO, a letter from Täsfahun Afäwärq (secretary of Quara) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 305/17/70, dated 15 Ţer 1970 E.C; Messing, 186- 198.
[147]Messing, 186- 198.
[148] NALAE code 1.1.20.01, petitions of Däbtära Géţé Aseräs and Andargé Ţegabé (Bétä Israelites representatives) to Emperor Haile Sellasie I, dated 3 Miyaziya and 7 Hamlé 1950 E.C.

plead you under the flag and your glorious throne to give an order that would benefit the poor people like us). The Bétä Israelites produced charcoal for blacksmithing and for sale at markets. However, the local people also prevented them using forests. Although they did not pay taxes to the government, they were sometimes forced to pay different kinds of tribute to the local officials. They also had no land security and guarantee; they were constantly evicted from the lands they cultivated. Even when they settled and cultivated vacant lands, the nearby non-Bétä Israelite people forced them to evacuate these since they did not *rest* landowners. As a result, at various times they expressed their grievances to the imperial government,[149] and to the Jewish organizations abroad.[150]Although the imperial government gave an order to Bägémder and Semén officials not to evict the Bétä Israelites from the established settlements on vacant lands and to fine those people who insulted them as *buda.*[151] these orders were not implemented in the courts in Chilga *Awraja* and other areas Bägémder and Semén. The courts mostly decided cases against the Bétä Israelites.[152]

Realizing the socio-economic and religious marginalization of the Bétä Israelites, some non-governmental international organizations were involved in supporting them in Chilga sub-province and other areas Bägémder and Semén. One of these organizations was the "Falasha Welfare Association". Starting from the 1950s, the association gave some support to the Bétä Israelites to improve the handcrafts works like tanning, weaving, pottery and iron smelting. The

[149]NGAZRO, petitions of Bétä Israelites to Bägémder and Semén Governorate, dated 29 Genbot 1946 E.C and to the Ministry of Interior, dated 30 Genbot 1954 E.C; NALAE Code 1.1.20.01, petitions of Bétä Israelites to the imperial government, dated 28 Ţeqemet 1951 E.C, 11 and 13 Mägabit 1951 E.C, and 7 Hamlé 1950.
[150]David Kessler, *The Falashas: A Short History of the Ethiopian Jews*. 3rd ed. (London: Frank Cass:1996), 152.
[151]NGAZRO, a letter from the director of Bägémder and Semén Governorate to Chilga, Semén, Wägära and Gondar Awrajas, Ref.no. 5965/59, dated 10 Säné 1946 E.C; a letter from Gen. Märed Mängäša (*Endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén Governorate) to the Governorate Higher Court Office, Ref.no. 18376/59/46, dated 29 Hamlé 1949 E.C.
[152] NGAZRO, petitions of Bétä Israelites to Emperor Haile Sellasie I, dated 7 Hamlé 1950 E.C and 10 Hamlé 1961 E.C.

welfare association also supported them in agriculture by giving better seeds, education, health, and clean water. Since the children of the Bétä Israelites did not mostly learn together with the children of other people because they were called *buda*, this welfare association opened boarding schools for the Bétä Israelites in their villages and had them taught by their own teachers trained in schools found in Addis Ababa and Asmara.[153] There were about 27 village schools in Bägémder and Semén province in 1958. Jewish Agency was the main institution that gave financial support to the "Falasha Welfare Association" in paying the salaries of the teachers. However, for reasons, in the same year the Jewish Agency reduced its financial support to the "Falasha Welfare Association" and almost all of the boarding schools were closed.[154]

When the question of land ownership for the Bétä Israelites became critical in the 1960s, the imperial government granted about 2,000 hectares of lands to parts of Bétä Israelites near Abdärafi, in Lower Armacheho district. They cultivated sesame, cotton and sorghum. However, due to the boundary dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan, the Sudanese destroyed their farms in 1968 like the other Ethiopian farmers.[155] Thus, the effort of the imperial government to improve the religious and socio-economic conditions of the Bétä Israelites ended with little success due to local and external causes from the Sudan

Trading Activity

In addition to revenue from land tax, taxation from merchants was one of the incomes of the government. The unsuccessfulness of the imperial government to centralize the local

[153]NALAE code 17.1.13.04.04, a letter from Col. Emeru Wändé to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no. 9410/27/47, dated 5 Mägabit 1969 E.C; a letter from Jean Claude Nedjar (Director of Ethiopian Branch of World ORT Union) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ref.no.JCN/213/81, Dated 25 July 1981 G.C.
[154] Kessler, 150-151.
[155]NGAZRO, a letter from Maj. Gen. Täšomä Ergätu (Commander of the Second Infantry Division Army) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 3/ምጽ2/33/02065/ አ15, dated 30 Mägabit 1961 E.C; Kessler, 158.

administration led local legal trading activity to encounter various problems and hence the revenue collected from them to be very low. It was also manifested in the expansion of contraband trade in the area.

The Gondar-Mätäma trade was disrupted during the Italian occupation due to the war of the anti-Italian resistance. Due to this, merchants preferred to transact business by opening shops than engaging in the caravan trade.[156] After liberation, local trade and the cross-border with the Sudan was reopened and it was the livelihood basis of a section of the society in Chilga sub-province. The first action that the restored imperial government carried out to encourage legal trade and to control contraband was promulgating successive laws. Like other illegal activities, smuggling was considered as criminal and those involved in it were to be fined, their properties confiscated, and imprisoned for their violation of rules and regulations.[157] Theoretically, this effort of the imperial government was good, although it had little impact on Chilga *Awraja* as I will show below.

Local trading activity, however, was very low in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in the early 1940s. This was because the area was war torn and most farmers were busy in the liberation of Gondar. There was not much agricultural activity and hence there was no good grain harvest in 1942/43. Let alone agricultural products that could be used for trading activity with other provinces, there was a shortage of food crops in the city of Gondar and its surroundings at the time. For example, in 1943, one-quintal of *ţéff* was sold for up to 20 *berr* and one quintal of barley was sold for up to 16 *berr* at Gondar. At the same time, at Däbrä Tabor, one quintal of *ţéff* was sold for 10 *berr* and a quintal barley was sold for up to 4 *berr*. Vehicles that

[156] Solomon, *A History*…, 101-102.
[157] See different laws on Negarit Gazeta regarding Customs offices and taxes on import and export items.

came from Asmara to Gondar carrying goods like yarn and *abujadid* could not get grain in Gondar to load and return to Asmara. Honey, hides, and skins were the predominant commodities that were sent to Eritrea.[158]

In the early 1940s (and after), there were various weekly local markets held in Chilga sub-province. Dälgi and Aykäl were well-known market centers. In addition, there were lesser local markets held in various localities. Markets held on Thursday at Dawa and Ţaqusa Aräko; on Tuesday at Chäwdeba and Gäläděba; on Saturday at Tänkäl Käbina Mareyam, Dekulareba, Šahura Mareyam, and at Musegé Wäfta. Näbes Gäbeya and Mätäma were known market centers in the lowlands areas along the Sudanese border. Moreover, there were market days on most localities constantly from November to May when cotton was harvested. The items of trade were local products and imported items from the Sudan and Eritrea. Since the all-weather road from Gondar to Baher Dar and then Addis Ababa was opened only in the late 1950s, merchants mostly did not bring fabricated items from the capital. The items of trade or goods were grains (cereals), cattle, pack animals, *abujadid*, yarn, salt, honey, butter, coffee, pepper, spices, shawls, hides and skins, leather products, pottery products, blacksmith products, and other items.[159]

Although the cross-border legal trade with the Sudan via Mätäma resumed in the post-1942 period, it was very low because of several factors. Mätäma was the only frontier customs post that managed the trading activity with the Sudan in Bägémder and Semén Province until 1949/50, when four additional frontier custom posts namely Humära, Godäbé, Dubaba, and Maţäbiya were opened. Godäbé later shifted to Abdärafi was located in Lower Armacheho,

[158] NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, YäGondar Awraja Yäheg …
[159]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from Kä-Reb Eskä Mätäma *Wäräda* Gezat Office to Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* Governor Office, 1937 E.C.

Dubaba was located at Särferädi, in Quara, about 45 kilometers southeast of the Maţäbiya customs post, and Maţäbiya was located at Wudberzin, about 75 kilometers to the south of Mätäma town in the Mahbärä Selasé territory. The absence of all-weather roads was one of the obstacles for the caravans and other merchants from Gondar to Mätäma. Although there was a dry season road that the Italians constructed, it was destroyed during the liberation campaign and was not repaired until the early1960s.[160] The existence of bandits was the other obstacle. The bandits robbed the merchants and created problems on customs officials at Mätäma headed by *Nägadras* Haylu Täsäma. As a result, the revenue of the Mätäma customs post was very low in the 1940s. For instance, from September 1944 to July 1945, its total revenue was $57, 289.32 *berr*.[161] The bandits under Ayalnäh Mängäša and Mängestu Käfalä from Adaň Agär and Chaqo repeatedly looted the caravans on the road to Mätäma. Ayalnäh even led his bandit group to raid the custom post of Mätäma on 23 January 1945 and in the fighting followed Haylu's group captured Ayalnäh. Soon Ayalnäh was handed over to the high court of Bägémder that passed a death sentence on him. But, Ayalnäh's relatives' frightened the customs officials and Haylu requested the provincial government to not implement the death sentence on Ayalnäh but rather should be imprisoned in another area. Otherwise, Ayalnäh's relatives and associates would kill him (Haylu).[162]

The amnesty given by the emperor to bandits during his first visit of Gondar in October 1946 did not end banditry. Although several bandits gave themselves up to government officials, they

[160] Solomon, *A History*…, 101-102; Informants: Alemneh, and Sisay.
[161]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from *Belata* Ṣähay Dästa (Bägémder and Semén Treasury Office) to *Ras* Emeru Haylä Selasé (Governor-General of Bägémder *Awraja*), Ref.no. 63, dated 18 Mäskäräm 1938 E.C.
[162]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.11, a letter from Bägémder and Semén *Awraja* to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 14/466/11, dated 27 Mägabit 1938 E.C; a letter from *Nägadras* Haylu Täsäma to the Customs office director in the Ministry of Finance, Ref.no. 28, dated 1 Tahsas 1938 E.C.

soon resumed their banditry activity by looting caravans. For instance, in 1946, *Fitawrari* Alämayähu Bitäwa, a *mesläné* of Chilga, secured the submission of twenty-two bandits in the district. However, some of them escaped to the forest and resumed their banditry activity. One of the bandits was Abetäw Bogalä who killed *Nägadras* Bäläṭä Sahelä Micha'el, the head of Mätäma customs officer succeeding *Nägadras* Haylu Täsäma, in 1947. The other bandit leaders were Käbädä Rädda and Kidé Bogalä. They looted caravans traveling between Dälgi and Mätäma. However, Kidé and his five associates were killed in a fighting against the army in June 1947.[163] The existence of a small number of finance police to control the outlaws discouraged legal merchants to trade with the Sudan via Mätäma and several legal traders were forced to cooperate with bandits and became smugglers. Thus, bandits and small size of finance police contributed for the decline of the revenue from Mätäma customs post continuously after 1948.[164]

Bandits also infested the western shores of Lake Ṭana and looted caravans moving to and from Gojjam via Dängäl Bär until caravans arrived at Dälgi.[165] Bandits also disturbed the peace and stability of the local people. Primarily to offer security to the merchants, the administrative center of Aläfa-Ṭaqusa was transferred from Šahura to Dängäl Bär in 1948.[166] Some merchants used *tankua* (reed boats) to transport goods over Lake Ṭana. Moreover, the inauguration of the Naviga Tana Company in 1951 by the emperor during his visit of Bägémder and Semén province not only helped the revival of the trade between Gondar and Gojjam provinces but also it helped merchants to transport goods at large scale up to Dälgi by boats. The company to which *Ras*

[163]NALAE code 17.1.13.24.07, a letter from Bägémder Peace Keeping Police Force of the Sixth Battalion to Bägémder and Semén Police Force Office, Ref.no.1796/17, dated 28 Nähasé 1939 E.C.
[164]NGAZRO, a letter from Mulugéta Mälké (governor of Mätäma district) to Col. Seyum Gäsäsä, Ref.no.469/17/57, dated 28 Genbot 1957 E.C.
[165] Informants: Haylé, Sinor, and Abé.
[166]NALAE code 17.1.13.17.27, a petition of Dängäl Bär people to Bägémder and Semén Governorate-General Office, dated 9 Säné 1961 E.C; a letter from Andaregačäw Mäsay to *Qäňazmač* Dästa Šibäši (governor of Aläfa-Ṭaqusa), Ref.no.5/548, dated 12 Tahsas 1941 E.C; Informant: Abé.

Andargačäw Mäsay was one of the main shareholders was involved in transporting goods between the ports of Baher Dar, Gorgora, Zägé, Däŋgäl Bär, Dälgi, and Say Däbre.[167]

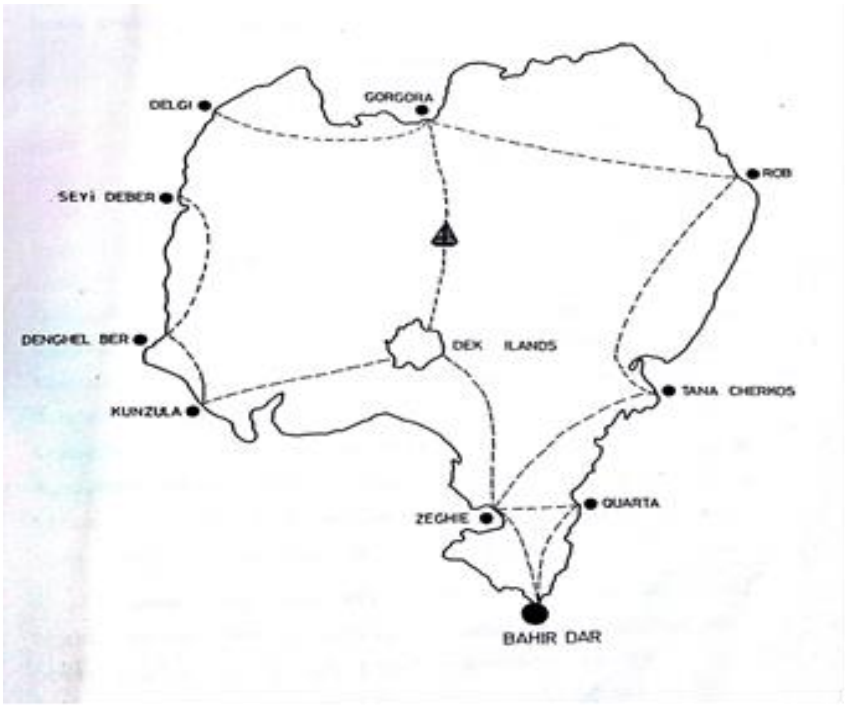

Fig. 2 Water Transport on Lake Ţana
Source: Regional Planning Office for Northwestern Ethiopia. "Development of Transport Network in Northwestern Ethiopia." Physical Planning Department, Baher Dar, 1986

Moreover, to protect the caravan merchants from brigands, security posts were set up along the road from Aykäl to Mätäma at Wali Dava, Sabsegé, Wähni, Gändawuha (Šähädi), Kokit, Chitana and Mätäma.[168] However, these centers could not fully protect the caravans from attack by brigands. At times, caravans made petitions to government officials and customs posts against

[167]Seltene, "A History of Baher Dar…", 93-100; Solomon, *A History*…, 100, 106; Addis Zemen, "Qaňäwena Ţäqel", 10 Yäkatit 1943 E.C; Muhammed Hamid, "A History of Lake Tana Transport Company" (MA Thesis, AAU, 2010), 12-16.
[168] Solomon, *A History*…, 101-102; Informants: Sisay, and Abuhay.

lack of security to them and to get compensations for their lost goods.[169] Indirectly the security posts and different bodies (like finance police, customs officers, and local officials) forced the caravans who used donkeys and horses to transport goods to upload and download their goods for probing as if they were smugglers. All these consumed the caravans' time, money, and energy.[170] and it hindered the trading activity with the Sudan. Malaria infested lowland was the other obstacle for the caravan merchants on the route to the Sudan.

Struggling with the above problems, many caravans conducted trade with the Sudan taking the advantage of its short distance compared to the Asmara route. They gave items like coffee, spices, grains, cattle and other raw materials to the Sudanese merchants; and they returned with items like naphtha, *abujadid*, *khaki*, yarn, soap, food oil, house utensils, and other factory products.[171] Relatively the road from Gondar to Asmara was good for car transport and free from malaria epidemics, but it covered a long distance compared to the road from Gondar to Mätäma. As a result, most merchants preferred to conduct trading activities to Eritrea using car. The merchants took several agricultural products and cattle to Asmara and returned with items similar to those items brought from the Sudan.[172]

The limited success of the imperial government to centralize the economy by introducing regulation on legal trade can be seen in its attempt to control contraband/smuggling. Smuggling was a common practice in Chilga sub-province in the post-1941 period and it was a factor that

[169]NGAZRO, a petition of Merchants named Nuré and Abederé to Mätäma Customs Office, dated 10 Mayaziya 1945 E.C; a petition of caravan merchants to Mätäma Customs Office, dated 7 Mayaziya 1945 E.C.
[170] NGAZRO, a petition of caravan merchants to Bägémder and Semén Customs Office Director, dated 11 Ţeqemet 1954 E.C; a letter from Alazebeh Damţäw (Maţäbiya customs post officer) to Director of Bägémder and Semén Customs Office, Ref.no.172/55, dated 1Ţer 1955 E.C.
[171] Informants: Haylé, and Abuhay.
[172] Seltene, "A History of Baher Dar…", 93 – 100; Solomon, *A History*…, 100, 106.

weakened the legal trade with the Sudan. Most of the contraband of items were not different from the legal trade items. Among others *abujadid*, yarn, and khaki were smuggled in large quantities from the Sudan until the early 1960s[173] by which time the establishment of several textile factories in Ethiopia and subsequent imposition of high tax on imported textile products made smuggling of *abujadid* decline.[174] Since the smuggling of *abujadid* was high after liberation, some local officials in Chilga *awraja* wanted to apply a similar regulation to *Ras* Kasa Haylu to control it. It was said that *Ras* Kasa used, in the early 1930s, stamped a seal in his name on *abujadid* when imported legally via Mätäma and those *abujadid* that had no stamp were taken as a contraband item.[175] This idea was not put into practice, however. Perhaps it was considered against the regulation of the imperial government that declared receipts to items had to be given for legal traders when they imported from outside. Among the items smuggled to the Sudan, coffee, cereals, spices. cattle, hides and skins, honey and wax were the dominant ones.[176]

Now I proceed to the other effort of the imperial government to integrate the frontier society of Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings with the center. It was the action of incorporating ethnic or religious groups into a community in the center. The effort was carried out not by a government institution but rather through the Mahbärä Selasé Monastery, one of the well-known monasteries in the history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC).

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[173] NGAZRO, a letter from Mätäma Custom post office to Šifäraw Wäldä Şadeq (governor of Mätäma district), Ref. no. 89/44, dated 6 Mägabit 1944 E.C.

[174]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.1008/59, dated 4 Genbot 1959 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Sinor, Wädaj.

[175]NGAZRO, a letter from Tägäñä Bogalä (secretary of Adaň Agär sub-district) to Chilga district governor office, Ref.no.118/46, dated 9 Mägabit 1945 E.C; a letter from Waka Zälläläw (secretary of Chilga *Awraja*) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no. 3158/39, dated 10 Mägabit 1945 E.C.

[176]NGAZRO, a letter from Mätäma Custom Post Office to Šifäräw Wäldäşadeq (governor of Mätäma district), Ref. no.89/44, dated 6 Mägabit 1944 E.C; a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Solomon Käder, Ref.no. 851/58, dated 22 Mägabit 1958 E.C; WMTMAC, a letter from *Bitwadad* Andargachäw Mäsay to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 1455/13, dated 18 Mäsäkäräm 1939 E.C; Informants:Haylé, Alämnäh, and Sinor.

The Government and Mahbärä Selasé Monastery

Christianity was a strong integrating force and national ideology in the "Solomonic" state and the EOC played a key role in the society in this regard.[177] The Mahbärä Selasé Monastery has been important institution that played vital role in the administrative, economic and social conditions among the people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings since its foundation.[178]

The monastery was the main organ in implementing the cultural homogenization project of the imperial government on the northwestern Ethiopian borderlands in the post liberation period. The government considered national integration or cultural homogenization as another way of centralization and modernization of the country in the post-1941 period. For this purpose, it used Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity as its tools. The education system was designed to promote culturally homogeneous population. While Amharic language was promoted throughout the country in government offices and schools, Christianization was directed towards the non-Christian peoples of the country.[179] The emperor encouraged Christian practices and converted the people of faraway areas into Orthodox Christianity, although he claimed that "religion is personal, the state is for all".[180] The imperial government also established the Ministry of National Community Development as another way of bringing homogenous society in Ethiopia to integrate the Muslims and non-Christian peoples with the national Orthodox Church.[181]

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[177]John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of A Traditional Polity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 27 - 31; Haile Mariam Larebo, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Politics in the Twentieth Century: Part I," *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. VIV, No. 3 (1987), 1 - 3.
[178] NGAZRO, a petition from a *Mämeher* of the monastery to Ministry of Justice, dated 14 Genbot 1959 E.C.
[179]Wudu,"The Ethiopian Orthodox ...", 241-246; Abebe Fisseha, "Education and the Formation of Modern Ethiopian State, 1896-1974"(PhD Diss. University of Illinois, 2000), 154; Markakis, *Ethiopia*…, 337-342.
[180]Haile Mariam Larebo,"The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Politics in the Twentieth Century: Part II," *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. X, No. 1 (1988), 6.
[181] Wudu, "The Ethiopian Orthodox ….", 267.

Several factors were behind the government cultural homogenization program. Externally, the rise of Arab nationalism and internally the expansion of Islam and missionary churches pushed the imperial government to adapt a policy of religious and cultural homogeneity. The government considered Arab nationalism as danger to the country since it believed instigating Muslim and other population on the borderlands against the imperial government. Moreover, the non-Muslim peoples of the borderlands were regarded by the ruling elites as "backward and infidel". As a result, the imperial government took cultural homogenization of the borderlands people as a solution for the external threat from the adjacent Muslim state like the Sudan. Chilga was one of the borderland regions that the Ethiopian government identified to carry out cultural homogenization.[182]

In this process of national integration and cultural homogenization, Mahbärä Selasé Monastery via its *mämeher* played a vital role among the people of Chilga sub-province and its surroundings by Christianizing the Qemant and Gumuz, especially in the 1950s. *Mämeher* Gäbrä Mareyam Fänta (1946?-1952) who later became *Abuna* Yosef baptized about 700 Gumuz into Orthodox Christianity in 1951/52. His successor, *Mämeher* La'ekä Mareyam Berru (1953-64), continued the evangelization activity among the Qemant and other non-Christian people in the borderlands as far as Täkäzé River. *Mämeher* La'ekä Mareyam was well educated in Church education and was the *mämher* of the Wataho Abo Monastery (near Mahbärä Selasé) before he became a *mämeher* of Mahbärä Selasé. Until 1957, La'ekä Mareyam converted about 2000 Gumuz into Orthodox Christianity, and several Gumuz boys received the title of deacon from

[182]Abebe Fisseha, 154, 193-196.

Abuna Mikael, Bishop of Bägémder and Semén governorate.[183] He constructed a school and the church of Saint Mary at Kulit-Serfedin. *Mämeher* La'ekä Mareyam was also made head of the national community development teachers in Bägémder and Semén province in 1954. He carried out a similar activity among the Kunama people along the Sätit-Humära frontier in the late 1950s and converted several Kunama into Orthodox Christianity and constructed churches.[184]

When Emperor Haile Sellassie I visited the province of Bägémder and Semén in May 1959, he was said to have reminded local officials to intensify the intermarriage between the Qemant and Amhara, and to expand Orthodox Christianity in Qemant localities. He also was said to have advised the Qemant traditional priests to change their religion into Orthodox Christianity but to keep their language.[185] This was stated in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of National Community Development. Subsequently, *Mämeher* La'ekä Mareyam converted about 13,000 Qemant traditional religion followers into Orthodox Christianity and more than 21 churches were constructed on former Qemant ritual sites between 1959 and 1960.[186]Although some Qemant traditional religion followers disliked La'ekä Mareyam's activity, most Qemant traditional religious leaders supported it and contributed money for the construction of churches. They also composed different poems in support of La'ekä Mareyam and Orthodox Church.[187] Some of them run as follows:

[183]Addis Zemen, "YäMahbärä Selasé Gädam ena Yagäru Hezeb Bahel ena Astädadär Bacheru", dated 25 Miyaziya 1950 E.C.
[184]Aemero Färädä (Qäň Géta), *BäBägémder ena Semén Yähezeb Nuro Edegät Mämheran: La'ekä Mareyam* (1952 E.C), 1-57; Informants:Abuhay, Šaräw, Sisay, and Bäläţu.Aemero was a member of Ministry of National Community Development.
[185] Zelalem Liyew, *The Kemantney Language: A Sociolinguistic and Grammatical Study of Language Replacement* (Koln:Rudiger Kopper Verlag, 2003), 42; Informants: Abuhay, Wäldé, and Bäläţu.
[186]Aemero Färädä (Qäň Géta), *BäBägémder …*, 1-57; Informants:Abuhay, Šaräw, Sisay, and Bäläţu. Aemero was a member of Ministry of National Community Development.
[187]Informants: Abuhay, Šaräw, Sisay; Aemero Färädä, *BäBägémder* …, 16-21.

መምህር ላዕከ ማሪያም በመስቀሉ ባርኮ፤
ተራራዉን ታቦት አደረገዉ እኮ።[188]

Mämeher La'ekä Mareyam blesses with his cross
And converts a hill into a church

የሰሳ ልጅ ብለዉ ገደል ሲጥሉን፤
የእንጨት ፍሬ ብልዉ ከንጨት ሲያስጠጉን፤
እሰይ የምስራች አባት አገኘን፤
እሰይ የምስራች ዘንድሮ ሰዉ ሆንን።[189]

Despising us the seed of low class
They throw us to the pit calling us the boughts of the tree, they draw us to the wood
Oh! this is a day of good tiding for we found our father
Let us rejoice for we became humans and respected like others

The above poems indicate that the surrounding Orthodox Christian population discriminated against Qemant tradition religion followers for years. The difference in religion has sometimes led to some friction between them. There was a tradition among the Amhara that considered the Qemant as the sons of Oreotrage and wood since they performed religious rituals under trees. Following the conversion of the Qemant into Orthodox Christianity by *Mämeher* Ba'ekä Mareyam, this religious discrimination was ended and the Qemant were regarded as equal with the surroundings Orthodox Christian Amhara. For this, the Qemant regarded *Mämeher* Ba'ekä Mareyam as their religious father. He integrated them more with the Amhara and the Ethiopian state. In addition to the above poems, there are several poems that Qemant religious leaders composed during the conversion of many Qemant into Orthodox Christianity. Most of the poems were composed to appreciate the national community development activities, *Däjjazmač* Keflé Dadi, and Emperor Haile Sellassie I. Amharic was taught among the Kunfäl in Jawi, who were

[188] Aemero Färädä, *BäBägémder* …, 27, it was composed by a Qemant named Aseräs Kebrät.
[189] Aemero Färädä, *BäBägémder* …, 46. It was composed by a Qemant priest named Abära Käbädä.

already Orthodox Christian. Since 1965, *Märigéta* Isayas Aseräsa was their teacher in Gazegé sub-district.[190]

Although the monastery played a great role in cultural homogenization in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings, it had sometimes disagreements with local government officials over territory and tax collection. The imperial government passed a decree in 1942 regarding the administration of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The decree recognized many types of fiefs and properties related to land given to the church and authorized the church to collect and use the tax from the people on her fiefs for the expansion of church education and charitable works.[191] In 1943, the clergy of the monastery applied to the emperor and the crown prince to get its "former" *gult* lands like Maṭäbiya and to collect tribute and taxes from it. The emperor promised them they would get it if they had evidence indicating the sub-district was its *gult* (tributary) before the Italian occupation.[192] The clergy also petitioned the emperor in October 1946 when he was visiting Gondar expressing the intervention of Chilga *Awraja* officials in their administrative domain. They expressed they had more privileges in the period before the Italian invasion than the post liberation period. The emperor ordered *Bitwädäd* Andargačäw Mäsay to respect various rights to the monastery. It partly says

> **1ኛ/ የማህበረ ስላሴ የሆነዉን አበል ሁሉ ምስለኔም ገንዘብ ተቀባይም ሳይገባባቸዉ ራሳቸዉ ካርኔያቸዉን ከመንፈሳዊ ጉባዔ ተቀብለዉ አበላቸዉን ራሳቸዉ እያስወጡ እንዲበሉ፡፡ 2ኛ/ በገዳማቸዉ ዉስጥ ምስለኔ ሳይገባባቸዉ በገዳሙ ዉስጥ በሚሆነዉ ነገር ሁሉ ራሳቸዉ ሀላፊ እንዲሆኑና እንዲጠብቁ ፡፡ 3ኛ/ በገዳማቸዉ ዉስጥ አንድ አጥፊ ገብቶ ቢቀመጥና ቢገኝባቸዉ ይዘዉ ያላመጡ እንደሆነ የተሰጣቸዉ ስልጣን እንዲወሰድባቸዉ እንዲፈርሙ፡፡**

[190] NGAZRO, a letter from *Balambaras* Ephrém Wäldä Giorgis (Secretary of Aläfa-Ţaqusa) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 2444/47, dated 1 Säné 1959E.C; A petition from *Märigéta* Issayas Aseräsa to Gazegé sub-district administration office, dated 22 Genbot 1959 E.C.

[191] Negarit Gazieta, Decree No 2 of 1942, "Regulation for the Administration of the Church".

[192] NGAZRO, a letter from Crown Prince Asfawäsän Haile Sellassie to Asratä Kasa, Ref.no.ሠ/187, dated 28 Ţeqemet 1936 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.24.10, a letter from Ministry of Pen to Ministry of Interior, Ref. no.8795/48, dated 4 Pagumé 1935 E.C. There were only between 7 and 10 tributary churches under the monastery in 1947.

> **4ኛ/ በጸጥታውም ወገን ሆነ ጥፋት ካልተገኘባቸውና አገር ገዥው ጥፋታቸውን ተረድቶ ስልጣናቸውን ካልወሰነው በስተቀር ምስለኔ እንዳይደርስባቸው። 5ኛ/ ማጠቢያ የሚባለው አገር የማህበረ ስላሴ ነው ብለው ስላመለከቱ የማህበረስላሴ የሆነውን ማስረጃ እቀረቡ እንዲይዙትና ከምስለኔ ግዛትጋር እንዲዋሰኑ።...**[193]
>
> 1/ all the tribute belong to Mahbärä Selasé Monastery should be collected with receipt from religious council without interference from the *meseläné* and they should use it for themselves. 2/ the clergy should administer and keep the area under the monastery without intervention from *meseläné*. 3/ their autonomous authority should be taken over when a criminal is found in their territory and when they failed to handover him to government officials; they should sign for this. 4/ unless they found guilty and thereby the governor-general would limit their authority, *meseläné* are not allowed to enter in the monastery. 5/ since they applied that Maṭäbiya has been the territory of Mahbärä Selasé, they should receive it when they bring evidence and have to delimit the boundary with *meseläné* (surrounding local government officials)…

Although the monastery did not bring evidence regarding its former territorial jurisdiction over Maṭäbiya, Andargačäw gave Maṭäbiya to them as compensation to clergy who were massacred during the Italian occupation.[194] There were ten localities in Maṭäbiya that the monastery obtained the right of administering. These, they were Wudebärzin, Mesahen Bela, Diza, Menjugjug, Šikuriya, Endaywäga, Mähaluf, Resires, Diran and Šinfa.[195] Moreover, since the Maṭäbiya customs post established in 1950 was located inside the territorial jurisdiction of the monastery, the clergy requested the government to get a share in the revenue of the customs post. The government allowed them to receive one-third (1/3) of the revenue starting from September 1953.[196] The clergy also collected tribute like honey from the Gumuz, kept cattle and engaged in commercial farming.[197]

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[193] NGAZRO, a letter from Emperor Haile Sellassie to Andargačäw Mäsay, Ref.no.1022/25, dated 26 Ṭeqemet 1939 E.C.

[194]NGAZRO, a letter from Maj. Gen. Näga Haylä Selasé (Governor-General of Bägémder and Semén) to Emperor Haile Sellassie, Ref. no.11678/4203/40, dated 1 Pagumé 1955 E.C.

[195] NGAZRO, a letter from Täšomä Räta (governor of Qolla-Ṭaqusa sub-district) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref. no.3/15, dated 30 Ṭeqemet 1946 E.C.

[196]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša (director of Customs of Bägémder and Semén) to Tamrat Yegäzu (*endärasé* of the governorate), Ref.no. 812/60, dated 5 Genbot 1960 E.C.

[197] Informans: Sisay, and Wodaj.

In addition to Maṭäbiya, the monastery also laid claims over other localities in the sub-district of Qolla-Ṭaqusa without evidence. This led to tussle and dispute between the clergy and the surrounding sub-district government officials.[198] *Däjjazmač* Asratä Kasa, the governor-general of the province in the early 1950s, introduced a directive in relation to the monastery. Accordingly, the monastery was made autonomous administrative area in the province; the head of the monastery attended various meetings at governorate-general level with other *awraja* governors. Asratä also authorized the monastery to collect education tax from its inhabitants in accordance with the law and to hand over part of it to the governorate-general office.[199]

However, in the subsequent years the monastery did not have a smooth relation with the provincial officials because of different reasons. First, the monastery was blamed for not paying parts of the tax it collected to the governorate-general office. For instance, the amount of arrears that the monastery's education and health tax to be hand over to the provincial treasury from 1947/8 to 1962/3 was about $37,526 *berr*.[200] Second, the monastery was also blamed for being a shelter to outlaws and for falling to provide security to the local people. The Gumuz in Maṭäbiya accused the monastery of not defending them from Sudanese attack and for falling to give modern education and health services properly.[201] In addition to paying tax, the Gumuz paid honey tribute to the clergy annually. Like the Gumuz of Quara, the tribute was said to have been heavy on the Gumuz who petitioned higher officials for reduction. They also expressed the mistreatment of the clergy and the fleeing of some of the Gumuz to the Sudan in need of

[198] NGAZRO, a letter from Täšomä Räta… cited above, Ref. no.3/15, dated 30 Ṭeqemet 1946 E.C.
[199] NGAZRO, a letter from Näga Haylä Selasé…, cited above, Ref. no.11678/4203/40, dated 1Pagumé 1955 E.C
[200] NGAZRO, a letter from Näga Haylä Selasé…, cited above, Ref. no.11678/4203/40, dated 1Pagumé 1955 E.C.
[201] NGAZRO, a petition of Gumuz to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 19 Miyaziya 1961 E.C; a letter from Bäqälä Zälläläw (assistant *endärasé* Bägémder and Semén) to *Mämeher* Gäbrä Kerestor Abäbä of Mahbärä Selasé Monastry, Ref.no. 2450/4194/39, dated 5 Säné 1961 E.C.

freedom.[202] Third, the area under the jurisdiction of the monastery was not clearly specified and it was a source of dispute between the monastery and the surrounding districts especially with Mätäma. Especially following the introduction of commercial farming in the areas in the 1960s, the monastery demanded to demarcate its boundary with Mätäma district. When lands were distributed to farmers, the monastery opposed the interference of the government officials in its domain. The clergy made petitions to the provincial and central government offices and underlined their opposition of land distribution to farmers until their boundary with Mätäma was clearly demarcated.[203] The basic motive was to collect taxes and other payments from the farmers without the intervention of local government officials, *cheqa šums*. Farmers paid some amount of money to the monastery or the government officials when they received land for commercial farming.[204] Since the clergy had no smooth relations with the provincial officials, mostly they preferred to travel Addis Ababa and submit their petitions to the central government. Higher officials and Patriarch Tewoflos discussed the case and ordered the clergy to finish their boundary case with the governor-general, Tamrat Yegäzu.[205] However, it went unsolved until the end of the imperial government.

Fourth, the monastery was also in disagreement with other churches in the area. While the monastery claimed several churches in Chilga *Awraja* as its *qefäf* (*gult*), the other churches rejected the monastery's claim arguing they were not tributary. Most Mahbärä Selasé clergy

[202]NGAZRO, a petition of Maṭäbiya Gumuz to Tamrat Yigäzu, dated 19 Miyaziya 1961 E.C; a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to *Mämeher* Gäbrä Kerestor Abäbä, Ref.no.2731/4194/39, dated 16 Hamlé 1961 E.C.
[203]NGAZRO, a letter from *Mämeher* Gäbrä Hiwot Habtä Giorgis of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.204/59, dated 8 Säné 1959 E.C; a letter from *Mämeher* Gäbrä Mareyam Täsfaselasé of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery to the Governorate-General Office, Ref.no.122/19, dated 16 Miyaziya 1959 E.C.
[204]NGAZRO, a letter from *Mämeher* Gäbrä Hiwot Habtä Giorgis to the Governorate - General Office, Ref.no. 6140/ 14/60, dated 19 Ṭer 1960 E.C; a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw (Vice-*Endärasé* of the Governorate) to Färädä Ṭerunäh, Ref. no.5/ማ77/11/59, dated 24 Ṭer 1960 E.C.
[205]NGAZRO, a letter from Solomon Gäbrä Mareyam (vice-Minister of Pen) to *Bitwädäd* Zäwdé Gäbrä Hiwot (Minister of Interior), Ref.no.724-63/መ12160, dated 12 Tahsas 1963 E.C.

argued that when its former clergy founded a church they regarded that church as *qeféf* to the monastery. One such protracted case involved tussle was with the Wataho Abo Monastery, in Chilga district.[206] Although several governor-generals of the province recommended to bring the monastery under the authority of Chilga *Awraja*, this was not realized until the end of the imperial period. This was perhaps the imperial government did not want to disappoint the clergy of the monastery who played a key role in cultural homogenization in its surrounding areas.

Conclusion

From 1942 to 1946, Bägémder and Semén *awraja* was structured into three districts as from Reb to Bäšilo, from Reb to Mätäma, and Semén and these were further divided into *abägaz* administrative units. The area from Lake Ţana to Mätäma was organized into Aläfa and Quara *abägazes* and it became Chilga *Awraja* in 1946, when Bägémder and Semén was elevated to *ţäqelay gezat* and arranged into six *awrajas*. Chilga sub-province consisted of Chilga, Mätäma, Quara (and Um-Idla), and Aläfa-Ţaqusa districts. Despite the effort of the imperial government to centralize the administration of the province by different strategies, in general Bägémder and Semén province and in particular Chilga *Awraja* remained a peripheral area. The geography of the province was one of the factors for the development of provincialism. Its long distance from the center of the imperial government and lack of road communication until the early 1960s obstructed the centralization effort of the government in Chilga sub-province. The various laws and orders of the central government were not implemented in the area properly. Not only the

[206]NGAZRO, a letter from Waka Zälläläw (secretary of Chilga *Awraja*) to Märed Mängäša (Endärasé of the governorate), Ref no.10/25/44, dated 9 Mägabit 1949 E.C; a letter from Dämes Bärihun (governor of Chilga district) to Chilga *Awraja* governor, Ref. no.64/25, dated 25 Mägabit 1945 E.C; a petition from *Mämeher* Gäbrä Yohannes Yemäräţu of Wataho Abo Monastery to Keflé Dadi (*Eddärasé* of the Governorate-General), dated 21 Genbot 1950 E.C .

local officials but also the governor-generals of the province did not implement the laws of the central government.

Chilga *Awraja* was a frontier region not only in its geographic location along the border with the Sudan but also in terms of power relations with the provincial government. Governors of Chilga sub-province were oppressive and exploitive; they collected various kinds of tribute that were unknown in the center from the local people. Although the monastery played a great role in the national integration by converting the Qemant, Gumuz and other non-Christian people into Orthodox Christianity. However, the monastic administration contributed to local instability that became worse in the last sixteen years of the imperial period.

CHAPTER IV

Socio-Economic Conditions in Chilga *Awraja* from the early 1960s to 1974

Introduction

The last one and half decade of the imperial period witnessed the construction of modern schools, roads and the introduction of commercial agriculture in Chilga *Awraja*. These activities were an extension of the imperial government's strategy of integrating the frontier areas into the national political economy. However, the measures had unintended consequences; rather than consolidate the establishment of rational administrative system and prosperity for the large majority of the population of the region, they contributed to the expansion of banditry and local instability in the area. This chapter examines the effort of the imperial government to control Chilga sub-province by introducing socio-economic development works and the reaction of the local people to these strategies by focusing on four interrelated issues: community development works, the introduction of commercial farming, the expansion of banditry and local instability, and contraband trade.

Although it was partly aimed at bringing national integration and cultural homogenization, community development works in Chilga *Awraja* was concurrent with the advent of commercial farming in the lowlands. The advent of commercial farming also partly brought the expansion of banditry and local instability. Local instability in turn contributed to the expansion of contraband trade in the area. I argue that the attempts by the imperial government to control and integrate Chilga sub-province to the center by introducing socio-economic development works was not

effective and paradoxically it became a casual factor in exacerbating banditry, local instability and contraband trade.

Community Development Works

In addition to the use of Amharic and Orthodox Christianity, the imperial government set up the Ministry of National Community Development (later renamed as the Ministry of National Community Development and Social Affairs) as a means to realize its project of national integration in the country.[1] Based on the guideline of this Ministry, community development committees or associations were founded in provinces and sub-provinces in the 1960s and early 1970s. Fund-raising for community development program was the main purpose of the development committees. The local people also contributed labor for self-help development programs, although fraud and misuse of the funds raised locally hindered the activities of the development committees set up across the country.[2]

The National Community Development office for Chilga *Awraja* was opened at Aykäl and a development association named "Yä Chilga Awraja Lemat Mahbär" was established in the early 1960s. At district level it was first established at Chilga in about 1964/5. Until the 1960s, Chilga sub-province lacked basic social-economic infrastructures like schools and road networks. From 1964/5 to 1965/6, Ayälä Täsäma, governor of Chilga district (1963-1973), was the chairperson of the development association. *Fitawrari* Bäqälä Zälläläw (assistant *endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén Province) appreciated Ayälä' role in constructing schools, clinics, churches and repairing roads at an estimated cost of $ 98,794 *berr*.[3] Similar development associations were also

[1] Wudu, "The Ethiopian Orthodox ….", 267; Abebe Fisseha, 193 - 196.
[2] Markakis, *Ethiopia*…, 305 - 306.
[3] NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zälläläw to Ayälä Täsäma, Ref. no. 1/ሕ128/364-1/60, dated 10 Ṭeqemet 1959 E.C.

established in other districts of Chilga *awraja*. With the money raised by the local people, the committee oversaw the construction of clinics, meeting halls, flour mills and the maintenance of roads. The committee also raised revenue for the association by buying a land rover and giving transport service to the local people with payment.[4]

In addition to contribution by the local people, different bodies supported the construction of schools. The Swedish government was one of these bodies. With the contribution of money partly by the Swedish government and partly by the local people, the Ministry of Education and Arts constructed several primary schools in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings in the last decade of the imperial government. For instance, from 1965/66 to 1969/70, twenty eight modern primary schools were constructed in the province with $988,400 *berr* and four of them namely Aykäl, Dälgi, Šahura, and Gälädba were schools constructed in Chilga sub-province.[5] In the early 1970s, other primary schools were constructed at Tewodros Kätäma (Quara), and Mätäma Yohannes.

The activity and program of the development association in Chilga sub-province encountered difficulty from its committee members especially following the appointment of *Fitawrari* Färädä Ţerunäh as its governor in November 1966.[6] First, without the consent of the majority of the local people, Färädä merged the districts development associations and transformed them into a sub-provincial committee called "Chilga Awraja Development Association." Although the regulation of the Ministry of National Community Development allowed him to take such an

[4]NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08: a petition from Chilga people representatives to Ministry of Interior, dated 6 Yäkatit 1963 E.C; a petition from Alämnäh Bälay to Bägémder and Semein Ţäqelay Gezat Office, dated 27 Tahsas 1963 E.C; Informants: Abuhay, Sisay, and Lamäsgen Gétahun.
[5] NGAZRO, a letter from Täsfayä Rädda (Manager of Bägémder and Semén Province Education Office) to Tamrat Yegäzu (*endärasé* of the governorate), Ref.no.10/4606/967/9, dated 9 Mägabit 1963 E.C.
[6] Nägarit Gezeta, General Notice no.360 of 1966.

initiative, Färädä made himself chairman of the committee without the consent and participation of the local people. He also appointed his close associates as committee members.[7] The newly formed committee decided and collected money in different ways from the local people without their goodwill. The committee decided that every tax payer peasant had to contribute $10 *berr* per year to the development association. Urban dwelling merchants had to contribute from $10 to $60 *berr* from each house to the committee.[8] It was reported that in some sub-districts like Adaň Agär and Chaqo, peasants were forced to contribute from $20 to $30 *berr* to the association. Civil servants were required to contribute about 15% of their one monthly salary per a year to the development association. The *färäsäňa* had to pay about 20% of *amešo* they obtained from the farmers. Every individual who brought a letter from the governorate-general office requesting land in Mätäma for commercial farming had to pay $ 1 *berr*; and when they received the land and started farming, they had to pay between $30 *berr* and $100 *berr* to the development association, depending on the amount of land they obtained. Although the derivative of the term is not clear, a new form of payment called *Yäfäţäţé* was introduced in which male below the age of 18 in the sub-province had to pay $3 *berr* to the development committee. Every lorry passing from Mätäma to Gondar carrying sesame paid $10 *berr* for every single trip to the development association. Thus, the amount of money collected in every year to the development association was considerably high.[9]

However, *Fitawrari* Färädä and his associates abused their power and this negatively affected the development association. The committee did not report the annual income and expense of the

[7]NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Alämnäh … cied above, dated 27 Tahsas 1963 E.C; Informants: Abuhay, and Lamäsgen.
[8] NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Chilga people… cited above, dated 6 Yäkatit 1963 E.C.
[9]NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Alämnäh …, dated 27 Tahsas 1963 E.C; Informants: Alämnäh, and Abuhay.

association to the local people. They constructed some bridges without proper studies and such constructions fell apart quickly and became useless. In short, they used the money raised for improper programs and to their personal value.[10] *Fitawrari* Färädä was accused of misusing the land rover that the development association bought to give transport to the local people between Aykäl and Gondar. He was also unable to finish started community development works, imprisoned some members of the development association, transferred them to other areas and decided to close the development association offices. In consequence, the local people demanded his removal since he was an obstacle for the local development of Chilga *Awraja*.[11] Due to his conflict with the local people, Färädä was transferred as governor of Semén *Awraja* in June 1972. However, based on petitions by the local people, the Ministry of National Development and Social Affairs sent an inquiry committee in early 1973 and found Färädä and his five associates guilty of embezzling and mismanaging the development association's money.[12] Efforts were made to return the money with litigations.

The development association did not show progress following the departure of Färädä and appointment of *Fitawrari* Abreha Mäšäša as governor of Chilga *Awraja* in July 1972.[13] Some of the officials of Chilga sub-province who were executive members of the development association and who embezzled the raised money tried to create frictions between the Qemant and Amhara, following the February 1974 Revolution. They used the local instability to cover

[10]NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Alämnäh…, dated 27 Tahsas 1963 E.C; a petition from Alämnäh Bälay to Ministry of Interior, dated 16 Miyaziya 1964 E.C.
[11] NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Chilga people … cited above, dated 6 Yäkatit 1963 E.C.
[12]NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a letter from the Ministry of National Community Development and Social Affairs to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 37819/214, dated 3 Miyaziya 1966 E.C.
[13] Nägarit Gazeta, General Notice no. 435 of 1972.

their weakness and problems in the development association.[14] The experiment with community development in Chilga suggests that like other national integration strategies, community development works did not achieve its objective largely due to lack of determination among local officials. Instead of bringing unity and integration among the local people, it led to friction in the relations between the local people and committee members in Chilga sub-province.

Commercial Farming in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé

The imperial government used commercial agriculture as another strategy to integrate Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings to national political and economic life. Sätit-Humära has been a fertile area for dura cultivation, especially since the early decades of the 20th century. The area was also a source of cotton, sesame, honey, wild animals products, and served as pasture area to the surrounding Ethiopian, Eritreans and Sudanese peoples. However, problems like human disease, lack of political stability, drought and locust swarms hampered the cultivation of these crops.[15] Most of these problems were associated with the area being a borderland region.

The development of commercial/mechanized agriculture in northwestern Ethiopian borderlands was associated with the introduction of successive five-year development plans in the last two decades of the imperial period.[16] The Second Five Years Plan (1963-1967) and the Third Five Years Plan (1968-1972) gave emphasis to commercial/mechanized farming that was a guideline

[14] NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Daňäw Lägätä and Taddäsä Seyum (Chilga *Awraja* representatives in the Chamber of Deputies) to *Däjjazmač* Zäwdé Gäbräselasé (Minister of Interior), dated 16 Miyaziya 1966 E C.

[15]James McCann, "A Dura Revolution and Frontier Agriculture in Northwest Ethiopia, 1898-1920,"*Journal of African History*,Vol. XXXI, No.1 (1990), 126-132; Peter Garretson, "Frontier Feudalism in Northwest Ethiopia: Shaykh al-Imam 'Abd Allah of Nuqara, 1901-1923," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*,Vol. XV, No. 2 (1982), 264 - 265.

[16]Getnet Beqele, "Food Matters: The Place of Development in Building the Postwar Ethiopian State, 1941-1974," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*,Vol. XLII, No.1 (2009), 43; Shiferaw Jammo, "An Overview of the Economy 1941-1974," In Shiferaw Bekele (eds.), *An Economic History of Ethiopia Vol. I: The Imperial Era1941-1974* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), 8-15.

of the economy in the last decade of the imperial regime. The government emphasized large-scale commercial farming since Ethiopia was believed to have lands suitable for commercial farming. However, the government did not study in detail with regard to its accessibility, size, and cost of the lands suitable for commercial farming.[17]

Taking the opportunities of the development plans and the liberal investment climate, commercial farms emerged in Sätit-Humära, Abdärafi, Mätäma, and Mahbärä Selassé in the last one and half decade of the imperial era. The district of Sätit-Humära, in Wägära *Awraja*, was a pioneer in commercial farming in Bägémder and Semén province. Three foreigners Doctor Dinko Cvitanovitch, Mr. Marco Sideris, and Mr. Dimitri Zervos established a share company called Al Khadra Agricultural Works Limited in 1958 and started farming in Sätit-Humära on about 150 *gašas* (6,000 hectares) of land crops like sesame, sorghum, and cotton using tractors.[18] Although from the onset, poor infrastructural developments, marketing problem, and malaria epidemic had a negative impact on its agricultural activity, Al Khadra became profitable and won a diploma, gold medal, and $7,000 *berr* reward from the 1968 Agricultural Award of Haile Sellassie I Prize Trust.[19]Learning from Al Khadra, many people requested, obtained land and started cultivating sesame, sorghum and cotton using oxen in the area.[20] However, the nearby inhabitants of Wälqayit opposed the distribution of Sätit-Humära land to farmers because they

[17] Shiferaw Jammo, 9-15; Dessalegn Rahmato, "Peasant Agriculture under the Old Regime," In Shiferaw Bekele (ed.), *An Economic History of Ethiopia. Vol. I The Imperial Era 1941-1974* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), 166-170.
[18] Haile Sellassie I Prize Trust 1964-1968, Fifth Year, 69; Addis Zemen, "BäBägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Yä Ereša Sera", dated 8 Yäkatit 1958 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Yä-Qädamawi Haylä Selasé Šelemat Derejet Ašänafiwäč Täšälämu", dated 14 Ţeqemet 1961 E.C.
[19] *Haile Sellassie I Prize Trust 1964-1968,* Fifth Year, 69.
[20] Addis Zemen, "Gondar-YäSätit- Humära Wäräda Gezat", dated 22 Ţeqemet 1952 E.C.

argued that the land that was being distributed was their *rest* land.[21] In fact, the interest of the local people was not considered when land was granted to the farmers.

Despite the various internal and external challenges from the Sudanese that affected mechanized farming in Sätit-Humära, commercial agriculture expanded into Tač Armacheho, Mätäma, and Mahbärä Selasé. From the onset, realizing the challenges that the Sätit-Humära farmers faced, Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu (*endärasé* of the province) demanded the development of commercial farming in Abdärafi and Mätäma to be implemented in a planned way. To this end, he wrote a letter to the emperor in October 1965 to send a study group to these areas. Tamrat argued that a planned mechanized farming in these areas would have important use. First, it would bring "development" in the borderlands, protect the border against Sudanese penetration and would enhance the image of the imperial government. Second, it would create job opportunities for thousands of people in the province and its surroundings since the development areas covered a wider geography. It would also improve the living standards of the laborers and their families.[22] Although the case was referred to the planning board for a follow up,[23] the study was not undertaken for unknown reason.

The pioneers of commercial agriculture in Lower Armacheho were a group of policemen from the province. These police men in the province had petitioned the emperor to give land to them and the emperor advised them to form an association and work together to be more profitable. Subsequently, they formed a share company named "Yä-Bägémder Ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat

[21] Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, 18.
[22] NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Emperor Haile Sellassie, Ref.no 13/134/58, dated 3 Ţeqemet 1958 E.C
[23] NGAZRO, a letter from Yohannes Kidanämareyam (assistant Minister of Pen) to Habtä Abayefru (with assistant Minister Title, manager of Technique Department in the Planning Board), Ref.no.4090/25/25/05, dated 12 Mägabit 1958 E.C.

Police Abaloč Yä-Ereša Lemat Mahbär" and received land in Abdärafi adjacent to the Angäräb River in 1966. Brg.Gen. Seyum Gäsäsä, the commander of the police force of the governorate, and Col. Goytom Gäbrä Egzi were the president and vice-president of the association respectively.[24] At the same time, several individuals obtained land either in-groups or individually in the area. However, there were disputes and local opposition in the course of granting land to the farmers in the area. The dispute was between the local *balabats* represented by Wakšum Näwäţä and the sub-district officials. Both parties claimed they were the authorized body to distribute land to the mechanized farmers.[25] The local opposition and dispute remained unsolved until the end of the imperial era.

Commercial farming in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé in the early 1960s was started by settlers from Wällo. Due to drought and famine in Wällo in 1962, the imperial government settled first a group of Muslim people from Wärä Himänu at Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé. Two years later, another group from the same area arrived and settled in Mätäma. In the same way, due to land degradation a group of people mainly Muslims from Gayint settled in Mätäma in the early 1960s. These Muslim settlers started commercial farming of sesame, sorghum and cotton. Gradually, they brought and settled their relatives to the area, and by the mid-1960s, their number had reached more than two thousand. The Muslims were settled in the localities of Das, Šähädi, Beršin, Qächen Mäsäläya, Areba Amba and they engaged in cultivating sesame, sorghum, and

[24]YäBägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat YäPolice Abaloč YäEreša Mahbär Mäşehét (1963), 5-8; Addis Zemen, "YäAbdärafi Edegät", dated 19 Ţer 1963 E.C; Addis Zemen, "YäBägémder Polisoč YäChenät Mekina Täsäţachäw", dated 25 Hamlé 1960 E.C.

[25]NGAZRO, a letter from Yishaq Täšomä (secretary of the Abdärafi sub-district) to Seyoum Gäsäsä (Commander of Bägémder and Semén Police), Ref.no.266/12/60, dated 12 Genbot 1960 E.C; a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to *Fitawrari* Täsfayä Asnaqä (Governor of Gondar *Awraja*), Ref.no.35/1151/60, dated 11 Säné1960 E.C.

cotton, and kept cattle.[26] Thus, they had started commercial farming in Chilga sub-province prior to the granting of land to commercial farmers of the surrounding people.

Different sections of the local population opposed the settlements of Muslims carried out by the imperial government. Government officials from Addis Ababa like *Däjjazmač* Wubnäh Täsäma (member of the Senate), Senešaw Bitäw (members of the Chamber of Deputies), the local people and *balabats* in the adjacent highlands did not welcome the settlers because they argued that the land the Muslims cultivated were their *rest* lands. The local people submitted petitions to various government offices and demanded the departure of the Muslims from the area. They claimed that their ancestors had died in the area fighting against foreign invaders (i.e. Mahdists and Italians) for the independence of the country and therefore they have a strong attachment to Mätäma. The local *balabats* also argued that they had been using the area mainly for hunting wild animals, collecting of wild honey and other forest resources like wood and wild fruits, and grazing their cattle. And for all of these they had paid tax to the state and tribute to local officials in different forms, including skins of lions and tigers.[27]

Although there were no nomadic pastoralist people in Chilga sub-province, the adjacent highland farmers seasonally used the lowlands for grazing purpose during the dry season when there was shortage of grass and the threat from malaria declines. Hunting in the forest lands along the Sudanese border had also a significant place in the culture of the people in the *awraja*. The status

[26]NALAE Code 17.1.13.17.13, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw (vice-*endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén) to Gétahun Täsäma (Minister of Interior), Ref.no.27/9/65, dated 3 Mäskäräm 1966 E.C; a letter from Lt. Yigzaw Asemälaš (Commander of Chilga *Awraja* Police) to the Bägémder and Semén Police Office, Ref.no. 3/12/ 7/63, dated 21 Mägabit 1965 E.C.

[27]WMTMAC, Folder name **በጌምድር**, a petition from Senešaw Bitäw to the Ministry of Interior, dated 14 Yäkatit 1956 E.C; a petition from *Däjjazmač* Wubnäh Täsäma to the Ministry of Interior, dated 12 Genbot 1955 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Wädaj, and Bäqälä.

given to the hunters depended on the type of wild animals they killed. Hunting elephants, tigers, and lions were a hard task and gave hunters a higher status than killing other wild animals and they used to wear ornaments made from parts (nail, skins and the likes) of animals they killed.[28] The following poem by the local people testifies how hunting had a significant place among the culture of the people:

አንጃ ወዲያ ማዶ የኩመር ስራስር
ደስ ይለኛል ጎበዝ አዳዳዉን ሲያስር፡፡
ጮሌዉስ (ዝሆኑ) ሄደ አሉ ተራራዉን ዙሮ
ማን ይከተለዋል ዉሃ ጥሙን ችሎ፡፡[29]

Under a Kumär (*Tamarindus indica*) tree beyond Anja River
I am happy to see a hero wearing ornaments made from hunted animals
An elephant has gone round a mountain
Who could follow him withstanding thirst?

Col. Fäläqä Mäkuriya, commander of the Eight[th] Brigade army at Azäzo, visited the borderlands in and around Mätäma in June 1967 and reported additional reasons why the local people opposed the Muslim settlers in the area:

> **… በዚህም ወረዳ የሚገኙ ክርስቲያን ህዝብ እስላም አምጥተዉ የሚያሰፍሩት አላግባብ ነዉ፣ ኢትዮጵያዊ እስላምች ከሱዳን እስላሞች ጋር እየተጋቡ መልሰዉ ክርስቲያኑን ይበድላሉ፣ ቀድሞዉንም አፄ ዩሃንስን ያስገደለ አንድ ኢትዮጵያዊ እስላም ሰይድ እረጅሙ የሚባለዉ ለቱርኮች መርቶ ነዉ፣ […] የቀድሞዉ ሳያንስ አሁን ደግሞ እስላም በተጨማሪ እያመጡ ያሰፍሩብናል የሚል የህዝብ ቅሬታ ይሰማል፡፡**[30]
>
> … The Christian people of this district (Mätäma) said that Muslims marry Sudanese and they in turn would ill-treat Christains. In the past, it is said that an Ethiopian Muslim named Seid Eräjemu had led the Turks [Mahdists] and caused the death of Emperor Yohannes IV; … In addition to these, the local people express their grievence on why the government is bringing and settling Muslims here.

From the above quotation, it is clear that the Mahdist invasion had a long lasting impact on the local people. Since their forefathers died there fighting them, the local people claimed the area as

[28]Informants: Abuhay, Sisay, Qoye, Haylé and *Merigeta* Zämikael; Bäkur, "Adän Dero ena Zändero", 21 Miyaziya 1995 E.C; Messing, 100-101.
[29] Bäkur Gazéṭa, "Adän Dero Ena Zändero", 21 Miyaziya 1995 E.C.
[30] NGAZRO, a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 13 Säné 1959 E.C.

their *rest* land. In the highland area of northwestern Ethiopia there was also a religious discourse during the imperial period that Muslims had no the right to own *rest* land. However, presenting the Mahdist war against Ethiopia as a religious war was not correct although Christians had suffered a lot. Moreover, the local Christian people had developed smooth relations with Muslim Sudanese. Religion was not an issue for the local people and this was similarly evident when the local people opposed Christians who came from outside the local area when they received lands for commercial farming in the same area.

Resisting the local opposition, the Muslims cultivated the land partly under the jurisdiction of the Mahbärä Selassé Monastery; they used to pay tax and tribute to the monastery. However, gradually these Muslims demanded to construct a mosque in the area and this brought conflict between the Muslims and the Christians within the jurisdiction of the monastery.[31] As a result, throughout the imperial period, the surrounding people murdered many Muslims and repeatedly raided their cattle and goats, and burnt their huts and crops. Although government officials did not take immediate actions until the end of the imperial period, the Muslim settlers submitted petitions continuously to different government offices expressing the problems they faced in the area.[32]

It was while the conflict between the Muslim settlers and the surrounding *balabats* was unfolding that commercial agriculture started in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé in the mid-1960s. The pioneers of commercial agriculture in Mätäma were retired and active soldiers of the Eighth

[31]NALAE code 17.1.13.17.13, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Gétahun Täsäma (Minister of Interior), Ref.no.27/9/65, dated 3 Mäskäräm 1966 E.C; a letter from Lt.Yigzaw Asemälaš (Commander of Chilga *Awraja* Police) to the Bägémder and Semén Police Office, Ref. no. 3/12/7/63, dated 21 Mägabit 1965 E.C.
[32]NALAE code 17.1.13.09.04, a petition from Gašaw Dawud and *Sheik* Mähameä Yimam (Wällo Settlers representatives) to the Ministry of Interior, dated 11 Säné 1968 E.C; NGAZRO, a petition from Wällo settlers to Gen. Näga Tägäň, dated 4 Pagumé 1966 E.C; a petition from Wällo settlers to Därg, dated 7 Säné 1967 E.C.

Brigade Army at Gondar. First, 400 members contributed $170 *berr* each and set up a share association named "Yä-Sementäňaw Brigade Yäräjem Zämän Agälegelot Yä-Ereša Lemat Mahbär." The chairperson of the association was Col. Bärhé Adego, who was the commander of the brigade before Col. Fäläqä Mäkuriya replaced him in early 1967. The initial capital of the share company was $66,000 *berr.* The company received about 400 *gašas* of land at Kumär in March 1966 and started cultivation of sesame, sorghum, and cotton using one tractor and four pairs of oxen on three *gašas* of land. In the following year, they added one tractor and cultivated additional seven *gašas* of land. Thus, in the first two years, they were able to cultivate ten *gašas* of land using two tractors and several pairs of oxen with at least 80 laborers.[33]

Following the footsteps of the Eight Brigade Army, several provincial as well as central government officials individually and in-group applied for farm land in Mätäma. Forming a group or association among family members and relatives was common. Based on the requests made, the governor of Mätäma granted lands to the farmers starting from 1966/7. The farmers paid $5 *berr* tax per *gaša* of land to the government when they received the land. Individuals made their best effort to get as much land as possible. It was common for many people to receive land in Mätäma and in Lower Aremacheho at the same time individually or as members of different association groups. As archival records indicate, the minimum amount of land given to a farmer was half a *gaša*; depending on the economic and political power of the individual who made the request, larger amount of land was given to government officials and members of the

[33]Addis Zemen, "Lä Ţuräta Yäwäţu Wätadäroč Bä 66,000 Berr Yä-Ereša Mahebär Aquaquamu", dated 30 Nähasé 1959 E.C; NGAZRO, a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.ፃ/46/25/4285/3ሐ 11, dated 26 Genbot 1960 E.C; a petition from the Eight Brigade farm association to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 30 Ţeqemet 1961 E.C

army. Moreover, individuals who applied for land in the initial years received better land than those who applied in later years.[34]

Most provincial officials had land in Mätäma, Lower Armacheho, and Mahbärä Selasé. Among the officials who had lands in Mätäma were *Däjjazmač* Ameha Abära one *gaša*, Major Maru Garäd one *gaša*, *Däjjazmač* (*Bitwädäd*) Gäsäsä Räta with his sons 20 *gašas*, *Fitawrari* Abreha Mäšäša nine *gašas*, Brg. Gen. Seyum Gäsäsä five *gašas*, Lt. Gen. Yilma Sebäš together with Gärima Tafärä and others 60 *gašas*. Government officials who had lands in Mahbärä Selasé were *Belata* Admasu Räta, Näbeyu Le'ul Keflé and others 20 *gašas*, Lt. Gen. Yilma Sebäš and others had 10 *gašas*. Officials who had lands in Lower Armacheho were Lt. Gen. Diresé Dubalä, Däbäbä Haylä Mareyam, *Belata* Admasu Räta and others 20 *gašas*, YäBägémder ena Semén Police Force Associations (including Generals Gašaw Käbädä, Diresé Dubalä, Däbäbä Haylä Mareyam and others) 250 *gašas*.[35]

Land granting in Mätäma was accomplished earlier than in Mahbärä Selasé where it was continued into the last years of the Imperial period. This was because Mätäma was closer to Gondar than other areas and it had a dry season road that passed through it. As a result, farmers were first interested in Mätäma and almost all cultivable lands were distributed to the farmers. Then new applicant farmers went to Mahbärä Selasé, which was remote from the dry road and where vacant land existed and the granting of lands was continued until 1973.[36]

[34] NGAZRO, various land registration forms of the commercial farmers.
[35]NALAE, a letter from Bäzabeh Gäbré (Administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province) to Mäbratu Mängestu (Minister of National Resource Development), dated 9 Hamlé 1967 E.C.
[36] NGAZRO, various registration forms of the commercial farmers.

As compared to Abdärafi and Sätit-Humära, Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé had better soil, streams and adequate rain fall for crop production. However, the cultivated land was small; it was the third next to Sätit-Humära and Abdärafi.[37] This could be partly illustrated by the number of tractors used in the region. For instance, in August 1971, there were 16 tractors in Mätäma, 35 tractors in Abdärafi and 422 tractors in Sätit-Humära in addition to thousands of oxen farmers in the areas.[38] Thus, unlike in Sätit-Humära and Abdärafi where much of the land was cultivated using tractors, much of the land in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé was cultivated using oxen. As a result, the farming system in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé was more of a commercial than a mechanized one. Moreover, Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé areas relatively had more forestland than Abdärafi and Sätit-Humära and therefore needed more labor to clear and cultivate the land. The area also was infested with outlaws than Abdärafi and Sätit-Humära which hindered the development of commercial farming.

Factors that Hindered Commercial Farming

Commercial farmers in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé faced several internal and external problems that hindered their activities. Most of the problems resulted from the borderland location of the sub-province while others were due to the unplanned nature of the commercial agriculture undertaken in the area. Like their opposition to Muslim settlers from Wällo and Gayint, different sections of the local people opposed the granting of lands to commercial farmers in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé. Alämnäh Bälay and Täklé Räda (members of the Chamber of Deputies representing Chilga *Awraja*), local governors, and *balabats* of Chilga

[37]NGAZRO, "YäBägémder ena Semén Ṭäqelay Gezat Hulätäňaw YäEdegät Ena Lemat Säminar" (Gondar: Central Printing Press, 1964 E.C), 122; TAMS, "*The Humera Report: Resources and Development Planning"* (Addis Ababa: Ministry of Agriculture, 1974), 9.
[38]NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Lägäsä Bäzu (Minister De'ata of Ministry of Interior), Ref.no.31/923 /62, dated 25 Nähasé 1963 E.C.

awraja opposed the granting of land to commercial farmers from the very beginning. The local people in the highlands adjacent to Mahbärä Selasé and Mätäma from Adaň Agär, Chaqo, Dawa, Quara, Tänkäl, Aläfa-Ţaqusa, Armacheho and Mätäma submitted petitions to the government officials protesting the granting of land in the lowlands to commercial farmers. The reason was similar to their opposition against the Muslim settlers that is the lowlands were their *rest* land and used it for hunting games and grazing their cattle. In return they paid tax to the government and different kinds of tribute to the local officials. The received the lowlands from their forefathers who have died there fighting against the Mahdists and Italians. They also expressed unlawfulness of granting lands to commercial farmers in Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé in the name of vacant lands/ forestlands which were categorized under government land in the 1955 constitution. They also stated that when they submitted their case to the nearby government officials, they did not give consideration to their petitions since the officials themselves were main land holders in the area.[39] Thus, these sections of the local people encouraged the local bandits to loot commercial farmers.

The other problem was malpractice among lower officials in the process of granting lands which led to disputes among the farmers. Initially, lands were granted to farmers by locally called "**ዓይነ ገመዲ**" (Lit.eye estimation). There were no clearly determined boundaries of the land given to the farmers; rivers, trees and other physical features were used to delineate the boundaries.

[39] WMTMAC, a petition from Asäfa Wubenäh, Gälayä Gobaw and *Fitawrari* Käbbädä Daňäw (representatives of the people of Chilga *Awraja*) to the Ministry of Interior, folder name ቦጌ ምድር, dated 15 Miyaziya 1959 E.C; a petition from Alämnäh Bälay and Täklé Räda to *Ato* Bayesa Jammo (President of the Chamber of Deputies), dated 22 Miyaziya 1958 E.C; NGAZRO, a petition from *Qäňazmač* Abuhay Fänta (Tänkäl people representative) to Chilga *Awraja* Court Office, dated 19 Mägabit 1963 E.C; a petition from *Qäňazmač* Abuhay Fänta (governor of Tänkäl sub-district) to the Governorate-General Office, dated 15 Miyaziya 1963 E.C; NALAE code 17.1.13.18.08, a petition from Ţaqusa sub-district people to Maj. Gen. Näga Tägäň, dated 28 Hamlé 1966 E.C.

Sometimes there were overlapping of granting of some lands and this led farmers into disputes.[40] Thus, some farmers instead of cultivating their lands spent their time in litigation. From the very beginning, realizing the difficulty of the task of land granting, Mulugéta Mälké (the governor of Mätäma from 1962 to 1967) asked the governor-general office that since Mätäma was a border district, he needed better and knowledgeable officials who could help him in the task of granting land and administering the district. He noted that the officials working with him like the assistant governor and secretary of the district were incompetent.[41]

There was also lack of coordination among officials of Chilga *Awraja*; there was disagreement among *Fitawrari* Färädä Ţerunäh (the governor of Chilga *Awraja* from 1966 to 1972), Mulugéta and lower officials. Abuse of power and corruption was also rampant; officials gave land to several individuals at any time and they refused to give to other farmers unless it was in November of each year.[42] The problems were created due to incompetency and lack of experiences among officials in Mätäma. These were Alämu Bayeh (secretary of the Mätäma sub-district), Mäbratu Damţäw (head of the record office of Mätäma district), Awäqä Zeqé (secretary of Mätäma), and *Fitawrari* Manaläbeh Bitäwa (the aged vice-governor of Mätäma). They were criticized and blamed for refusing orders from Mulugéta who was also criticized by higher officials for lack of managing his officials.[43] Färädä Ţerunäh, after investigating the case,

[40]NGAZRO, a letter from Major Maru Garäd (governor of Mätäma district) to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated Yäkatit 1960 E.C; a letter from Mulugéta Mälké to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no.1351/60, dated 10 Mäskäräm 1959 E.C; a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Färädä Ţerunäh, Ref. no. 31/ 1051/59, dated 10 Hamlé 1959 E.C.

[41] NGAZRO, a letter from Mulugéta Mälké to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.1351/60, dated 10 Mäskäräm 1959 E.C.

[42] NGAZRO, a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.2/46/100/764/1, dated 13 Säné 1959 E.C; a secret study report from unknown man (who was ordered by Tamrat to visit Mätäma) to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 16 Säné 1959 E.C.

[43]NGAZRO, a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya, …, Ref. no. 2/46/100/764/1, dated 13 Säné 1959 E.C; a letter from Färädä Ţerunäh to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.1032/59/60, dated 11 Hedar 1960 E.C; a letter from Mulugéta Mälké to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref. no. 1193/17/59, dated 7 Hamlé 1959 E.C.

recommended the transfer of these local officials to other interior districts. Färädä also emphasized the need to appoint a governor who would be loyal, responsible, and if possible who could speak and write foreign language on the district of Mätäma.[44] Based on the recommendation and the beginning boundary dispute with the Sudan, the imperial government appointed Major Maru Garäd, who was a member of the Ethiopian peace keeping unit sent to Congo, as governor of Mätäma the 1967.[45] Major Maru tried to address some of these challenges. Thus the incompetency of the local officials to manage land granting hindered the development of commercial farming in Mätäma.

The other internal problem was shortage of food for farmers and laborers in 1966. This was because following the Ethio-Sudan border conflict along the Sätit-Humära borderlands in 1966, the Sudanese refused to export food crops to Mätäma. Since sufficient food crop was not harvested locally in Mätäma, farmers and laborers faced shortage of food. For instance, there were about 5,000 laborers in Mätäma in 1967 Due to shortage of food, many laborers left Mätäma for Sätit-Humära or their homes where relatively better food supplies were available. When the Sudanese found the Ethiopians from the Sudan trying to import food crops illicitly, they expropriated these as well as the pack animals of Ethiopians. Ethiopian customs officials also did not allow the smugglers to import food crops from the Sudan without paying tax. Government officials tried to reduce the shortage of food by purchasing grain and sent to Mätäma before the rainy season of 1967.[46]

[44] NGAZRO, a letter from Färädä Ţerunäh,…cited above, Ref. no.1032/59/60, dated 11 Hedar 1960 E.C.
[45] Addis Zemen, "Mätäma Tenant Ena Zaré", dated 19 Yäkatit 1960 E.C.
[46] NGAZRO, a secret study report from unknown man,… cited above, dated 16 Säné 1959 E.C.

Most farmers did not start cultivation immediately after they received the land and this was another factor that hindered the development of commercial farming in the region. In 1967/68, the total amount of land that the farmers requested in Mätäma was said to be greater than the total estimated area of the district; it was more than 5,000 *gašas* against an estimated 4,000 *gašas* of the district (This was excluding part of the district under the jurisdiction of Mahbärä Selasé). Until the beginning of 1968, between 800 and 900 *gašas* of land was given to farmers in Mätäma. However, most farmers did not start cultivating the land they received. As was the case in Sätit-Humära, most farmers of Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé were absentees. Many of them did not visit their lands but rather had obtained their certificates containing the right to cultivate the land for ten years through their representatives. Even after they received these certificates, many farmers transferred their land use right to others.[47] This was partly because most farmers of Mätäma were from the highlands and it was difficult for them to reside in the lowlands for a longer time due to the prevalence of malaria. Although the government sometimes sprayed the area with DDT, there were no adequate health centers or clinics in the area for a long time that could cater for the needs of these highland farmers.

The farmers did not start cultivation partly because the certificate form they signed stated that a farmer who received the land should start cultivation within two years and had to cultivate completely within ten years. Thus, there was a gap in the contract form signed by the farmers and government officials.[48] Major Maru explained how this loophole has been exploited by the land recipients as follows:

[47]NGAZRO, a letter from Maru Garäd to Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu, no dated, Yäkatit 1960 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Mätäma Tenant Ena Zaré", dated 19 Yäkatit 1960 E.C.
[48] NGAZRO, land registration form and certificate.

> …የመምሪያዉ ደምብ ማብራሪያ በሚያመለክተዉ መሰረት መሬቱን ተመርተዉ የሚገኙት ሰዎች ከደንቡ ጋር ተስማሚ ሆነዉ ለመገኘት ሲሉ ከ40-50 ካሬ ሜትር በምትሆን ቦታ ላይ እፍኝ የማትሞላ አዝርት በትነዉና አንዳንዶችም ደግሞ አራት አምስት እንጨቶችን በመቁረጥ ልማቱን ጀምረናል መጨረስ ያለብን እስከ 10 አመት ነዉ በሚል መከላከያ ብዙ መሬት ይዘዉ ለልማቱ እንቅፋት ሁነዉ ስለሚገኙ፣ በዚህ ሁኔታ የተራመድን እንደሆነ የመተማ ልማት የቀን ህልም ሆኖ እንዳይቀር ያሰጋል:: [49]
>
> …to be in harmony with the directives of land granting form, those farmers who received land are claiming to cultivate and saw less than a handful grain on their 40 to 50 square meters lands. Others, by cutting down four or five trees, they argued that they start cultivation and will complete it up to ten years. They hold large land and became an obstacle to the development of commercial farming. If we move forward in this condition, it is doubtfull that the development of commercial farming in Mätäma will be a daydream.

Major Maru tried to improve the development of commercial farming in the area by taking different actions. However, several local factors hindered his efforts. First, he recommended that a farmer should cultivate 1/5 of his land within two years and had to cultivate all the land within five years. Until a detailed study of the land was made Maru stopped for some time granting land to the farmers in January 1968. Second, since shortage of water and security was the other problem to commercial farmers and merchants at Mätäma Yohannes, he transferred the center of the administrative office of Mätäma district to Tändälti, about 15 kilometers inland from the border on the bank of the Guang River.[50] In fact, some months before Maru's appointment, Col. Fäläqä Mäkuriya, the newly appointed commander of the Eighth Brigade at Gondar, had visited the town and recommended the shifting of the administrative center of Mätäma district from Mätäma Yohannes to a locality away from the border for the security of the commercial farmers and merchants who lived in the town. The shortage of water for the merchants of Mätäma was worsened by the construction of about eight deep water wells by the Sudanese along their border

[49] NGAZRO, a letter from Major Maru Garäd to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated Yäkatit 1960 E.C.
[50] Addis Zemen, "Mätäma Tenant Ena Zaré", dated 19 Yäkatit 1960 E.C; NGAZRO, a letter from Maru Garäd to Tamrat Yegäzu, no dated, Yäkatit 1960 E.C.

with Mätäma. The Ethiopian officials feared that these deep wells would drain Mätäma's ground water and would make the water problem of Mätäma more severe. The condition forced Tamrat Yegäzu to visit Mätäma in February 1971 and he recommended the construction of a similar deep water wells in Mätäma.[51]

Although experts approved the suitability of Tändälti and confirmed its favorable position than Mätäma Yohannes to be district capital, the inhabitants of Mätäma town refused to relocate their houses to the new site for various reasons. They therefore petitioned to Tamrat Yegäzu against the move to Tändälti. In their petition they stressed Mätäma's historic significance and its security importance for the country to keep off Sudanese penetration along the border.[52] Thus, Mätäma Yohannes remained the political center. Moreover, *Fitawrari* Färädä had no smooth relation with Maru, who refused to accept Färädä's order.[53] Thus, these cases might have disappointed Major Maru who left his governorship of Mätäma to Lt. Col. Amarä Dämesé in June 1971.

Lack of roads and social services was the other internal problem that hindered the development of commercial farming in the area. Since the road from Gondar to Mätäma was not used mostly for cars, commercial farmers in the area faced problem to deliver their product to Gondar and other markets in of the country. They were forced to pay tax at the custom posts to export to the Sudan.[54] Members of the Eight Brigade submitted a petition to Tamrat Yegäzu in November 1968 emphasizing the challenges they faced due to lack of a road for car in the area and to take

[51]NGAZRO, letters from Tamrat Yegäzu to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no. 35/723/62, dated 27 Säné 1962 E.C and Ref. no.35/396/62, dated 24 Yäkatit 1963 E.C.
[52] NGAZRO, a petition from Mätäma town people to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 10 Ţeqemet 1964 E.C.
[53]NGAZRO, a letter from Färädä Ţerunäh to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.2826/19/1773, dated 4 Mägabit 1962 E.C.
[54]NGAZRO, a petition from Bägémder and Semén people representative in the Chamber of Deputies to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 1 Yäkatit 1959 E.C.

their product to markets found in the country.[55] Other farmers also petitioned government stating the necessity to reconstruct the Gondar-Mätäma road. Farmers also contributed money to help the government to construct the road. In early 1968, farmers of Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé set up a committee to organize the contribution of money for the road from Azäzo to Mätäma. *Bäjerond* Eskender Dähené was elected as the chairperson, Col. Bärhé Adego as the vice-chairmen, and Mängestu Ţerunäh as the secretary, and Omär Yasin as the cashier of the committee.[56]

The reconstruction of the road from Azäzo to Mätäma, about 220 kilometers, was started in May 1968 with the money contributed by the local people and the government.[57]The contract to construction this road was given to the Ethiopian Ground Army Engineering Department. Due to constantly changed of managers who oversaw this road project, rainy season, existence of several rivers, lack of funds and the hot weather, the construction was delayed and interrupted several times,[58]and it was never completed during the imperial period. This hampered the development of commercial farming in Mätäma. In the early months of 1971, the Imperial Highway Authority constructed an iron bridge over the Angäräb River that separates Lower Armacheho and Sätit-Humära. The river had been an obstacle in the movement of people in the area and it was hard to cross it on the rainy season. The bridge made transportation relatively easier.[59] In May 1971, an Iron Bridge on the Guang River was constructed and connected

[55] NGAZRO, a petition from the Eight Brigade Farm Association to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 30 Ţeqemet 1961 E.C.
[56]Addis Zemen, "Kä Azäzo - Mätäma Lemisäraw Mängäd Šumament Tämärätä", dated 16 Hamlé 1960 E.C.
[57]Addis Zemen, "Altewäram…", cited above, dated 12 Yäkatit 1960E.C; "Ka-Gondar….", cited above, dated 28 Hedar 1961E.C; "Yä Humära Hezeb 80,000 Yeţägal Täbalä", dated 2 Tahsas 1961 E.C; NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Lägäsä Bäzu, cited above, Ref.no. 31/ 923/62, dated 25 Nähasé 1963 E.C.
[58]Addis Zemen, "Kä Azäzo-Mätäma Yämängäd Sera 2 Amät Yifäşämal", dated 13 Mäskäräm 1962; Addis Zemen, "Kä Azäzo - Mätäma Mängäd 111 kilometer Täsära", dated 5 Genbot 1963 E.C.
[59]Addis Zemen, "Yä Angäräb Deldey Sera Täţänaqäqä", dated 24 Säné 1963 E.C; NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Lägäsä Bäzu, …cited above, Ref.no. 31/923/62, dated 25 Nähasé 1963 E.C.

Mätäma and Lower Armacheho. However, the road from Humära to Mätäma was constructed by human labor for the dry season and it was difficult for trucks. Mätäma's commercial farmers were forced to pay high costs to transport their crops to Abdärafi and Humära.[60] In May 1972, another Iron Bridge was constructed on the upper part of Guang River, about 31 kms west of Azäzo on the road to Aykäl, and it connected Chilga and Dämbiya districts. The Ethiopian Ground Army Engineering Department supported by the British Army built the bridge and Emperor Haile Sellassie cut its opening ribbon.[61]

Absence of banks to lend money to farmers in Mätäma was the other internal problem that farmers faced in the area, although some of these farmers borrowed some amount of money from Humära branch of Agricultural and Development Bank that was opened in 1971. The harvesting of sesame crop needed proper care at cutting time which lasts from September to December in each year. If the crops were not harvested on time they were easily destroyed. Therefore, farmers in the harvest season had to employ thousands of laborers and a considerable amount of money was needed. Farmers also gave provisions to the laborers. The payment for laborers was dependent on the amount of sesame they cut and measured locally in a unit called *Héla*. One *héla* was equal to 400 č*ebo* (bands or fistful).[62] Thus, like the case with Sätit-Humära and Abdärafi farmers, the commercial farmers of Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé were forced to make "shell" agreements with merchants.[63] "Shell" was a system in which the farmers made an agreement to sell their produce to the money lenders at a lower price than the price it had on the open market.

[60]TAMS, 181.
[61]Addis Zemen, "BäAzäzo ena BäMätäma Mäsemär Soset Deldeyoč Yesäralu", dated 3 Ţer 1964 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Geremawi Janhoy Bä Guang Wänz Lay Yätäsärawun Deldey Märeqäw Käfätu" dated 9 Genbot 1964 E.C.
[62] NGAZRO, a letter from Täsfayä Geday (Bägémder and Semén, Gojjam and Tegray Development Office) to the Ministry of National Community Development and Social Affairs, Ref. no.ሥ.2/ሀ·/64, dated 8 Hamlé 1964 E.C.
[63] NGAZRO, "YäBägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Hulätäňaw …", 122.

Thus, money lenders exploited most farmers twice; first they required them to pay interest on the money they borrowed, and second they forced them to sell their produce at a lower price to them.[64]

Since the commercial farmers of Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé did not set up a cooperative until 1971/72, they did not benefit more from the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank at Humära branch. For instance, 1970/71, only 33 farmers of Mätäma and Humära borrowed only $300,000 *berr* at 10% annual interest rate, while the bank lent several million *berr* to mainly the cooperatives of Sätit-Humära and Abdärafi farmers.[65] Since the bank gave more credit to the cooperative farmers, farmers of Mätäma and Mahbärä Selasé set up a cooperative named "Yä-Mätäma Ena Mahbärä Selasé Gäbäréwäč Hulägäb Mahebär". Establishing a multipurpose cooperative was important to farmers in many ways: they could get more loan from the bank, buy agricultural input and tractors at relatively lower price, sale their crops to merchants relatively at a higher price than the open market etc.[66]

Pest infestation and attack by worms that broke out occasionally was the other problem that the farmers in the area faced. For instance, in 1972/73, pests and worms like black arms, Amerzan Bollworms, Sudan bollworms and Espine bollworms destroyed the cotton crop in the area. Although pesticide was sprayed with the help of Gondar Ginning Factory, the worm destroyed between 25% and 30% of the cotton farms in that year.[67] The Ministry of Agriculture did not

[64]Addis Zemen, "Yä Sätit Humära Lemat", dated 12 Hedar 1960 E.C.
[65]Addis Zemen, "LäBägémder Gäbäréwäč Yä-Ereša ena Yälemat Bank 7 millions Berr Abädärä", dated 23 Tahsas 1964 E.C.
[66] NGAZRO, "YäBägémder ena Semén Ţäqelay Gezat Hulätäňaw …", 108.
[67]NGAZRO, a study report from expert groups to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, dated 1 Ţeqemet 1965 E.C.

respond to these attacks immediately; even the ministry asked the farmers to share cost to cover per diem for experts to be sent to the area.[68]

The monastery of Mahbärä Selasé, banditry and local instability were the other factor that hindered the development of commercial agriculture in the area. The heads of the monastery argued that government officials had granted lands that belonged to the monastery to farmers. This led dispute and became an obstacle for the operation of commercial farming.[69] Banditry and local instability in and around Mätäma became worse in the last decade of the imperial regime concurrent with the advent of commercial farming. Burning of farms and crops, vehicle robbery on the road from Gondar to Mätäma, stealing of oxen and other properties of the farmers, and other illegal activities were common in the area, especially in the last four years of the imperial government.[70] Lawlessness was deep-rooted especially at Kokit, where commercial farming first started in Mätäma. Well-armed outlaws created serious problems to the local people in the area. They stole cattle and sometimes returned them to owners in return for money. They treated the local people harshly; when the people presented their cases to the government officials, they faced reprisals from the outlaws. As part of possible solution, government officials proposed to disarm the local people at Kokit.[71] However, the activities of outlaws did not decrease in the area.

Banditry and local instability in the area occasionally was accompanied by the outbreak of fires. Due to unknown reason, fire broke out in Mätäma Yohannes town at night on 2 March 1972 and

[68]NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture to Mätäma Mahbärä Selasé Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative, Ref. no. 8862/1, dated 10 Genbot 1965 E.C.
[69]NGAZRO, a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.ያ/46/25/4285/3አ11, dated 26 Genbot 1960 E.C.
[70]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Färädä Ţerunäh, Ref.no. 3/275/64, dated 26 Tahsas 1964 E.C; a minute of officials meeting, dated 11 Säné1965 E.C.
[71] NGAZRO, a minute of officials meeting, dated 11 Säné1965 E.C.

destroyed houses and properties of the residents. Due to this, many merchants and commercial farmers were bankrupted and deserted the town. The people presented petitions to the government demanding subsidies.[72] On 5 March 1974, about 690 quintals of cotton that belonged to GEB agriculture association was set on fire in Maṭäbiya.[73] It was difficult for the police force to control the activities of the outlaws and bring them to justice. There was a small number of police force in the area and they had insufficient transport service and other facilities to carry out their duties.[74]

The Impact of the Ethio-Sudan boundary Negotiation and Agreements on Commercial Farms

The former Bägémder and Semén province shared about 500 kilometers boundary with the Sudan, from Täkäzé in the north to Ayima River in the south. Gywnn had placed 18 beacons as boundary marks on this section and the average distance between the beacons was about 27.7 kilometers. However, since some of Gwynn's boundary marks were removed, it was difficult to know whether the cultivated land belonged either to Ethiopia or the Sudan. The nature of the boundary did not follow a clear physical demarcation marks like rivers and watersheds but rather via plain lowlands and sometimes used mountains found at far distances. The 1902 treaty mentioned only a few areas as from Khore Um Hager to Gallabat to the Blue Nile.

The Sudan and Ethiopia started officially the boundary negotiation in Addis Ababa in July 1965 and agreed to form a Joint Consultative Committee composed of the higher officials of the two

[72]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Amarä Dämesé to Bäqälä Zäläläw, Ref. no.2026/12, dated 27 Nähasé 1964 E.C.
[73]NGAZRO, a petition from Amanuel Täsfamareyam (GEB Representative Manager) to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 17 Miyaziya 1966 E.C; a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Bägémder and Semén Police Office, Ref.no. 107/ማ7/ 11/59, dated 20 Mägabit 1966 E.C; a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to *Mäneher* Gäbrä Selasé Haylämareyam of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery, Ref.no. 111/ማ7/11/59, dated 18 Miyaziya 1966 E.C.
[74]NALAE Code 17.1.13.15.04, a letter from Gen. Yilema Sebäš (Commander of Ethiopian Police) to Commander of Bägémder and Semén Police, Ref. no. 4218/8/84, dated 4 Genbot 1963 E.C.

countries to implement the would be agreements on the relationship between the two states including their boundary.[75] Their higher officials met in Khartoum in June 1966 and set up a Joint Boundary Commission of Experts to demarcate their international boundary. On the boundary they also agreed "to respect and recognize the *status quo* without prejudice to the treaty and protocol rights of either party."[76] The Joint Ethio-Sudan Boundary Commission met at Addis Ababa from 18 November to 1 December 1966. The two parties had different views on the boundary. The Ethiopian party rejected Gwynn's boundary marks and proposed the demarcation of the boundary based on the 1902 treaty because he demarcated the boundary without representative from the Ethiopia's side contrary to the treaty's requirement. On the other side, the Sudanese officials argued that Gywnn's demarcation was legal and it had to be re-demarcated and re-fixed in order to avoid border conflict.[77]

Ethiopian officials were cautious in the negotiation on lands mainly from Mätäma town to Dinder River where Gwynn performed a greater deviation in favor of the Sudan, especially from Mätäma to Daglish Mount.[78] The strategic and military significance of the mountains of Jebel Halawa (locally known as mount Näbes Gäbäya or Sekuar Tärara), Jebel Umdoga, and Jebel Mutana found in this section. Gwynn demarcated these mountains in three kilometers crest shape towards Ethiopia and placed them under the Sudan, although the treaty map line just ran straight

[75]Mesfen Woldemareyam *eta ls*, "Yä Iteyopeya and Sudan Wäsän Tarik", Vol. II, Joint Communique, dated 28 July 1965, IES Ms.no.1873; "Yä Iteyopeya Ena Sudan Wäsän Akälaläl Guday", Joint Communique, dated 28 July 1965, IES Ms.no.2351.
[76]Mesfen Woldemareyam *et als*,"Yä Iteyopeya ena Sudan Wäsän Tarik", Vol. II, Joint Communique, dated 27 July 1966, IES. Ms.no.1873; Addis Zemen,"Yä Itiopiya ena YäSudanen Wäsän Lämäkälälä Yä-Expärtoč Guad Yequaquamal", dated 22 Säné 1958 E.C.
[77]Mesfen Woldemareyam *et als*, "Yä Iteyopeya …" , Vol. II, Joint Communique, dated 1 December 1966, IES. Ms.no.1873; "Yä Iteyopeya Ena…", a minute of Ethiopian Higher officials headed by Gétahun Täsäma (Minister of Interior), dated 11 Mägabit 1964 E.C, IES. Ms.no.2351.
[78]"Yä Iteyopeya Ena …", a minute of Ethiopian Higher…, dated 11 Mägabit 1964 E.C, IES Ms.no.2351; David Hamilton, 309-310.

between these mountain peaks. Ethiopian officials demanded to make these mountains peaks as boundary instead of placing them under the Sudan.[79] Thus, due to disagreement, the discussion of the two countries on the boundary was adjourned on 1 December 1966.[80]

When Ethiopian officials made great effort in the negotiations to gain the fertile commercial land from Sätit to Dinder River, farmers in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings criticized Haylä Selasé's government for making negotiation with the Sudan. A member of the Chamber of Deputies from Bägémder and Semén, submitted an application letter to the House of the Chamber of Deputies in January 1967 by expressing the voice of the local people. He believed that the Sudanese started boundary negotiation on the frontier claiming their boundary as far as Gywnn's mark since they were envious of the expansion of commercial agriculture by Ethiopian farmers and they demanded that the negotiation should be based on Menelik's 1891 circular letter. He also expressed that the local people used the land for long years by fighting against the Mahdists in the late 1880s and the Italians in the 1930s. In the fighting against the Mahdists, the people of Gondar, Gojjam and Wällo had paid their lives for the independence of the area. To show how the Šewan officials dominated the imperial government, he stated that the Šewan did not fight the Mahdists. After claiming Ethiopia's boundary was as far as Gedarif province, they noted that the 1902 Treaty was unknown among the people in the province and it had to be published in newspapers and let the people know it.[81]

[79]"Yä Iteyopeya Ena …", a letter from Getanuh Täsäma to the Council of Ministers, Ref.no. 4566/22, dated 7 Hedar 1966 E.C; a letter from Gétahun Täsäma to Aklilu Habtäwäld, Ref. no.22/2112, dated 12 Säné1965 E.C, IES. Ms.no. 2351; David Hamilton, 309-310.
[80]Mesfin Woldemareyam *et als*, "YäIteyopeya …", Vol. II, Joint Communique, dated 1 December 1966, IES. Ms.no.1873.
[81] "Bä1959 E.C Yaltawäqä Yä Parilama …", IES. Ms.no. 1120; Informants: Alämnäh, Sisay, Wädaj, Abuhay.

Instead of respecting the "status quo" agreement, local officials and farmers of the two countries especially in the Ethiopian side continued granting lands and rushed to control more lands. It was like applying the principle of "effective occupation" as a base for the boundary demarcation. The Ethiopian farmers never accepted Gwynn's marks as a legal boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan. They knew only of Menelik's 1891 circular letter to European states.[82] When information reached to the farmers about the treaty and demarcation, they disregarded it as a rumor. Farmers were also attracted by the profitability of the commercial farming in the area.[83]

Side by side with negotiation with the imperial government, the Sudanese committed various actions on the Ethiopian farmers in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in the late 1960s. Probably the Sudanese had planned either to argue they were Gwynn erected boundary marks or to block the rush of the Ethiopian farmers in creating new farmlands on the frontier, they constructed and erected new boundary marks in Ethiopia along Sätit-Humära, Lower Armacheho, Mätäma, Quara, and Mahbärä Selasé.[84] Are'aya Gäbrämädehen, governor of Chilga *Awraja*, stated in March 1966 how the Sudanese erected new marks as follows:

> …የሱዳን መንግስት ወሰኑን አልፎ ከኢትዮጵያ መሬት በመግባት፣ 1ኛ/በማህበር ስላሴ (ገዳም)፣ በማጠቢያ፣ በሽንፋ፣ በአስክኒት እስከ አለዉ በርሃ ድረስ 4 ጅፕ መኪናዎች በሱዳን ፖሊሶች እየታጀቡ ዜግነቱ ካልታወቀ አንድ ነጭ ጋር ሆኖ ከገነዲ ተራራ እስከ ወሰኑ በግምት 2 ኪሎ ሜትር ከኢትዮጵ መሬት ዉስጥ ለሊት ባዉላ እያበሩ በ4 ማዕዘን የተሰራ የጣዉላ እንጨት በዉስጡ በድንጋ የተሞላ ቁመቱ አንድ ሜትር ተኩል የተሰራ ምልክት አድርገዉ ፩፰ ቀን ያህል ቆይተዉ መመለሳቸዉን… በዚህ ሁኔታ ወሰኑ ሊደፈር የቻለዉ ያዉራጃዉ ግዛትና በወሰኑ ላይ የሚገኙ ወረዳ ገዥዎች የተሟላ ድርጅት ባይኖረንና ባይኖራቸዉ እንጅ ድርጅቱ ተሟልቶ ቢገኝ ኖሮ እነርሱ በ4ና በ5 መኪና ሆነዉ ሲመጡ በኛም በኩል 4ና 5 መኪና ይዘን እዩታዉ ድረስ ፈጥነን

[82] Informants: Alämnäh, and Sisay.
[83] "Yä Iteyopeya Ena…"; a letter from Gétahun … , Ref. no.22/2112, dated 12 Säné 1965 E.C, IES Ms.no.2351.
[84] NGAZRO, a petition of Sätit-Humära farmers to Seyum Gäsäsä, dated 10 Genbot 1959 E.C; a letter from Yeshaq Abdel Kärim (vice-commander of Mätäma police) to Mulugéta Mälké (governor of Mätäma district), Ref.no. በ2/ 143/58, dated 17 Yäkatit 1958 E.C; a letter from Mulugéta Mälké to Are'aya Gäbrämädehen, Ref.no. 373/5/58, dated 15 Miyaziya 1958 E.C.

በመገኘት እኛ እናስሎህ ነበር እንጅ አቤቱታ እስከ ማቅረብ ድረስ ባልደረስነም ነበር፡፡ …[85]

The government of the Sudan entered into the Ethiopian territory crossing the boundary in Mahbärä Selasé Monastery, Maṭäbiya, and Šinfa in the lowland up to Askänit. With four GP cars, a white man whose nationality is unknown escorted by the Sudanese police, entered into the Ethiopian territory from Gändi mountain up to the boundary about 2 kilometers and erected a rectangular concrete boundary mark with 1.5 meter long, at night. They returned after 15 days stay in the area. The Sudanese did this since we had no well-organized institutions on the frontier districts. If we had such facilities, we could arrive immediately in the area like them with four and five cars. Even we would have made them cry and would not have been writing a petition…

The Sudanese also destroyed Ethiopian farms, imprisoned farmers, and expropriated their properties from Mahbärä Selasé up to Sätit-Humära. They warned the Ethiopian farmers either to pay taxes to the Sudan or to leave the area since they cultivated lands that belonged to the Sudan.[86]

Because of the boundary disputes, the Sudanese also forced many Ethiopian laborers working in the farms to evacuate the Sudan. They refused to pay their salaries considering them as illegal workers and expropriated the property of Ethiopians. They were also imprisoned and faced physical punishments. For instance, between 50 and 60 Ethiopians were returned from the Sudan via Mätäma every day in December 1966.[87]

[85] NGAZRO, a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämädehen to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.2669/5, dated 1 Mägabit 1958 E.C.
[86]NGAZRO, a field visit report of higher provincial officials (Bäqälä Zäläläw, Seyum Gäsäsä, Täsfayä Asenaqä and Adanä Mäkonnen) to Tamrat Yegäzu, dated 10 Tahsas 1959 E.C; letters from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.51/19/97,dated 24 Ṭer 1959 E.C and Ref.no. 51/19/125, dated 17 Yäkatit 1958 E.C; a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.ም46/25/4285/3አ11, dated 26 Genbot 1960 E.C.
[87]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Damté Tämsgän (vice-commander of Bägémder and Semén Finance Police) to Bägémder and Semén Police Office, Ref.no.217/59, dated 21 Tahsas 1959 E.C; letters from Hagos Mäšäša (director of customs of Bägémder and Semén) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.5/59, dated 7 Mägabit 1959 E.C and Ref.no. 450/567/59, dated 24 Tahsas 1959 E.C.

Although the Sudan agreed with Ethiopia to return the properties of the Ethiopian farmers in the 1967 Joint-Ministerial Consultative meeting, it was not ready to respect and implement the agreement, and the Ethiopian government blamed it for violation of the "status quo" agreement. It was partly because of absence of stable government in the Sudan in the late 1960s and Sudanese officials had no intention of respecting the agreements.[88]

The Ethiopian government was not ready to defend its farmers against the Sudanese attacks for various reasons. First, it was pre-occupied with the Eritrean insurgency and other internal problems. Second, there was shortage of Ethiopian security force on the frontier districts. For instance, in January 1966, there were 10 police forces in Quara. In February 1967, there were 30 police in Mätäma, where there were about 70,000 inhabitants. They also lacked road and transport facilities to patrol the frontier. The Ethiopian higher authorities ordered local *näch läbaš ţor* to refrain from fighting the Sudanese fearing provoking a border clash..[89] The *näch läbaš ţor* were commonly assigned as the frontier guards for long years on the area. They served as assistant to the regular police to keep the security of the people. They were important to pursue bandits, guard prisoners, and escort local officials. They were armed local farmers without any salary. As a result, some of them involved in banditry activity crossing the border in the Sudan. This provoked fighting with the Sudanese who took countermeasures against the Ethiopian farmers.[90] Probably due to their outlaw behavior, the provincial officials forced about 160 *näch läbaš ţor* to evacuate from Mätäma and Lower Armacheho frontiers in 1965. Their

[88]NGAZRO, letters from Tamrat Yegäzu to Deräsé Dubalä, Ref.no.35/928/57, dated 3 Säné 1959 E.C and Ref. no. 35/400/57, dated 24 Ţer 1959 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Kä Sudan Gar Läläloč Mesalé Yämenehon Wädajenät Näbärän", dated 1 Hamlé 1959 E.C.

[89]NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.51/19/85, dated 24 Ţer 1958 E.C; a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Maj. Gen.Yelma Šibäš (Commander of Ethiopian Police), Ref.no.3/32/6258, dated 1 Mägabit 1959 E.C.

[90]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw (Director of Bägémder and Semén Governorate) to Keflé Ergätu (Acting Minister of Interior), Ref.no. 35/1363/57, dated 6 Miyaziya 1957 E.C.

departure made the frontier area more vulnerable to the Sudanese incursion.[91] Third, since January 1965 the Eight Brigade army at Azäzo interrupted its monthly visit of the Ethiopian borderlands due to transport and gas oil problems. As a result, at that critical period, guarding the border from the Sudanese was placed on the shoulder of few regular police members and other remaining *näch läbaš ţor*.[92] Thus, due to these factors the Ethiopian government preferred to follow appeasement policy with the Sudan.

Without realizing the aggressive nature of the Sudanese and Ethiopia's appeasement policy properly, Are'aya Gäbrämäden in 1966 argued that the governors of the districts in Chilga sub-province were incompetent to stop the Sudanese activities and he proposed reshuffling them. Waka Zäläläw, governor of Quara, had health problems, aged, and incapable to keep the border traveling from area to areas in the district. It was proposed to shift him as Aläfa-Ţaqusa governor. In return, *Gerazmač* Ayälä Čäkol, governor of Aläfa-Taqusa, had been active and important to keep the border and was proposed to govern Quara. Mulugéta Mälké, governor of Mätäma, was physically incapable to travel in the lowland and could not keep the border. Thus, another capable person should replace him. Are'aya tired by the boundary case and security of the frontier stated "**በጠቅላላዉም በጠረፍ አጠባበቅ በብርቱዉ ታስቦበት ጉዳዩ ዉሳኔ ካላገኘ በጠረፍ በኩል ሊደርስ ለሚችለዉ ጉድለት ሀላፊነት የሌለኝ መሆኑን በማክበር አመለክታለሁ።**"[93] (I appeal with respect that guarding the frontier area needs critical thinking and decision highly; otherwise, I will not take the responsibility of the atrocities that would be committed on the frontier).

[91]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Public Security Department of the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no. 35/1349 /57, dated 29 Miyaziya 1957 E.C; a letter Col. Bärhé Adego (Commander of the Eight Infantry Brigade) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no. 350.09/481/2/o86/39, dated 13 Tahsas 1957 E.C.
[92] NGAZRO, a letter Bärhé Adego to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no. 350.09/481/2/120/63, dated 20 Ţer 1957 E.C.
[93]NGAZRO, a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämädehen to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.7/5/58, dated 21 Mägabit 1958 E.C.

Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu, *endärasé* of the province, however, did not accept Are'aya's idea as a sufficient solution to protect Chilga sub-province farmers from Sudanese attacks. Instead, he emphasized the importance of giving transport facilities (car and mule) to the district officials and to increase the number of police forces on the frontier.[94] Tamrat Yegäzu also requested his government to send at least one company army or rapid deploying police to the province to protect the Ethiopian farmers from the Sudanese attacks.[95] The Ministry of Interior, however, recommended Tamrat to deploy the regular police from the interior parts of the province to the frontier districts and keep the interior parts of the province with the local *näch läbaš ţor* and *färäsäňa* until an army would send to the province.[96] Tamrat could not practice this proposal because of several problems. First, there were very few police forces in the province. In June 1965, there were about 970 police members in the province.[97] Out of these about 235 police members were retired before 1967 and new police forces were not employed to substitute them. Let alone keeping the border districts from the Sudanese attacks, the numbers of police forces were insufficient to keep the stability of the interior of the province. That was why the criminal and banditry activities escalated in the province in the late 1960s. Moreover, the *näch läbaš ţor* had the duties to keep the security of the province, collect taxes, guard prisons, and others; they did all these with their own old rifles and bullets with insignificant support from the government. Thus, they could not replace the duties of the police force in the interior part of the province. The

[94] NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Keflé Ergätu (with Minister title, Public Security), Ref.no. 35 /754/57, dated 10 Miyaziya 1958 E.C.
[95] NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Keflé Ergätu, Ref.no. 35/275/57, dated 18 Tahsas1959 E.C.
[96] NGAZRO, a letter from Maj.Gen Deräsé Dubalä (Head of Public Security Department in the Ministry of Interior) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.1828/59, dated 26 Ţer 1959 E.C.
[97] NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.124/9/188, dated 14 Genbot 1957 E.C.

ideas of transferring the police force from the interior areas to the frontier could bring more problems in the administration of the interior areas of the province.[98]

Picture. 4. Sätit-Humära farmers' demonstration against Sudanese takeover of their land, on 18 May 1967. Source: NGAZRO

The Ethiopian government performed two major actions in Chilga *Awraja* and its surrounding in 1967. First, it appointed Lt. Col. Molaleň Bälay and Major Maru Garäd as governor of Sätit-Humära and Mätäma districts respectively.[99] Second, the 24th Battalion Rapid Deploying police force, about 500, commanded by Brg. Gen.Yemam Gošu deployed on Sätit-Humära in late May 1967.[100] However, the Sudanese unlawful actions on the Ethiopian farmers continued on Mätäma, Quara, and Mahbärä Selasé since there was no such rapid deploying police force there. Thus, the local people criticized the imperial government for lack of giving immediate response to their problem and they were ready to defend themselves with their rifles and arms. However,

[98]NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Deräsé Dubalä, Ref no.35/426/57, dated 3 Yäkatit 1959 E.C.
[99]NGAZRO, a letter from Keflé Ergätu to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.7/9053, dated 12 Mägabit 1960 E.C.
[100]NGAZRO, a letter from Deräsé Dubalä to Lt. Gen. Yilma Šebäš, Ref..no.3417/59, dated 9 Genbot 1959 E.C; a letter from Brg.Gen.Yimam Gošu to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.1, dated 6 Yäkatit 1960 E.C.

due to Ethiopia's appeasement policy, fearing the exacerbation of local instability and turmoil, provincial officials ordered the local people to be patient.[101]

The people of Lower Armacheho considered Ethiopian territory as far as the junction of Guang and Angäräb Rivers. They used and cultivated the land partly for years. However, the Sudanese argued the area belonged to the Sudan and fighting broke out from 25 to 28 March 1969. The Sudanese imprisoned Ethiopian farmers, confiscated their properties, destroyed villages and farms including about 60 Bétä Israelites farmlands, about 20 kilometers west of Abdärafi town. Since the detachment of the rapid deploying police force at Abdärafi did not give immediate support to the Ethiopian farmers, farmers blamed it as valueless to them.[102] Maj. Gen. Täšomä Ergätu, commander of the Second Infantry Division Army from Eritrea, immediately visited the area and brought a detailed report. The 24th Battalion Rapid Deploying Police force had fewer numbers of forces on its four detachment companies and it was in difficult condition to control the wider frontier areas that lacked road network and movement was impossible in the rainy season. The detachment companies were also located at far distances among them difficult to help each other. Täšomä Eregätu stated "**የጦር ሰራዊቱ በጠረፍ በኩል መሰለፍ ለመታየት ብቻ መሆኑን ለማሳየት ካልሆነ በስተቀር የኢትዮጵያ ወሰኖችን መብት በማስከበርና ወሰኑን በመጠበቅ ፍጡም የሚችለዉ ምንም ነገር የለም።**"[103] (The army is deployed along the border to show it exists there nominally; otherwise, it is incapable of protecting the boundary and safeguarding Ethiopian rights).

[101] NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 51/19/182, dated 2 Yäkatit 1959 E.C
[102] NGAZRO, a letter from Maj.Gen.Täšomä Ergätu (Commander of the Second Infantry Division Army) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 3/ም2/33/02065/ አ 15, dated 30 Mägabit 1961 E.C.
[103] NGAZRO, a letter from Täšomä Ergätu to Lt. Gen. Eyasu Mängäša (Commander - in - Chief of the Ethiopian Army), Ref.no. 3/ም2/33/2191/አ 3, dated 30 Mägabit 1961 E.C.

Since the Ethiopian farmers had no trust on the support of the 24th Battalion Rapid Deploying Force, they determined to fight the Sudanese to bring back their farmlands. Maj. Gen. Täšomä noted that the local Ethiopian farmers loved the borderlands and kept it from Sudanese penetration as much as they could for years and they had moral strength to fight Sudanese without the support of the Ethiopian rapid deploying police and asked him to allow them to battle the Sudanese. However, the Ethiopian officials and the police deterred the farmers fearing large scale fighting against the Sudanese and the farmers did not understand this appeasement politics of the Ethiopian government.[104]

The Sudanese also agitated the local people on the frontier against the Ethiopian government by magnifying lack of various social services in the border areas. In June 1971, they told the local people in Šinfa not to pay tax to the Ethiopian government and do so to the Sudan. In December 1971, the Sudanese force entered Mertrahad, in Maṭäbiya, and employed several Gumuz in road construction, agitated them not to pay taxes and tribute to the monastery since it did not construct social services to the local people. The Gumuz, who were dissatisfied with the tributes imposed by the monastery, were said to be in good terms with the Sudanese propaganda.[105]

At the beginning of 1972, a group of Ethiopian experts conducted a survey on the Ethio-Sudan borderlands to know how much Gwynn deviated in 1903 and 1909 demarcations in favor of either the Sudan or Ethiopia from the 1902 and 1907 Treaties map line annexed. They also planned to know how much farmers of the two states cultivated lands in the other's country crossing either the 1902 Treaty or 1903 Gwynn's demarcation marks. According to experts

[104] NGAZRO, a letter from Täšomä Ergätu to Eyasu Mängäša, .. cited above, dated 30 Mägabit 1961 E.C.
[105]NGAZRO, letters from the *Mäneher* of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.228/121, dated 24 Säné 1963 E.C and Ref.no.57/12, dated 14 Tahsas 1964 E.C.

report, from Sätit River to Mätäma /Gallabat, Gwynn gave about 71 square kilometer land to the Sudan and 242 square kilometers to Ethiopia. From Mätäma to Dinder River, he gave no land to Ethiopia and 264 square kilometer land to the Sudan.[106] The experts found that many Ethiopian farmers cultivated in the Sudan beyond Gwynn's marks. Along Al-Fashaga Triangle, along Sätit-Humära between Angäräb and Sätit Rivers, about 283 Ethiopian farmers cultivated about 1,370 square kilometers lands in the Sudan beyond Gwynn line. Along Lower Armacheho or between Guang and Angäräb Rivers, in Dälälo and Gerar Wuha, the Ethiopian farmers cultivated about 112 square kilometers land in the Sudan beyond Gwynn marks. From Mätäma to Mt. Daglish, they entered the Sudan and cultivated about one kilometer beyond Gwynn's boundary mark; but they never reached the 1902 treaty line. From mount Daglish southwards, in the Mahbärä Selasé territories, they entered and cultivated lands in the Sudan as far as ten kilometers from Gwynn marks; they even passed the treaty lines. Mostly the Sudanese did not cultivate lands in Ethiopia beyond Gwynn's marks.[107]

After a protracted negotiation on the boundary Ethiopia was ready to accept Gwynn's marks in March 1972. Hearing this news, a dispute broke out in the Chamber of Deputies. About eleven representatives of the Bägémder and Semén governorate in the Chamber of Deputies raised the issue in the house and protested the imperial government.[108] They submitted an application letter to *Ato* Säyfu Tadässä, president of the Chamber of Deputies, and argued that Gywnn's demarcation of the Ethio-Sudan boundary was not valid since there were no representatives from the province at that time because it was difficult to go the borderland in the rainy season and

[106] "Yä Ithiopiya Ena Sudan…", IES Ms.no.2351.
[107] "Yä Iteyopeya Ena…", IES Ms.no.2351: a letter from …, Ref.no. 4566/22, dated 7Hedar 1966 E.C; a letter from Gétahun Täsäma to Aklilu Habtäwäld, Ref. no.22/2112, dated 12 Säné 1965 E.C.
[108]Belete, "Setit…", 111-112; Informant Alämnäh; *Teglačen*, No. 2 (Stockholm, Hedar-Tahsas 1965 E.C), IES Ms. no.2395/02/4/9/32.

malaria when Gywnn demarcated it. Thus, his demarcation is not good and binding to Ethiopia. They also indicated the local people only knew the 1891 circular letter of Emperor Menelik II that claims Ethiopia's boundary as far as Gedarif; they had no knowledge about his 1902 agreement. They also requested that the prime minister had to present the issue to the house for discussion before its ratification.[109] Following the dispute, they were summoned before the emperor and discussed on the boundary issue. Finally, the emperor promised them as "**የኛንም ለሰዉ አንሰጥ የሰዉም አንወስድ**" (we will not take others land and we will not give our land to others). Despite this promise of the emperor, the local officials in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings preached to the local farmers to refuse any order coming from the central government with regard to the boundary with the Sudan.[110]

Finally, the Joint Ethio-Sudanese Ministerial Consultative Committee met in Addis Ababa in July 1972. In the end, Ethiopia accepted Gwynn's marks as a legal boundary with the Sudan south of Sätit River. They also agreed "the boundary between the two countries south of Mount Daglish, re-demarcation should take place at any time with the understanding that the line of re-demarcation shall be rectified to run across crest points of Mounts Halawa, Umdoga, El Mutan and Jerok."[111]

After they won the boundary negotiation, the Sudanese performed various activities in Mätäma, Quara, and Mahbärä Selasé. In late December 1972, the Sudanese entered Mertrahad, and recorded population data. In January 1973, the Sudanese police force captured and took the properties of Ethiopian farmers at a locality called Menjugjuge, in Maṭäbiya. The Sudanese

[109] *Teglačen*, No. 2 (Stockholm, Hedar-Tahsas 1965 E.C), IES Ms.2395/02/4/9/32; Informant: Alämnäh.
[110] Informant: Alämnäh.
[111]Mesfin Woldemareyam *et als*, "Yä Iteyopeya…" ,Vol. II, Joint Communique, dated 25 July 1972, IES Ms.no.1873.

argued that the Ethiopian farmers were captured while engaged in farming on the Sudanese land.[112] At the same time, the Sudanese police force entered to Mertrahad, told the people the land belonged to the Sudanese and returned by taking properties like farming materials, money, firearms, medical materials and several quintals of sorghum that belonged to 50 retired Ethiopian soldiers farm of St.Georg Farming Association.[113]Generally, the Sudanese activities in the course of the boundary negotiation greatly hindered the development of commercial farming in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings.

Banditry and Local Instability

Banditry is a broad phenomenon that encompassed different levels of criminality; it has a long history in the northern provinces of Ethiopia. Although there is a slight difference between the English term banditry and the Amharic term *šiftenät,* they are synonymous and include a wide range of activities such as robbery, rebellion, killing, and burning of houses.[114] Richard Caulk stated that the motive of *šiftas* to take government positions differentiated them from ordinary bandits, although they have many common elements like robbery. He states that most *šiftas* in the 19th century in northern Ethiopia had either blood or marriage relations with the provincial nobility and their actions were a means of securing an office as exemplified by Kasa Haylu, the later Tewodros II.[115] Donald Crummey noted that although the modern usage of the term *šiftenat* is confusing, banditry is equivalent to the Amharic term *šiftenat.* He describes a *šifta* as "one

[112]NGAZRO, a letter from *mämeher* of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.8, dated 18 Tahsas 1965 E.C; a letter from *Fitawrari* Abreha Mäšäša (governor of Chilga *Awraja*) to Bäqälä Zälläläw, Ref. no. 2681/12/ 65, dated 22 Ţer 1965 E.C.
[113]NGAZRO, a petition from Sergent Asmamaw Aseräsé (chairman of St. Georg Farming Association) to Mahbärä Selasé Monastery, dated 16 Ţer 1965 E.C; a letter from Bälaynäh Mängistu (vice-Commander of the Governorate Police) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no 51/19/170, dated 17 Ţer 1965 E.C.
[114]Abebe Dires, "Banditry and Insecurity in Eastern Gojjam"(MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 2008), 12-16; Timothy Fernyhough, "Social Mobility…", 152.
[115] Caulk, "Bad Men ...", 201-205, 216.

who strips up trouble, while taking to the forest or bush, departing from the king, the government, rule, instituted order, and the law." *Šiftenat* included rebellion and banditry activities. While rebellion is to indicate the intention of an outlaw to capture an office in largely a political way, banditry is a criminal one and involves robbery.[116] In the 20th century, *šiftenat* became more of a banditry activity and a *šiftenat*'s motive to take office was weakened and limited to the provincial level. This was because of Haile Sellassie's centralization policy and the incorporation of the gentry into the administrative structure.[117]

Different authors grouped bandits into various ways depending on particular criterion. For instance, taking the causes that led to banditry and bandits' activity, Abebe Dires has grouped bandits of Eastern Gojjam non-exclusively into two groups. The first one were criminal bandits that involved in plundering the society for personal interest, and the second was political (or social) bandits that engaged themselves in political activities against the government to make the lives of the peasantry better. Since they lived in their house, ordinary thieves are not *šiftas* because they lacked one basic feature of *šiftas* i.e. they had no permanent home since they were wanted by the government and had to move around.[118]

As we saw in the first chapter, banditry had a long history in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. However, it rapidly expanded in the area in the last one and half decade of the imperial period and ordinary *šiftas* (criminal bandits) outnumbered the political bandits. There were various causes for the expansion of banditry after 1958. Before 1958 government officials used different mechanisms that had a positive contribution in controlling bandits as a whole in

[116] Crummey, "Banditry and…", 133-135.
[117] Crummey, "Banditry and…", 135; Fernyhough, "Social Mobility…", 153.
[118] Abebe Dires, 22, 50.

Bägémder and Semén. The first mechanism was when a non-salaried person among the local people captured or killed a bandit, the outlaw's rifle was given to him. Thus, attracted by the necessity of acquiring firearms, local people cooperated with government officials in their search for bandits and minimizing their activities in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings.[119] The 1958 imperial government's decree for proper control and administration of arms, however, paradoxically encouraged banditry and local instability in the area. The decree prohibited individuals from acquiring and owning machine-guns, cannon, and ammunitions. Youngsters under eighteen years were not allowed to hold arms; and persons were prohibited to sell, give, and lend arms to persons below 18 years. Individuals were required to have a license to involve in business of repairing, selling, transferring, importing, and exporting firearms. The decree also demanded registration of arms as obligatory. Persons who violated the provisions of the decree would be dispossessed of the arms and would be fined $100 to 1000 *berr*, and imprisoned for one to six months.[120]

The people of Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings, however, did not welcome the decree. After the 1958 decree, instead of giving arms to a non-salaried person when he killed or captured a bandit, firearms had to be submitted to the government treasury set up in police offices.[121] As a result, it became difficult for provincial officials to control the outlaws and bring stability in the province by using the regular police force alone. Although he was not successful, *Däjjazmač* Keflé Dadi, *endärasé* of the province, requested Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1959 to allow him to give the arms of criminals to those who killed and captured them or otherwise the decree would

[119]NGAZRO, a letter from *Däjjazmač* Keflé Dadi (*Endärasé* of the governorate-general) to Emperor Haile Sellassie, dated 29 Genbot 1951 E.C.
[120]Negarit Gazeta, Decree No. 31 of 1958, "Decree to Amend the Authority to Issue Orders Proclamation, 1942".
[121]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Ṣegé Dibu (Commander of the Ethiopian Police) to Keflé Dadi, Ref.no. **ኢ.ፖ/ንብ/ማያ/**5/1/702, dated 6 Hedar 1951 E.C.

retard his work to eliminate bandits in the province.[122] *Däjjazmač* Keflé's idea was not accepted by the emperor and whatever arms captured from bandits continued to put in police offices.

The imperial government also issued arms regulation in 1960 regarding how to register, get licenses, restrictions on transferring and carrying arms. Among others, individuals were prohibited to carry arms in places where liquor was sold, in public gatherings, religious ceremonies or festivities, hotels (except guests or resident), cinemas, restaurants, and similar places.[123] This decree, however, did not go in harmony with the local culture in Chilga *awraja* and could not be enforced.

Local culture that put high value in firearms had a greater effect on the banditry and instability in Chilga sub-province and other parts of the province. Col. Seyum Gäsäsä, the commander of the police of the province, reported that the local people in the province were "worshipers of firearms". Every person, either a farmer or a trader, had greater interest in owning rifles. Holding rifles by men was a symbol of dignity and masculinity. Whenever men travelled on different businesses including to attend various ceremonies (like weddings) *mahabär* and *sänbté* they carried rifles with them. When minor frictions broke-out spontaneously in such places, due to consumption of alcohol or other reasons, the parties quickly resorted to using their rifles and killed innocents with their rifles. As a result, on numerous occasions communal and festival occasions like wedding ceremonies were turned into funeral events. Moreover, culturally, the local people were averse to going to the courts whenever a crime was committed. Rather, they

[122] NGAZRO, a letter from Keflé Dadi to Emperor Haile Sellassie, dated 29 Genbot 1951 E.C.
[123]Negarit Gazeta, Legal Notice No.229 of 1960, "Regulations Issued Pursuant to the Authority to Issue Orders Proclamation".

resorted to taking revenge on the criminals.[124] This exacerbated banditry and local instability in the area.

The second mechanism used to control outlaws in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in the pre-1960 period was related to the procedure used in capturing suspected criminals. Local police did not need to have a court warrant to seize suspected criminals until the promulgation of the civil and criminal codes of Ethiopia.[125] For the accused person, the 1943 administration of justice proclamation which was applied only in the Higher Courts and Provincial Courts stated as "if the accused person is not in custody, the court upon receiving such complaint may issue a summons or warranty to compel the attendance of the accused person before the court."[126] However, with the introduction of civil and criminal codes in the early 1960s, a warrant became mandatory to put into custody suspected criminals. This delayed the process of capturing suspected criminals and it gave the outlaws time to escape into inaccessible areas after committing crimes. Due to this, criminal activities intensified and greatly disturbed the peace and stability of the sub-province. Although local outlaws did not form an organized group against the government, they committed many kinds of criminal activities. Murdering people, stealing cattle, burning houses, cattle raiding across the border of the Sudanese, car robbery on the road were common in Chilga sub-province. The first two were the two dominant criminal activities in the sub-province.[127]

[124]Addis Zemen, "Altäwäram Eneji Bezu Lemat Täsärtual", dated 12 Yäkatit 1960 E.C.
[125]NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä (Commander of the Governorate Police) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no. 124/ 9/188, dated 14 Genbot 1957 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, and Haylé.
[126] Negarit Gazeta, "Administration of Justice Proclamation", Legal Notice no.33 of 1943.
[127]NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.124/9/188, dated 14 Genbot 1957 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, and Haylé.

The effort of the governor-generals of the province in the early 1960s to control banditry and local instability was insignificant. As we saw the previous chapter, *Däjjazmač* Ameha Abära tried to set up a new *awraja* along the border with the Sudan, although it was not put into practice in his period and his successor Maj. Gen.Näga Haylä Selasé (May 1962-March 1965). Maj. Gen. Näga considered criminal activities among local people as a common practice and he faced a problem to bring peace and stability in the province especially on the borderlands along the Sudan. The instability of the province in the early 1960s forced the imperial government to change the governor-general by appointing Lt. Col. Tamrat Yegäzu *endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén replacing Näga in March 1965.[128]

The appointment of Tamrat was initiated by the government's desire to tackle outlaws in the province. Soon after his arrival in Gondar, Tamrat held a meeting with the *awraja* governors in May 1965. In his opening speech of the meeting, Tamrat said:

> **አዲስ አበባ ሆኝ እንደሰማሁት የዚህ አገር ጸጥታ መጓደል ህዝቡን እከፍተኛ በደል ላይ እንደጣለዉ ተረድቻለሁ። […] ድረጊቱም እንደሚያሰረዳዉ ወንጀል ሰሪዎቹ ተቆጣጣሪ የለንም በማለት እንደተዝናኑ የሚያሰቆጥር ከመሆኑም በላይ የበደሉ አፈጻጸም የአመልካቹ ብቻ ሳይሆን የየክፍሉን አስተዳዳሪዎች የጸጥታዉን መጓደል ተቆጣጥረዉ አገሩን ሰላም ለማድረግ የሚያስንቃቸዉ ሁኖ ይታያል። በራዲዮ እንደሚሰማዉና በጋዜጣም እንደሚገለጸዉ ሌሎች ጠቅላይ ግዛቶች ጸጥታቸዉን ጠብቀዉ በንግድ፤ በትምህርት፤ በጤና ይህን በመሳሰሉ ልዩልዩ ልማት እየተሻሻሉና እከፍተኛ ቁም ነገር ካለዉ ስራ ሲደርሱ ቀደም ብሎ በትምህርትና በእዉቀት ደርጅቶ የነበረዉ የአማራ ህዝብ እርስ በርሱ በመጋደል አሁን በያዝነዉ ዓመት በ 1957 ዓ.ም 149 ሰላማዊ ሰዎች በወንጀለኞች ተገድለዉ ከወንጀለኞች ዉስጥ አምሳዎቹ ብቻ ሲያዙ ዘጠና ዘጠኙ በዱር ያሉ ለመሆኑ የጠቅላይ ግዛቱ ፖሊስ መስሪያ ቤት በጎበኘሁበት ጊዜ ለመረዳት ችያለሁ።** …[129]
>
> When I was in Addis Ababa, I had heard how the absence of security in this province has been a source of suffering to the local people.… The events indicate that not only do criminals believe that there are no officials who could control them, but also the ill-treatments and petitions undermine the efforts of every governor to establish peace in their territory. As heard in Ethiopian Radio and disclosed in newspapers, the other provinces

[128]Negarit Gezeta,General Notice No.341 of 1965.
[129] NGAZRO, a meeting minute of provincial officials, dated 16 Genbot 1957 E.C.

> have established security and are making progress in trade, education, and health and other development arenas and have reached higher level. However, the Amhara people, who were well developed in education and knowledge in former times, are now engaged in killing each other. And in the current 1964/65 year when I visited the police office of the governorate, I understood that 149 innocent people have been killed by criminals. Among the criminals, only 50 have been captured while the remaining 99 are still in the forests. …

The causes for the expansion of outlaws and criminal cases pointed out in the meeting were partly similar to the causes mentioned in the earlier pages. Tamrat also underlined the point that local provincial officials lacked the determination and responsibility to control the outlaws. Third, without an order from the court, it was prohibited to capture any suspected outlaw and this prevented individuals and *näch läbaš* force to capture an outlaw at the time of committing crime. Fourth, lack of equivalent punishment given by the courts on the criminals as compared to the crime they committed was one of the causes of banditry and local instability. Outlaws were brought to the court after tiresome work by the local people and officials. But the courts did not punish them by sentencing them to long-term imprisonment. Short prison sentences were passed on criminal, and of these 3/4 was reduced as amnesty. Soon the released outlaws from prison took revenge attacks on those who acted as testimonies of their cases. This discouraged the local people to cooperate with the government officials against the outlaws. Thus, the local officials criticized partly the legal system, the court decision, civil and criminal codes of the country.[130]

After thorough discussion the meeting passed an order with regard to outlaws. It agreed to respect the civil and criminal codes of the country in relation to capturing suspected criminals with court order. However, it also decided to bring in the outlaws by giving them amnesty without an order from the courts. Accordingly, outlaws who lived in the wilderness were given amnesty and ordered to give their hands to the government within a one-month period up to June

[130] NGAZRO, a meeting minute of provincial officials, dated 16 Genbot 1957 E.C.

1965. The amnesty notice was posted in various market places and towns of the province and disseminated orally. If an outlaw did not surrender to the government within the specified period, officials were authorized to capture them using court orders. When a non-salaried individual who captured an outlaw with a court order and handed him to the government, the person was allowed take the firearm of the outlaw when the court confirmed the criminality of the suspected outlaw.[131]

Based on the amnesty declaration, 167 prominent outlaws surrendered to the provincial government within the specified time. Among them, 14 were from Chilga, 37 from Semén, 22 from Wägära, 20 from Gondar, 36 from Däbrä Tabor, 21 from Gayint, and 17 from Libo *awrajas*.[132] Chilga *awraja* had the smallest number of outlaws that surrendered to the government perhaps because they felt that they would be able to resist capture easily because of the difficult topography of the region. The suspected criminals who surrendered to the government were allowed to live in the towns by bringing a guarantor who would make sure that the person would not commit another crime then after. However, many of the outlaws that surrendered to the government did not get men to surety in the towns where they had given their hands because they came from remote countryside and were unfamiliar with urban life. They also lacked basic needs like shelter, clothing and food to lead their lives in the urban centers. As a result, some of them soon returned to the forest and resumed their banditry activity.[133]

[131]NGAZRO, a meeting minute of provincial officials, dated 16 Genbot 1957 E.C; a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to all *awraja* governors of the province, Ref.no. 3/1728/57, dated 5 Säné 1957 E.C.
[132] NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Germa Endalkačäw (Commander of the Governorate Police) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 232/19/10181, dated 21 Säné 1957 E.C.
[133]NGAZRO, a letter from Germa Endalkačäw to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 232/19/10181, dated 21 Säné 1957 E.C.

Despite the strategy of the provincial officials to deal with banditry, criminal activities did not decline in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. In 1966, a year after the law was passed, there were reports of several criminal activities like killings, burning houses, and cattle stealing in the area. Bandits stole cattle in the area and took these to the Sudan where they sold or exchanged them for goods in market towns like Basonda. Some also sold the rustled cattle to outlaws who came from Tegré via Sätit. The absence of a security force along the border with the Sudan to control cattle thieves opened the way for the expansion of banditry in the sub-province.[134]

One of the reasons for the expansion of criminal activities in Chilga sub-province and other areas of the province in the 1960s was the existence of a small number of police force stationed in the province. In June 1965, the police forces in the province was about 970 and this was small to keep the stability of the province. Moreover, the local people did not cooperate with the authorities and disclose the where about of outlaws. At times, the local people gave provisions to the outlaws because they feared that the outlaws would retaliate against them when they were released from prison. Lack of communications and reports among local officials to inform each other about suspected outlaws on time was also the other reason for the expansion of banditry in the area.[135]

The geographic location of Chilga *Awraja* along the border with the Sudan and Gojjam province was the other factor that encouraged banditry and local instability. It was difficult to control the outlaws after they committed crimes in a locality since they escaped to the Sudan or other

[134]NGAZRO, a letter from *Qäñazmač* Käbädä Wändyerad (Armacheho *wäräda* administration office) to Gondar Awraja administrative office, Ref. no.1900/12/58, dated 15 Genbot 1958 E.C.
[135] NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 124/9/188, dated 14 Genbot 1957 E.C.

adjacent districts or *awrajas*.[136] Cattle thieves from Ačäfär also stole cattle in Aläfa repeatedly. The seriousness of the case forced Färädä Ţerunäh, governor of Chilga *Awraja,* to visit and discuss with Aläfa people in May and June 1969. However, district and sub-district governors of Ačäfär cooperated with thieves and rejected to discuss the case with Färädä. To control thieves from Ačäfär, Aläfa people demanded the stationing of police force in the area and actions should be taken on Ačäfär officials.[137] Thus, being on the border with the Sudan and Gojjam, Chilga sub-province was an ideal place for outlaws.

The other factor for the expansion of banditry in the area in the last decade of the imperial period was the expansion of commercial farming. The bandits considered the lowlands of Chilga sub-province which were free from government control as their "homes". Wild animals and honey for food was abundant in the area. When the government officials searched for them, several bandits took shelter in the lowlands. Some of the well-known *šiftas* in the area in the imperial period were Alämu Bälay, Hagos Ambayä, and Mamo Malädä. When commercial farmers obtained land and settled along the border, the bandits considered this as a danger to their lives and way of life because they could not now freely move. They also feared that the government might use the farmers as means to control the criminals. Thus, the bandits attacked and raided the farmers occasionally.[138]

The bandits also attacked and raided the Sudanese across the border for different reasons. The first was competition over resources between Sudanese pastoralists and Ethiopians in Chilga *Awraja*. On the Sudanese side, there were pastoral nomads called Fellaţa, Takruri, and Menamer

[136] NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Gäsäsä to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 124/9/188, dated 14 Genbot 1957 E.C.
[137]NGAZRO, a letter from Färädä Ţerunäh (governor of Chilga *Awraja*) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.4331/17, dated 12 Säné 1961E.C ; meeting minutes of Aläfa people and Färädä Ţerunäh, dated 4 and 6 Säné 1961 E.C.
[138] Informants: Sisay, Alämnäh, and Abuhay.

who exploited the resources of the border. Each year mostly between April and June, these pastoral nomads mainly the Fellaţa who were of Nigerian origin entered Ethiopian territory along the border of Quara, when they faced shortage of grazing land in the Sudan. The Fellaţa, grazed their cattle along the Ethiopian borderlands from Illubabur in the south to Täkäzé River in the north. The Ethiopian imperial government imposed a tax on grazing named *yäsar geber or yäsar Chäw* (lit. grass salt) on the nomadic pastoralists along the borderlands. The amount of money paid was dependent on the types and numbers of animals that pastoralists had. Accordingly, 50 cents, 25 cents, 10 cents and 5 cents were paid per camel, horn cattle (and mule and horse), donkey and sheep (and goat) respectively.[139] Based on this tax law, the officials of Chilga sub-province and its surroundings tried to apply these taxes on the Sudanese nomads who were partly interested to pay it.[140]

The amount of tax that Chilga officials collected from the Sudanese pastoral nomads was very low, although it was estimated about 10,000 Sudanese cattle used the pasture inside Ethiopia territory during the dry season. The tax was not more than $500 *berr* per a year. This was because of several reasons. First, it was difficult for the handful of local Chilga sub-province officials to count the cattle properly. Some of the Sudanese pastoral nomads refused to have officials count their cattle. Second, the Sudanese cattle were not familiar to the odor of Chilga officials who were strangers to them. Since the cattle were offensive to them, Chilga officials tried to count the Sudanese cattle by climbing on trees. However, this system could not help

[139]NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Andargačäw Mäsay, Ref.no.7528, dated 29 Säné 1941 E.C; Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No. 142 of 1954, "A Proclamation to Provide for Cattle Tax".
[140] NGAZRO, a petition from Engedaw Asäfaw (Chilga *Awraja* people representative in the Chamber of Deputies) to the office of Chamber of Deputies, dated 3 Mägabit 1954 E.C.

them know the actual number of the cattle.[141] In addition to using the pasture, the Sudanese pastoral nomads also exploited the forest resources of the area. They hunted wild animals for meat and skins, hunted elephants for ivory, engaged in fishing in rivers, gathered wild fruits, collected wild honey, cut wood for timer, and bamboo tree without the permission of the Ethiopian authorities.[142]

Although there were no pastoral nomads in Chilga *Awraja*, the surrounding highland inhabitants used the lowlands as transhumance in the dry season and returned to the highlands in the rainy season. Officials and the local people of Chilga sub-province and its adjacent highlands opposed the exploitation of the forest resource by the Sudanese pastoral nomads freely. Thus, the bandits and thieves raided the Sudanese cattle, especially those Sudanese who refused to pay tax. Raiding cattle mainly from the Fellaṭa was considered as a heroic activity among many local people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. Since the cattle were long physically, attractive and very hostile to people of Chilga *Awraja*.[143] The local people in Chilga along the escarpments expressed this activity by the following poem:

የምንድን በርበሬ የምንድን ሰጢጣ
ከዳር አገር ሂደህ ስምና ቀንድ አምጣ። [144]

Why limit yourself to cultivating red and hot pepper
Proceed to the borderlands and bring cattle and name for yourself.

The above poem indicates that the local people in the escarpment encouraged men to bring cattle mainly from the Fellaṭa. It was a dangerous activity and sometimes in the course of raiding cattle

[141]NGAZRO, a petition from Engedaw Asefaw…, cited above, dated 3 Mägabit 1954 E.C.
[142]NGAZRO, an application letter from *Gerazmač* Dämas Käfalä (appointed official to keep illegal hunting in Quara) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, dated 26 Genbot 1963 E.C; a letter from Are'aya Gäbrämädehen to Tamrat Yigezu, Ref.no.7/5/58, dated 21 Mägabit 1958 E.C.
[143]Informants: Sisay, Wädaj, Alämu Čäkol, Seid Issa, and Mäkonnen Alähäñ.
[144] Informants: Sisay, and Ali Muhamed.

men lost their lives either shot by Fellaţa riflemen or attacks from cattle themselves. The raiding was done by a group of armed men; it was impossible individually. Men would get honorable name and status after bringing cattle. This tradition among the people on the escarpment was developed since it was frontier area where *šiftas*/ bandits used to shelter for decades.

Since the Sudanese nomads, mainly the Fellaţa, benefited very much from the resourceful land along the Ethiopian borderland compared to tax they paid to Ethiopian officials, the local officials of Chilga *Awraja* requested higher officials in 1963 to formulate a law that would prohibit them from crossing into Ethiopia.[145] This was not however practiced in the imperial period.

Conflicts also occurred between the nomads and local Ethiopian farmers at the time of grazing borderlands pasture because of different reasons. First, Sudanese cattle destroyed the local Gumuz cotton and sorghum farms. As a result, many Gumuz from Quara moved to other safer areas and others petitioned the provincial government to prohibit the movement of these Sudanese nomads.[146] Especially, the advent of commercial agriculture on Mätäma and its surroundings in the 1960s and early1970s brought conflict between the local farmers and the Sudanese pastoral nomads. In addition to the Fellaţa, the Beni Amer and Maria brought their cattle from the north Eritrean border to the south as far as the Guang (Atbara) River and grazed their livestock. The expansion of mechanized farming in the Sudan from Blue Nile to Atbara Rivers, mainly in the late1960s had a great effect on the Sudanese nomads by reducing their

[145]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no.4486 /21/55, dated 25 Hamlé 1955 E.C.
[146]NGAZRO, a petition from Engedaw Asefaw …cited above, dated 3 Mägabit 1954 E.C; a petition of Gumuz people to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, dated 13 Ţer 1954 E.C.

grazing lands.[147] This forced the Sudanese pastoral nomads to depend highly on the pasture of Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. The local people on the Ethiopian side opposed the Sudanese nomads and raided their cattle because the land had been their *rest* land.

The boundary negotiation between Ethiopia and the Sudan not only brought local opposition against the imperial government but also exacerbated banditry and local instability in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in the last decade of the imperial period. The Sudanese attacked Ethiopian farmers, evicted them from their farms, destroyed their farms and looted their property. In return, the Ethiopian bandits committed actions on the Sudanese across the border. Although the farmers faced several problems from the Ethiopian bandits, they were happy when the bandits attacked the Sudanese. Some of the farmers also encouraged the bandits to attack the Sudanese,[148] although some officials and police forces viewed the activity of the bandits as an aggression that contradicted the Ethiopian's appeasement policy. The action of bandits paved the way for the Sudanese as an alleged reason to take unlawful activity on the Ethiopian farmers.[149] For instance, a group of bandits from Lower Armacheho attacked the Sudanese police center in Al-Fashiga Triangle on 26 March 1968. The mastermind behind this bandit group was Wakshum Näwäṭä, a *balabat* of Lower Armacheho, who had disagreement with the government officials with regard to land granting to the commercial farmers. The Sudanese police killed four Ethiopian bandits in the fighting and they suspected that the government officials organized the bandits. The basic reason of this action was the Ethiopian bandits and farmers in Lower

[147]Johnathan Bascom,"Border Pastoralism in Eastern Sudan," *Geographical Review*, Vol. LXXX, No.4 (Oct., 1990), 420-421, 424-425.
[148]Informants: Sisay, Wädaj, and Alämnäh.
[149]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Goythom Gäbrägzi (vice-Commander of Bägémder and Semén Police) to Seyum Gäsäsä, Ref.no.17/61, dated 10 Yäkatit 1961 E.C; a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to *Bitwädäd* Adanä Mäkonnen (governor of Wägära *Awraja*), Ref.no. 35/415/59, dated 18 Yäkatit 1961 E.C.

Armacheho considered the boundary of Ethiopia as far as the junction of Guang and Angäräb Rivers. When the Sudanese established police stations and cultivated the land by evicting the Ethiopian farmers and when the imperial government did nothing against the Sudanese, the bandits were forced to take that action on the Sudanese.[150] The Ethiopian officials attempted to convince the frontier Sudanese officials that the incident happened without the knowledge of the government.[151] The death of four Ethiopians in the incident angered commercial farmers from Sätit-Humära up to Quara and they were prepared to take a counteraction on the Sudanese. The provincial officials preoccupied with cooling down the emotion of the local people and the Ministry of Interior ordered the provincial officials to control the local people from aggressive move in avenging the Sudanese.[152] Bandits, encouraged by the local farmers, continued their attacks on the Sudanese in the late 1960s and early 1970s. [153]

Mahbärä Selasé Monastery was also the other responsible body for the expansion of banditry and local instability in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings for sheltering outlaws and criminals throughout the imperial period. After doing criminal activities, suspected outlaws escaped to the monastery and hid there, and it was impossible for the police and government officials to investigate the crime and arrest outlaws inside the jurisdiction of the monastery.[154] For example, in May 1968, Fäläqä Mäkuriya, the Eight Brigade commander, reported as "**ይህ ገዳም ለብዙ ዘመናት የኢትዮጵያ መነኰሳቶች መኖሪያና የጸሎት ስፍራ ሆኖ እራሱን በራሱ እያስተዳደረ መቆየቱ**

[150]NGAZRO, a letter from Goyhtom Gäbrä'egzi to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 9/60, dated 4 Miyaziya 1960 E.C.
[151] NGAZRO, a letter from Molaleň Bälay to Tamrat Yegäzu , Ref.no.**ለ** 4 /12 / 13 /60, dated 27 Mägabit 1960 E.C.
[152]NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no.2823/60, dated 8 Genbot 1960 E.C.
[153]NGAZRO, a letter from Goyhtom Gäbrä'egzi to *Gerazmač* Abay Wäldämareyam (governor of Upper Armacheho district), Ref.no.51/19/349, dated 28 Säné 1960 E.C; a letter from Yilema Zälläläw (governor of Lower Armacheho sub-district) to *Fitawrari* Täsfayä Asnaqä (governor of Gondar *Awraja*), Ref.no.191/5/61, dated 16 Hedar 1961 E.C
[154]NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to *Mämeher* Gäbrä Mareyam Täsfaselasé of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery, Ref.no.3/1792/57, dated 18 Säné 1957 E.C; a letter from Col. Germa Endalkačäw to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref. no.120/14 /9960, dated 8 Säné 1957 E.C.

የሚታመን ነዉ፣ አሁን ግን እንደዉነቱ ከሆነ የጸሎት ስፍራ ወይንም የመነኮሳት መኖሪያ መሆኑ ቀርቶ የቀማኛ፤ የነብስ ገዳይ፤ የወሮበላ መሰባሰቢያ ነዉ ቢባል መሳሳት አይደለም።[155] (It is known that Mahbärä Selasé Monastery has been home and praying area for Ethiopian monks and has been administering itself for years. Now, however, it no longer of such a space. I would not be mistaken if I say that it is a gathering place for robbers, murderers and brigands). On its part, the monastery tried to defend itself from the criticism of the government officials by arguing that its clergy had no knowledge about the suspected criminals who entered the jurisdiction of the monastery as religious men free from crime and as daily laborers in search of jobs.[156]

The governor-generals of the province, especially Tamrat Yegäzu, tried to put an end the autonomous status of the monastery. Tamrat wrote in May 1969 to the Ministry of Interior that the monastery could not administer that frontier area properly and asked to eliminate its *awraja* status and to place it under Chilga *Awraja*.[157] However, his and other governor-generals' recommendation was never implemented in the imperial period.[158] It was perhaps because the imperial government did not want to upset the monastery that played a great role in the national integration or cultural homogenization among the people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings.

The other activity that Tamrat Yegäzu carried out to bring peace and stability in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings was revitalizing and pushing forward Ameha's idea to set up a new *awraja* consisting the border districts along the border with the Sudan. Since the *awrajas*

[155]NGAZRO, a letter from Fäläqä Mäkuriya to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.ም/46/25/4285/3አ11, dated 26 Genbot 1960 E.C.
[156]NGAZRO, a letter from *Mämeher* Gäbrä Mareyam Täsfaselasé to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.442/20/29, dated 16 Hamlé 1957 E.C; Informants: Sisay, and Wädaj.
[157]NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.2300/4203/40, dated 6 Genbot 1961 E.C.
[158] NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Commander of Governorate Police, Ref.no.35/393/63, dated 6 Säné 1965 E.C.

administrative centers of these border districts were far away from the *awrajas'* centers (Aykäl, Gondar and Wägära) and the local people required several days of journey to arrive at the administrative centers for their various cases.[159] However, the idea was not implemented probably due to financial problem to cover the salaries of proposed administrative workers and officials. Thus, banditry and local instability continued on the lowland districts along the border with the Sudan.

Tamrat Yegäzu also initiated to control the outlaws and criminals along the border with the Sudan by establishing several temporary criminal examining stations in Chilga, Gondar and Wägära *Awrajas* in the early 1970s. Such centers had not existed in the area in earlier years. The commanders of local *näch läbaš ţor* and sub-district governors headed such temporary centers in their respective areas. In Chilga sub-province, such stations were set up on sub-districts like Mätäma Yohannes, Dawa (Dangura), and Chaqo Mikael where outlaws were prevalent.[160] However, such centers could not bring peace and stability in the area. Especially, at Kokit, in Mätäma, lawlessness was deep rooted. Armed outlaws committed various crimes on the local people and farmers. Concerned higher officials of the province, including the police force, *näch läbaš ţor*, *awraja* and district governors held a meeting in June 1973 to discuss on the banditry and local instability of Mätäma. In the opening speech of the meeting, Col. Bälaynäh Mängestu, vice-commander of the province police force, stated that the insecurity of the people in Mätäma

[159] NGAZRO, a reminding report from Tamrat Yegäzu to the Ministry of Interior, dated 13 Tahsas 1960 E.C.
[160] NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Zäläläw to Färädä Ţerunäh, Ref. no. 3/275/64, dated 26 Tahsas 1964 E.C; a letter from Färädä Ţerunäh to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.4/64/12, dated 11 Miyaziya 1964 E.C.

had worsened from time to time and he visited the area and he lacked the means to restore peace and stability there.[161]

The participants of the meeting mentioned different reasons. Col. Amarä Dämesé, Mätäma district governor, argued that since Mätäma hosted many commercial farmers, there was a higher movement of people in the district and it was hard and a burden to manage for a single district governor. Col. Amarä stated partly it was due to the cancelation of Mätäma sub-district position in 1967, following the appointment of Major Maru. *Fitawrari* Abreha Mäšäša, Chilga *awraja* governor, after he realized the importance of the sub-district governor in Mätäma to bring stability and peace in the area, gave the lion's share of responsibility to Col. Amarä since he was incompetent and incompatible to the local administration. In the end, participants of the meeting decided to set up a police station at Kokit, to station a rapid deploying police force in the area, and proposed to disarm the local people around Kokit.[162] Generally, the various actions of government officials to eliminate banditry and local instability were nor effective.

Now I proceed to the section of the expansion of contraband trade that was partly the result of local instability and partly it was one of the manifestations of the unsuccessful attempt of the imperial government to control or centralize the frontier economy.

Contraband Trade

Although alongside with their discussion on their common boundary, the Sudanese and Ethiopian officials agreed to control smuggling along their common border by establishing a

[161]NGAZRO, a minute of officials meeting, dated 11 Säné1965 E.C.
[162]NGAZRO, a minute of officials meeting, dated 11 Säné1965 E.C.

Joint Frontier Committee in the 1960s,[163] they were not successful in controlling it. Contraband was a complementary activity to legal trade in Chilga *Awraja's* society and its surroundings.

In addition to local instability, there were several factors behind the contraband trade in the area. First, the imperial government was unable to integrate the frontier economy into the larger national economy. The power of the central market to draw the resources found in the borderlands had deteriorated. Second, there was a sluggish process of legal importing and exporting system. The frontier people like Chilga sub-province could not get goods distributed from the center properly since it was remote and lacked road network. Third, when high amount of tax was imposed on items to be exported or imported legal merchants would be discouraged to export or import the items. This condition indirectly encouraged smugglers to export or import the items illicitly.[164] These factors pushed contrabandist to smuggle items to and from Chilga *Awraja* and the Sudan to satisfy the needs of the local people

Most of the items of contraband were not different from the items imported or exported legally from Chilga sub-province to the Sudan and in the opposite direction. Unlike the period before the early 1960s years, following the establishment of several textile factories in Ethiopia in the 1960s and due to high tax imposed on imported textile products, smuggling of *abujadid* and cotton cloth declined in Chilga sub-province.[165] Since increased tax on *abujadid* was also the basic reason for the decline of revenue of the frontier customs posts in the 1960s, *Däjjazmač* Ameha Abära, the governor-general of Bägémder and Semén, requested the Ministry of Finance

[163]Mesfin Wolde Mariam et als, " YäIteyopeya…" Vol II. IES Ms.no.1873.
[164]NGAZRO, a letter from Said Mohammäd… cited above, Ref. no.964/2498/79, dated 1 Mägabit 1979 E.C; a letter from Därebé Mamo… cited above, Ref. no. 86/8/2, dated 18 Hamlé 1975 E.C.
[165]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.1008/59, dated 4 Genbot 1959 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Sinor, and Wädaj.

in 1961 to lower the tax rate on imported *abujadid* from the Sudan. The Ministry, however, was not willing to do so because such an action could open the door for other goods and the economy of the country would not permit it to do so.[166] Following the local instability in the last decade and half of the imperial period, the smuggling of various firearms and ammunitions increased in Chilga *Awraja*.[167] The local bandits were the main actors in smuggling the rifles and ammunitions from the Sudan. This was the case because more than other smuggled items, rifles needed higher capital and much care at the time of buying, selling, and smuggling and such activities were easier for the bandits than any other persons.[168]

Different items were smuggled from Chilga sub-province into the Sudan and brought sometimes from the interior part of Ethiopia. Coffee and cattle were the dominant items. Cattle smuggling into the Sudan steadily increased and reached its height in the 1960s and 1970s. Contrabandists not only smuggled cattle that they bought and raised, but also those that the raided and stole from local people in Chilga *Awraja*.[169] Since Chilga sub-province and the areas around Lake Ţana were rich in cattle, the Israeli company called INCODE (Industry and Commerce Development) set up an abattoir in 1961 in Gondar city. In its early years, the company slaughtered about 150 cattle per a day and dispatched its raw products to Asmara where a company called SOPRAL (Societa Prodotti Alimentari) processed the raw products. Soon the abattoir was developed to a factory level and tanned foods and exported to foreign countries.[170] Either the price of cattle sold to the factory was low as it compared to the Sudanese markets or the number of cattle were

[166]NALAE code 17.1.13.17.17, a letter from *Däjazmač* Ameha Abära to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.27/2028/53, dated 7 Hamlé 1953 E.C; a letter from Täklu Delnäsahu (assistant Minister of Finance) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no.***U***/3422/8/53, dated 27 Nähasé 1953 E.C.
[167]NGAZRO, a letter from Ašagré Gétahun (director of Gondar and Gojjam Customs) to Customs and Excise Tax Administration of the Ministry of Finance, Ref.no.136/218/70, dated 8 Ţeqemet 1970 E.C.
[168]Informants: Sisay, Sinor, and Wädaj.
[169] NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no.1008/59, dated 4 Genbot 1959 E.C.
[170] Solomon, *A History*…, 215-218; NGAZRO, "YäSemén Gondar Astedader Akababi….", 40-41.

beyond its capacity, contrabandists in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings continued to smuggle cattle into the Sudan.

The expansion of contraband trade in the 1960s and after was one of the factors for the decline of the revenue of Mätäma and other frontier custom posts.[171] In March 1966, Hagos Mäšäša, the customs director of the province from1964 to1970, visited the frontier custom posts of Humära, Godäbé, Maṭäbiya, and Dubaba and he indicated the decline of their revenues because of partly contraband and few number finance police who had no transport facilities.[172] For instance, Humära custom post had very low revenue in 1962/3 that could not afford the salaries of its officials. Its revenue from 1 July 1965 to 30 January 1966 was $3,878.40 *berr*.[173] Since contraband was dominant in Chilga Sub-province, there was an attempt in the 1960s to set up an additional inland customs post at Säraba, about 7 kilometers west of Aykäl on the road to Mätäma.[174] Local government officials blamed the clergy of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery for lack of controlling smugglers who went via Maṭäbiya Customs post. The clergy gave shelter to them and working against the custom regulations.[175] Thus, its revenue was low the 1960s and it was closed in 1974 due to instability.[176] The existence of three customs frontier posts in Chilga *Awraja* indicated how the cross border trade mainly contraband with the Sudan was high in the area. Hagos was the most active and diligent of all custom directors of the province. He

[171] NGAZRO, a letter from Mulugéta Mälké to Col. Seyum Gäsäsä, Ref. no. 469/17/57, dated 28 Genbot 1957 E.C.
[172]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Solomon Käder, Ref.no.730/58, dated 24 Yäkatit 1958 E.C; a letter from *Fitawrari* Beṭul Täsäma (governor of Sätit-Humära district) to Hagos Mäšäša, Ref. no.853/39/58, dated 15 Yäkatit 1958 E.C.
[173]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos to … cited above dated 24 Yäkatit 1958 E.C.
[174]NGAZRO, a letter from Lämma Borru (Ministry of Finance) to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office Ref.no. Ф 72/10/209, dated 25 Hamlé 1959 E.C.
[175]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 812/60, dated 5 Genbot 1960 E.C.
[176]NGAZRO, a letter from Ašagré Gétahun (Gondar and Gojjam Customs director) to Customs and Excise Tax Administration, Ref.no.115/208/70, dated 2 Ţeqemet 1970 E.C.

constantly visited and supervised the frontier custom posts, wrote recommendation to higher officials for improvements and shifted his workers from one post to another.[177]

Confiscating of contraband items from smugglers and sold by auction was one of the sources of revenue for the customs posts, although it is difficult to get the continuous years' records. For instance, totally $ 193,349.96 *berr* revenue was collected in the province by confiscating smuggled goods in the years from 1962/63 to January 1968.[178] In 1970/71 the revenue of the custom posts was relatively low as it compared to the 1969/70 year due to the expansion of contraband trade.[179]

Different sections of the society participated in contraband trade in Chilga *Awraja*. Local farmers, local merchants, Ethiopian refugees and daily laborers in the Sudan, Ethiopian police and local officials, the Sudanese including the nomads, and local bandits were actors in the contraband trade.[180] Contraband had no clear routes; it changed constantly to escape from finance police control. Mostly the routes were relatively remote from the frontier custom posts. The major route for cattle smugglers in Chilga sub-province was via Kulit (Maṭäbiya) to the Sudanese towns of Tiha and Basonda. The cattle were gathered from Gojjam and Gondar provinces and smugglers used search of grazing land or pasture in the lowlands as a pretext to cross to the Sudan. Since cattle medical treatment centers were almost absent in Chilga sub-province, many cattle smugglers also used cattle medication in the Sudan as a pretext to cross the border, mainly at night time. Mostly, there was little contraband trade in the rainy season since

[177]NGAZRO, a letter from Tamrat Yegäzu to Solomon Käder, Ref. no.31/1183/58, dated 13 Nähasé 1961 E.C.
[178]NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, dated 2 Mägabit 1960 E.C.
[179] NGAZRO, a letter from Mäzmur Akaläwäld (Gondar and Gojjam Customs director) to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 557/64, dated 3 Yäkatit 1964 E.C.
[180] NGAZRO, a letter from Dubaba Customs Post office to Quara Um Idela governor office, Ref. no. 145 - 23, dated 30 Genbot 1950 E.C Informants: Sisay, Wädaj and Bäqälä.

rivers fill with flood and made the movement difficult. It was conducted in between November and June. The most important markets in the Sudan were Tiha (about 15 kilometers inside the Sudan), Basonda (about 68 kms southwest of Gallabat) and Kunir.[181]

Predominantly smugglers in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings used a method of exchange locally called *Bida.* This was a system of exchanging cattle and other items with Sudanese goods. Cattle smuggled into the Sudan were exchanged with electronics, ornaments, cloths, and salt. Although they used the Ethiopian and Sudanese notes sometimes, they were not interested very much to transact with currency notes because they feared forgery of the notes and the low exchange rate of the Sudanese notes as it compared to the Ethiopian notes.[182]

Although the imperial regime tried to control smuggling by establishing custom posts and employing finance police, contraband trade was a deep-rooted activity in Chilga *Awraja* due to various reasons. First, the boundary with the Sudan was long and inaccessible due to lack of road network. Here, there were few frontier control posts at far distance apart each other and it makes the control of smuggling very difficult.[183] Secondly, since government officials and customs officials sometimes were actors in smuggling, there was nepotism and corruption among them. Since frontier customs posts were located far away from the center, custom directors did not supervise them for several years and the local circumstances forced custom post officials to accommodate themselves with the smugglers.[184] The smugglers, mainly cattle, were superior in arms and numbers than customs officials and finance polices. Smugglers were armed with better

[181]NGAZRO, a letter from Därebé … cited above, dated 18 Hamlé 1975 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Wädaj and Bäqälä.
[182]NGAZRO, a letter from Därebé … cited above, dated 18 Hamlé 1975 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Wädaj and Bäqälä.
[183]NGAZRO, a letter from Said Mähammäd to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Ref. no.964/2498/79, dated 1 Mägabit 1979 E.C.
[184]NGAZRO, a letter from Said Mohammäd to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Ref. no.964/2498/79, dated 1 Mägabit 1979 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Alämnäh, Wädaj and Ahmad Nuru.

and automatic rifles that finance police. For instance, there were only 44 finance police in Gojjam and Bägémder (and Semén) provinces in May1969 and they were equipped outdated rifles.[185] Fourth, since there was shortage of storehouses, captured contraband goods were stored improperly that led them to damage and were sold by auction at low price. For instance, in 1965, one *ţaqa abujadid* was sold by auction with $5 *berr* against it could be sold with $18 *berr* if it was stored properly.[186] Fifth, since most of the agricultural products adjacent to Ethiopia and the Sudan were the same like cotton, sesame and sorghum, it was difficult to customs officials to differentiate whether they were locally harvested or smuggled from the Sudan.[187]

Smuggling had different impacts on the local people in Chilga *Awraja* and in national economy. First, it damaged the revenue of the central government that could collect taxes from imported and exported items. The price of goods imported legally lacked buyers and it brought bankruptcy on the part of legal traders. As a result, legal traders were forced to incline to smuggling. Second, smuggling made locally produced goods less competitive to the smuggled goods. This had a negative impact on the development of local industries.[188] Unlike its impact on national economy, smuggling was viewed positively among local people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. Since the local people lacked various basic goods distributed from the center for various reasons, it was through contraband that they could satisfy their needs. No lives were lived without contraband on the borderlands of Chilga. Cattle contraband was a source of revenue and created job opportunities for several people and they were partly encouraged to rear

[185]NGAZRO, letters from Hagos Mäšäša to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 837/61, dated 27 Mägabit 1961 E.C and Ref. no.1137/57, dated 24 Genbot 1957 E.C; a letter from Sergent Solomon Malädä (Maţäbiya district administrator) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 120/16/73, dated 13 Hedar 1973 E.C.
[186] NGAZRO, a letter from Hagos Mäšäša to Tamrat Yegäzu, Ref.no. 34/58, dated 8 Mäskäräm 1958 E.C.
[187] NGAZRO, a petition of a group of people to *Däjjazmač* Ameha Abära, dated 9 Genbot 1953 E.C.
[188] NGAZRO, a letter from Tadäsä Mandäfro to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 280/567/71, dated 3 Tahesas 1971 E.C; Informant: Ţegabu Zägäyä.

cattle.[189] However, cattle contraband brought shortages of oxen for cultivation and this in turn led to decline of crop production. Moreover, cattle smuggling to the Sudan exacerbated cattle stealing and banditry in Chilga sub-province. In turn, banditry and local instability encouraged contraband trade. Thus, there was a direct correlation between banditry and local instability and contraband trade.[190] Fourth, although firearms were important tools for the security of the local people, it partly exacerbated the local instability and insecurity.[191]

Conclusion

Chilga sub-province was a frontier area that lacked different social and infrastructural developments for long years until the1960s. Realizing the benefits, the local people contributed money and labor for the construction of roads and schools in the last 16 years of the imperial period. Struggled with various internal and external problems, the local people in Chilga *Awraja* engaged in commercial farming. In short, the majority of the frontier people of the sub-province entered into the road of modernization in the last 16 years of the imperial period. However, since control of the imperial government was weak on the area, there was widespread banditry, local instability and an increased scale of contraband. Banditry greatly affected the lives of the local people and the government in many ways. It brought loss of lives and materials and led the people to poverty. Banditry brought instability, displacement, bitterness, and hatred among the

[189] Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, Wädaj, Qoyä, Ţegabu and Ahmad.
[190] NGAZRO, a letter from Därebé Mamo to Gondar Province Yämeret Zämächa ena plan Mämeriya Office, Ref. no. 86/8/2, dated 18 Hamlé 1975 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, Wädaj, Qoyä.
[191]NGAZRO, a letter from Tadäsä Mandäfro to … cited above, Ref.no. 280 /567/71, dated 3 Tahesas 1971 E.C.

local people. It dwarfed the progress of the local people in education and other social life. Banditry wasted the time, energy, manpower and economic resources of local officials in the process of hunting bandits. It hindered the development of cross-border legal trade with the Sudan and the commercial agriculture in the area. The outbreak of the 1974 revolution and the subsequent war of counter-revolution waged by anti-Därg groups further worsened banditry and local instability.

CHAPTER V

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chilga *Awraja*, 1974 to 1980

Introduction

Following the outbreak of the February 1974 Revolution, a group from the army and police set up a Därg (committee) on 28 June 1974 which slowly consolidated its power. On September 12, 1974, the Därg removed the emperor from power and declared itself a Provisional Military Advisory Council (PMAC). Subsequently, the Därg issued successive socio-economic and administrative reforms that destroyed the basis of the imperial regime. However, the military government faced opposition from different sections of the society in most part of the country. Bägémder in particular was one of the provinces that posed a serious challenge to the authority of the military Junta. Since it was strategically and usefully located along the border with the Sudan, Chilga sub-province became home to the anti-Därg groups that came together under the umbrella of the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) in the first five years of Därg rule.

This chapter tries to examine the struggle between the Därg and local opposition groups under the umbrella of EDU in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings from 1974 to 1980. I argue that for various reasons the inhabitants of Chilga sub-province were sympathetic towards the anti-Därg groups, and that the government in consequence failed to control effectively the sub-province and was unable to introduce its programs in the area during the period. This chapter shows how local opposition started in Chilga sub-province by focusing on the causes and the factors that exacerbated the counter-revolution movement. It then offers a detailed explanation on the course and basic features of the counter-revolution movement in Chilga *Awraja* by dividing it into

different phases. The chapter also analyzes how the counter-revolutionary war came to an end and how it affected the lives of local people of Chilga *Awraja*.

Causes and exacerbating Conditions for Local Opposition against Därg

The outbreak of the February 1974 Revolution against the imperial government was supported mainly by the urban people of Bägémder and Semén province. For instance, in Chilga *Awraja*, when demonstrations were taking place in many parts of the country, *Fitawrari* Abreha, the governor of the *awraja*, prohibited the people of Aykäl from staging a demonstration. Due to the opposition of the local people, he was forced to leave Aykäl for Gondar. As a result, the people wrote a petition to Bäqälä Zälaläw (the vice-*endärasé* of the province since 1966). Partly the petition states the following:

> **…በዚህ አዉራጃ ግዛት የተመደቡት ሰራተኞች መንግስት የሰጠዉን የስራ መመሪያ በመጣስ በኛ በታማኝ የመንግስት ህዝቦች ላይ ከብዙ ጊዜ ጀምረዉ በልዩልዩ የጥቅም መሳሪያና ፍልስፍና በሀይል ሲበድሉን ለመኖራቸዉ በእዉነተኛ ኢትዮጵዊነትዎ አረጋግጠዉ እንደሚዉቀዉ አይጠረጠርም ሆኖም ቀደም ብሎ የንግግር ነፃነት ሙሉ መብት ባለማግኘታችን በደሉን ተሸክመን እንኖር ነበር፣ አሁን በቅርቡ የካቢኔ ለዉጥ የንግግር ነፃነት ስለሰጠ እኛ በጭልጋ አዉራጃ ግዛት የምንገኝ ህዝቦች ይህን መሰረት በማድረግ የደረሰብንን አስተዳደር ሆነ የፍርድ ጭቆና ዘርዝረን ለነበሩት አዉራጃ ገዥ ፊት/አብረሃ መሸሻ ለማቅረብ… በአስተያየትዎ የአዉራጃ ገዥዉን መብት ብቻ ለመጠበቅ ያሰቡ ስለሆነ የህዝቡን መብትና ያቀረበዉን አቤቱታ በመሻር አዉራጃ ገዥዉን ወደዚሁ ተመልሰዉ እንዲመጡ ከማድረገዎ በፊት ፍጥረታችን የእግዚያብሄር ዜግነታችን በኢትዮጵዊነታችን የንጉሠ ነገስቱ መሆናችንን አስበዉ ፊታ/ አብረሃ መሸሻ ከማይገቡበት አገር መስፈሪያ እንዲሰጠን እያሳሰብን አስቀድሞ ለኛ መስፈሪያ አገር ሳይሰጠን አዉራጃ ገዥዉን ሰደዉ የንፁህ ህዝብ ደም በከንቱ እነዲፈስ ቢያደርጉ በሀላፊነት ተጠያቂ መሆንዎን እንዲያዉቁልን…**[1]
>
> …By violating the regulations of the imperial government, officials appointed in this *awraja* have been mistreating the loyal subjects of the state for many years. No doubt, you know this. Since we had no freedom of speech in the period, we lived under oppression. Following the recent change of cabinet that gives freedom of speech, we the people of Chilga have submitted our administrative and judicial oppressions to the *awraja* governor, *Fitawrari* Abraha Mäšäša. […] In your view, you are thinking to protect only the rights of the *awraja's* governor. Before

[1] NALAE code 17.1.13.17.19, a petition from Chilga *Awraja* people to Bäqälä Zälaläw, dated 3 Genbot 1966 E.C.

> reinstating him on his position by violating the petition and rights of the local people, think we are creature of God and Ethiopians belonged to the emperor. We remind you, give us land which *Fitawrari* Abraha Mäšäša would not enter. If you send the *awraja* governor to this area before giving us a land for us to settle on and shed the blood of innocents, you should know that you are the responsible person for it…

The above petition shows that governors of Chilga *Awraja* during imperial period were oppressive to the local people. Although the regime gave various freedom and liberty to the people, governors never implemented it and they violated the rights of the local people. They especially criticized *Fitawrari* Abreha who prohibited them from organizing a demonstration while people in other parts of the country were allowed to do so. However, *Fitawrari* Bäqälä showed a tendency to return Abreha to Chilga and for this they reminded him that he would be accountable to his action.

The decline in security in Bägémder and Semén after the revolution forced the imperial government to appoint a native governor-general as a possible means to restore law and order in the province. In May 1974, Maj. Gen. Näga Tägäň was transferred from his command of the Third Division Army in eastern Ethiopia to *endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén. At the same time, Yirga Dästa was appointed as assistant *endärasé* while *Qäňazmač* Sahlé Ayu was made governor of Chilga *Awraja*.[2] However, lawlessness and instability did not decline in the sub-province; people in various localities petitioned government officials to contain the insecurity.[3] Bandits as well as Sudanese from across the border were reported to have raided local people. For instance, a group of bandits from Mahbärä Selasé and Quara, with the cooperation of some local militiamen raided about 800 Sudanese cattle around Gallabat in June 1974. The Sudanese

[2]Negarit Gezeta, General Notice no. 458 of 1974.
[3]NGAZRO, a petition from Chäw Deba people to Chilga *Awraja* Governor Office, dated 16 Säné 1966 E.C; a petition of Wällo settlers in Mätäma to Maj. Gen. Näga Tägäň , dated 4 Pagumé 1966 E.C.

submitted a protest letter to the Mätäma police. Subsequently, with the help of the Ethiopian rapid deploying police force, about 150 cattle were returned to them and some of the brigands were captured.[4]

Maj. Gen. Näga did not welcome the establishment of the Därg or the actions it took in the subsequent months. In the months following his appointment as *endärasé* of Bägémder and Semén, Näga visited the sub-provinces of Däbrä Tabor and Gayint. Näga and *Lej* Haylämareyam Käbbädä, administrator of Gojjam, then organized a clandestine meeting in Ţiss Abay town along the border between the two provinces. Administrators of some neighboring districts and *awrajas* of the two provinces participated in the meeting. The meeting sought to organize a joint front against the military junta and anti-Därg leaflets were distributed among the local gentry in the two provinces. However, the Därg uncovered the conspiracy and imprisoned Haylämareyam.[5] Suspecting arrest, Näga fled from his office on the night of 7 December 1974. The Därg dispatched letters to local officials of the province to patrol their areas and capture Näga.[6] Suspecting Näga was sheltered in the district of Dära, his birthplace, an army unit under Brg. Gen. Sirak Täsfa was sent to Dära and made the army Wäräta its center of operation. An army unit under Captain Danél Täsäma searched Dära in the early days of January 1975 and informed the local people that the Därg has granted amnesty to Näga and his associates. With the arrival of the Därg army, Garäd Chäkol, governor of Dära district, escaped to the forest and

[4]NGAZRO, a petition from Sudanese to Bägémder and Semén Governorate, dated 15 Ţer 1967 E.C; a letter from Bägémder and Semén Governorate-General to Chilga *Awraja* Office, Ref.no 131/77/11/ 59, dated 21 Ţer 1967 E.C.
[5]Temesgen Gebeyehu, "Peasant Resistance against the Ethiopian Revolution: The Case of Gojjam 1975-78" (MA Thesis, Department of History, AAU, 2005), 12; Abuhay Beyene, "Mobilizing the Peasants against the Revolution of 1974: The South Gondar Rebellion of 1975" (MA Thesis, History Department, AAU, 2006), 37-38.
[6]NGAZRO, a letter from Yirga Dästa (vice-administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province) to various officials and military leaders of the province, Ref. no.33/251/67, dated 1 Tahsas 1967 E.C.

became a rebel for some time.[7] The army unit also informed the local people that they wanted Näga because the Därg has given him a higher position in Addis Ababa. However, Näga was able to escape to the Sudan after wandering for some time in the area around Lake Ţana.[8]

Although Näga departed for the Sudan, he had disseminated an anti-Därg sentiment among the local people in Bägémder and Semén. Accompanied by religious men, he called on local officials in different areas to stand up against the Därg. Soon several local officials of the province informed the people that Näga had escaped to the Sudan because the Därg had mistreated him. These men organized opposition against the Därg in different areas. They preached to the local people to reject the Därg's revolutionary ideas and decisions.[9] Similar local opposition groups against the Därg started in different parts of Ethiopia like Šewa, Gojjam, and Wällo.[10]

There were several causes for the emergence of a counter-revolutionary war in Chilga *Awraja* and other areas of Bägémder and Semén Province. The first cause was Därg's socialist ideology and the summary execution of high imperial officials in November 1974. Opposition leaders preached to the local Christian people that the socialist ideology of the Därg had declared that there was no religious difference between Christians and Muslims and this was not compatible with the culture of most Christian people of the country.[11] For example, the local opposition leaders like *Gerazmač* Admasu Bälay, in his letter to the people of Gayint and Däbrä Tabor, demanded to change the socialist ideology of the Därg by principles of a democratic

[7]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Urgéssa Saffara (vice-Commander of Bägémder and Semén Province Police) to Bägémder and Semén Province Administration Office, Ref. no.422/9/240, dated 14 Ţer 1967 E.C.
[8] Informants: Sinor, and Garäd.
[9] "Yä Gondar Kefelä Hagär Yä Qeseqäsaw Guzo Ena YäTälekow Wuţét, 1969 E.C" IES Ms. 3584.
[10]Fantahun Ayälä, "The Ethiopian Army: From Victory to Collapse 1977-1991" (Ph D Diss, AAU, 2009), 31-32.
[11]NGAZRO, a letter from Wärqenäh Tägäñä (secretary of Däbrä Tabor *Awraja*) to Bägémder and Semén Province Administration Office, Ref.no.1/52/62/58, dated 6 Mägabit 1968 E.C; The Ethiopian Herald,"Ex-Advisor to Gondar Regional office, His son give themselves up", dated 10 July 1977; Informants: Alämnäh, Sisay, and Sinor.

government.[12] There was fear of similar executions and detention among former officials of the province and many of these therefore slipped out of their homes towards the forest and organized local anti-Därg groups.[13]

The second cause for the emergence of resistance against the Därg in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings was the removal of imperial officials from their positions. To dismantle the structure of the imperial regime at the grassroots level, the PMAC removed district and sub-province governors from their positions across the country in late 1974 and early 1975. Government officials, who were 55 years and above, were retired with some pension while those below 55 years were removed considering them as incompetent. In their place, the PMAC appointed its own men, many of them military men, as provincial, sub-provincial and district administrators.[14] The Därg appointed Bäzabeh Gäbré as chief administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province on 6 January 1975.[15] In the next month, new administrators were appointed to seven sub-provinces of Bägémder and Semén. Major Gétačäw Wubnäh was appointed administrator of Chilga *awraja*.[16]

However, the Därg's new administrators appointed to different administrative levels of the province were constantly changed and stayed in office only for a short period. For example, on Chilga *Awraja* the PMAC appointed successively *Fitawrari* Dämes Bärihun (September 1974 - January 1975), Major Gétačäw Wubnäh (February 1975 - December 1975), Lt. Commander

[12] NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Col. Yilma Mängestu (Bägémder and Semén Public Security Department) to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.5/582/69, dated 27 Hedar 1969 E.C; a letter from Wärqenäh Tägäñä … cited above, Ref.no. 1/52 /62/58, dated 6 Mägabit 1968 E.C.
[13] The Ethiopian Herald,"Ex-Advisor to Gondar Regional Office, His son give themselves up", dated 10 July 1977; Informants: Alämnäh, Sisay, and Sinor.
[14]John M. Cohen and Peter H Koehn, *Ethiopian Provincial and Municipal Government: Imperial Patterns and Post Revolutionary Changes. Ethiopian Series Monograph No.9* (Michigan: African Study Center, 1980), 278.
[15]Negarit Gazeta, General Notice No.1 of 1975.
[16]Negarit Gazeta, General Notice No.2 of 1975.

Haylu Mäkonnen (January 1976 - April 1976), Germa Mäläsä (May 1976 - December 1976) as administrators. However, they stayed in their position for short periods and hence were not able to restore peace and order in the area.

There was strong resentment against the Därg from the removed imperial officials in Gondar because they were kicked out from their positions without reaching the age of retirement and without a pension. Removed officials argued that if the military government appointed officials in this way, the change cannot be a revolution and that there was no guarantee that civil servants would continue to hold their jobs in the future.[17] For example, *Gerazmač* Admasu Bälay's addressed letter to the people of Gayint and Ayälä Čäkol's addressed letter to the people of Aläfa-Ţaqusa clearly opposed this action of the Därg. *Gerazmač* Admasu preached to local people that the government's various reforms and actions should be rescinded. He also stressed the obligation to remove the military junta from power and replace it with a government elected by the people of Ethiopia.[18]

The removed officials in Chilga *Awraja* were involved in the conflict among the local people by creating ethnic divisions between Qemant and Amhara. The provincial police office's investigation and the petition of the local people indicated that Eritreans who worked in Chilga *Awraja* largely fomented the conflict. These Eritreans were Major Ayalćw Yizängaw, commander of Chilga *Awraja* Police, and Gäbräselasé Bärhé, head of Chilga sub-province

[17]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Feqeré Abäbä (Commander of Bägémder and Semén Police) to the Provincial Administration Office, Ref. no.2320/206/10858, dated 21 Yäkatit 1967 E.C.
[18]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Col. Yilma Mängestu to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.5/582/69, dated 27 Hedar 1969 E.C; a letter from Wärqenäh … cited above, Ref.no. 1/52/62/58, dated 6 Mägabit 1968 E.C.

education office.[19] Later on it was discovered that the conflict was developed into supporting the revolution and opposing it between the two ethnic groups. Most Qemant supported the Därg and the revolution against the counter-revolution Amhara war leaders. The Därg was considered as anti-Amhara and anti-Orthodox Christian as the Italians did during the occupation. This became evident in the course of the war of counter-revolution.

The third cause for the emergence of opposition against the Därg in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings was the March 1975 nationalization of rural land proclamation and nationalization of extra houses and urban lands in July of the same year. Although the rural land proclamation had no major effect on the northern provinces in general, it had a great impact on the commercial farmers in the lowland parts of Bägémder and Semén.[20] In the lowland areas, the minimum amount of land a farmer held was half a *gaša* (ten hectares). The proclamation restricted a quarter of a *gaša* to be the maximum land a household could hold. Thus, it is fair to conclude that all commercial farmers in the area were losers from the proclamation. The *balabats* from the adjacent highlands, who opposed land granting to the commercial farmers in the lowlands claiming it was their *rest* land, were disadvantaged for the second time and the proclamation denied them to hold land in the lowlands beyond their localities (PAs). This was a powerful incentive for them to stand up against the Därg. The local opposition leaders like Ayälä Čäkol's addressed a letter to the people of Aläfa-Ţaqusa stating that the Därg's land proclamations were designed to destroy the economic basis of the country and it would lead the people to slavery.[21]

[19]NALAE Code 17.1.13.18.08, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Maj. Gen. Näga Tägäň, Ref.no. 20005/35/127 /11, dated 27 Hamlé 1966 E.C; NGAZRO, a petition letter froma group of Chilga people to Näga Tägäň, dated 18 Säné 1966 E.C.
[20]Addis Zemen, "Yä-Bägémder ena Semén Wana Astädadari Gäläţa Adärägu", 12 Ţeqemet 1968 E.C; Informants: Alämnäh, Sisay, Gäbeyaw, Sinor, and Abuhay.
[21]NGAZRO, a letter from Yilma Mängestu to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no 5/582/69, dated 27 Hedar 1969 E.C.

Similarly, Admasu Bälay's addressed a letter that urged the people to restore the *rest* system of land ownership, to cancel nationalization of urban lands and extra houses.[22] Thus local anti-Därg opposition leaders pushed the peasants to reject the land proclamation and rebel against the Därg.

Därg officials understood the impact of the rural land proclamation on the commercial farmers in Mätäma, Abdärafi and Sätit-Humära. After they visited the commercial farms in April 1975 and assessed the problems, the Därg officials gave permission to the farmers to cultivate their lands for another year. This was probably because they understood the problem of the border with the Sudan and the possible shortage of food crops in the area. Meaning the farmers served as guards in keeping the border from Sudanese penetration and if they evacuated the area because of the land proclamation the frontier would be vulnerable to Sudanese incursion. However, the farmers had no confidence in the words of the Därg officials and refused to cultivate the land.[23] Most of the laborers in the commercial farms by then were not capable to form a peasant association, control and cultivate the lowlands. This was because they were seasonal laborers who came from other areas and also had no sufficient money to purchase agricultural equipment including oxen to cultivate the land. Taddässä Nägaš, an expert in the Ministry of Land and Settlement, visited Mätäma in May 1975 and reported that most farmers had stopped cultivation due to the rural land proclamation and that many rich farmers had left the area without paying their laborers. Hence many laborers became jobless; many of them migrated to the Sudan in search of work while many others returned to their homes. Taddässä also reported that there was dire food

[22]NGAZRO, a letter from Wärqenäh ….cited above, Ref.no.1/52/62/58, dated 6 Mägabit 1968 E.C.
[23]Taddässä Nägaš, "Yä Bägémder Ena Semén Kefelähagär YäMerét Yizota Aquam Kä Maziya 1967 E.C Eskä Hedar 1968 E.C", IES Ms.no.987.

shortage in the area and how about 115 laborers died in Mätäma due to disease and lack of food.[24]

The military government and its rural land proclamation also disadvantaged the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Chilga sub-province and other parts of Ethiopia. The proclamation deprived the main economic resource of the church. Farmers who were cultivating church land were freed from the church and granted the right to till the land. The church also lost the taxes it collected from its lands.[25] To rally the local people, the former imperial officials and many clergy in the province preached to the people that the Därg was anti-Orthodox Church, working to change their religion to "materialism", and to close churches.[26]

The Mahbärä Selasé Monastery was a major loser with the coming to power of the Därg. Its autonomous monastic administrative system was incompatible with the Därg's philosophy of Ethiopian Socialism. Government officials stated that there could not exist two types of administrations in a single government. The monastic administration was criticized for failing to provide protection to the local people from the various crimes committed by the bandits.[27] Consecutive meetings and discussions were held between the monastery and provincial officials in the later months of 1974 and early months of 1975 to replace the monastic administration with a secular administrative structure. However, the clergy were resistant to the new administrative reform and were absent from some of the meetings.[28] Finally, on 24 March 1975, the provincial

[24] Taddässä Nägaš, "Yä Bägémder ….", IES Ms.no.987.
[25]Wudu, "The Ethiopian Orthodox …", 294.
[26]Addis Zemen, "Yä-Bägémder ena Semén Wana Astädadari Gäläţa Adärägu", 12 Ţeqemet 1968 E.C; Informants: Alämnäh, Sisay, Gäbeyaw, Sinor, Abuhay, and Därso Bälay.
[27]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäzabeh Gäbré to Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.74/ማ67/88/25, dated 28 Hamlé 1967 E.C.
[28] NGAZRO, minutes of provincial officials with the monastery head, dated 19 Tahsas 1967 E.C, 6 Ţer 1967 E.C, 17 Ţer 1967 E.C, 17 Yäkatit 1967 E.C.

officials, including *Abuna* Andreas, the archbishop of the province, met in Gondar and they realized the need to separate religious and secular administrative works. The monastery was ordered to carry out only religious work, and the administrative, security, and judicial cases were transferred to government officials under Chilga *Awraja*.[29]

The rural land proclamation prohibited the monastery to collect taxes from the people it formerly administered and the Maṭäbiya custom post. The taxes now had to be collected and entered directly into the government treasury. Only a small area in the monastery's yard remained under its jurisdiction while most of its previous land was put under a new district named Maṭäbiya in 1976.[30] Thus, the clergy of the monastery were attracted to the ideas propagated by anti-Därg groups. The provincial officials even expected possible fighting from the monastery and asked for the deployment of a *ganta* (a company) in the area.[31]

Besides the above main causes, there were local circumstances that exacerbated local opposition against the Därg in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings. First, taking the change of government and the emergence of anti-Därg opposition as an advantage, outlaws expanded, mainly in the lowlands, and committed crimes against the local people. Especially, Mätäma's cattle raiders acted as peaceful men at the daytime and looted cattle and transported these to the Sudan at night.[32] In Maṭäbiya (Kulit), outlaws stole goats and cattle, murdered individuals, and forced the

[29]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäzabeh Gäbré to Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.73/ማ 67/88/3-25, dated 28 Mägabit 1967 E.C.
[30]NAZRO, a letter from Eyasu Mäläsä (Mahbärä Selasé Security and people organizer) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.41/28/69, dated 29 Ṭeqemet 1969 E.C; a petition of peoples from three localities representative (Wubé Ayalenäh, Alämu Nägaš, Däsaläñ Abäbä, and Wärequ Gälayä) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, dated 4 Nähasé 1968 E.C; Informants: Sisay, and Wädaj.
[31]NGAZRO, a letter from Germa Mäsälä to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration, Ref.no.4974/12/68, dated 11 Nähasé 1968 E.C.
[32]NGAZRO, a letter from *Qäñazmač* Bärihun Fänta (administrator of Mätäma district) to Bäzabeh Gäbré, Ref.no. 1559/28/67, dated 16 Hamlé 1967 E.C.

local people to evacuate the area, and closed schools. Even some of the local officials cooperated with the outlaws. This was partly due to absence of a police force in the area.[33] As in previous years, the bandits intensified raids on cattle that belonged to the Wällo settlers following the February 1974 Revolution. The bandits from Armacheho, Chaqo, Adaň Agär and Dawa raided more than 3150 cattle, burnt about 118 huts and killed about 21 Wällo settlers during the first year of the 1974 Revolution. They also prohibited the Wällo settlers to fetch water from the streams and forced some of them to migrate to Mätäma Yohannes. In their petition the Wällo settlers stated that this was done to them because they were Muslims.[34] However, the fundamental factor was the surrounding peasantry considered the area as their *rest* land and several local officials secretly encouraged bandits to raid the Wällo settlers and other commercial farmers in the area.[35]

The alarming instability of the area forced Bäzabeh Gäbré and Col. Feqeré Abäbä (Commander of the provincial police) to visit Mätäma and discuss at Kokit with the local people in May 1975. Subsequently, about 460 suspected criminals were captured in *afersata* (a system of disclosing thieves and bandits by meetings of local people in villages) and imprisoned. Some of the looted properties of the Wällo settlers were returned to them and the settlers themselves were returned to their localities. However, raiding against Wällo settlers continued in the subsequent years.[36] Some of the victims of the bandits also joined the government army to avenge their enemy who

[33]NGAZRO, a petition letter from Täšalä Jeba (Director of Kulit School) to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administrator, dated 11 Genbot 1967 E.C; petition letters from the Gumuz people representatives (*Belata* Dahaya Kuké, Kakeri Jänbäro and Täbäjä Šénga) to Bäzabeh Gäbré, dated 27 Miyaziya 1967 E.C and 23 Genbot 1967 E.C
[34]NGAZRO, a petition of the Wällo settlers to the PMAC, dated 8 Säné 1967 E.C
[35] Informants: Sisay, and Wädaj.
[36]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäzabeh Gäbré to Lägäsä Wäldämaryam (Minister of Interior), Ref.no 129/ፍ140/7-3/12, dated 5 Hamlé 1967 E.C and Ref.no 140 /ፋ 140/7-3/12, 22 Nähasé 1967 E.C; a petition of the Wällo settlers … , dated 8 Säné 1967 E.C; Informants: Sisay, and Wädaj.

killed their relatives. My informant who was a settler from Gayint narrates the condition as follows:

> I was one of the settlers who petitioned the government office at Mätäma, traveling at night under moon light. Bandits killed my uncle named Gälawdewa in here and took his rifle. I buried my uncle. I vowed that I would not live without avenging my uncle‘s blood. I was recruited into the government militia and received a rifle. Then I killed a bandit and gave his rifle to my nephew. The surrounding people did not consider the Wärä Himänu and Gayint settlers as human beings. They thought of us as wild animals.[37]

Bandits transferred the looted cattle across the border to the Sudan mostly at night. Ethiopian officials were unable to pursue the bandits into the Sudan because Sudanese officials asked them for passports and permission letters from the immigration office to enter the Sudan. This became one of the obstacles for Ethiopian officials to control the bandits. Since a large number of people went to the Sudan via Mätäma for various reasons, the Mätäma district governors had asked the Ethiopia government to open an immigration office at Mätäma since the 1960s. Since there was no such office in the district, Mätäma officials and the Sudanese Gallabat officials sometimes gave a pass letter for 10 to 15 days to the Ethiopians whose cattle were looted by the bandits and taken into the Sudan. However, following the departure of Näga Tägäň to the Sudan the Sudanese district officials prohibited giving such pass letters to Ethiopians. This hindered the efforts of Mätäma officials to control cattle bandits.[38]

Some of the prominent bandit leaders in the 1960s and 1970s in Mätäma involved in cattle raiding were Zäwdu Aleţah, Mamo Malädä, Hagos Ambayä, and Tägäňä Ţegabé. These men soon joined the anti-Därg group. While the last two men surrendered to the government and were

[37]Informant: Wädaj.
[38]NGAZRO, a letter from Bärihun Fänta to Bäzabeh Gäbré, Ref.no.1559/28/67, dated 16 Hamlé 1967 E.C.

given amnesty in the late 1970s, the first two men continued to serve anti-Därg groups. Several bandits also joined the anti-Därg groups. Many local people blamed the Därg for the absence of security in their areas and joined the anti-Därg groups.[39]

The other exacerbating local circumstance for the resistance against the revolution in Chilga sub-province and other areas of Gondar province was the natural catastrophes and the bad harvest in 1975 and 1976. A series of environmental disasters hit the province in both years. These included shortage of rains, heavy rains, earthworms and locust invasion, ice storms, frost, and human and cattle diseases. As a result, there was decline in crop production and subsequently shortage of food in many areas. The government did not give immediate support to those affected by food shortage except providing a little loan to cooperative farmers of Dämbiya to purchase seed.[40] Moreover, in the lowland areas of Mätäma, Abdärafi and Sätit-Humära much of the land was not cultivated due to the rural land proclamation. In Sätit-Humära, it was estimated that about 60% of the land was not cultivated after the proclamation. This has led to decline of crop production in most parts of the province. There was between 40% and 60% loss of crops in the highland parts Wägära *awraja*. Due to ice storm, there was about 80% loss of crops in Semén *awraja*. In Gondar *awraja*, due to worms and lack of rains, crop harvest declined. In Chilga *awraja*, due to the heavy rains and earthworm invasion harvest in Chilga district was low. In Aläfa-Ţaqusa, many cattle died because of disease. The death of oxen made cultivation difficult for the farmers and crop production declined.[41] Similarly, in the rainy months of 1976, cattle disease broke out in the Mahbärä Selasé area and killed many cattle, despite the government

[39]Informants: Sisay, Arnor, and Wädaj; NGAZRO, a letter from Germa Mäsälä to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration Office, Ref. no.3808/12/68, dated 27 Genbot 1968 E.C.
[40]NALAE code 17.1.13.09.05, a letter from Alämantä Gäbräselasé (Ministry of Land Reform and Administration) to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ref.no. 1/ሞጠ 4/81, dated 2 Mägabit 1968 E.C.
[41] NALAE code 17.1.13.09.05, a letter cited above …, Ref no. 112/5/11, dated 5 Genbot 1968 E.C.

offer of treatment.[42] There were ice storm and frost in the Däbrä Tabor and Libo *awrajas* that led decline in harvest. Thus, the province that had been self-sufficient in food crops and had been a supplier of grain to Tegray and Eritrea for years was facing shortage of food in the various localities in 1975 and 1976.[43]

Flooding was the other catastrophe that exacerbated opposition against the Därg. In the areas around the Lake Ţana experienced flooding of Gumara and Reb Rivers for years; it destroyed crops and created hardship for the inhabitants in Dämbiya and Fogära plains. However, there was extreme over flooding in the first two years of the Därg rule. It destroyed crops and was followed by cattle epidemic.[44]

The response of the government to this environmental shock was late in coming. In September 1976, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission sent about $204,000 *berr* to purchase grains for the famine victim people of Šahura, in Aläfa.[45] The aforementioned conditions exacerbated the opposition and resentment of the farmers against the military junta. The anti-Därg leaders used these conditions as fertile ground to preach to the local people that the Därg did not care about them when they faced such problems and needed immediate aids. Several famine victims also resorted to banditry.[46]

One of the organizations established to oust the Därg from power was the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU). Ethiopian refugees and former imperial officials who had marriage ties with the

[42]NGAZRO, a letter from Germa Mäsälä to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no. 4974/12/68, dated 11 Nähasé 1968 E.C
[43]NALAE code 17.1.13.09.05, a letter from Ministry…, Ref. no. 112/5/11, dated 5 Genbot 1968 E.C.
[44]NALAE code 17.1.13.09.05, a letter from Ministry…, Ref no. 112/5/11, dated 5 Genbot 1968 E.C.
[45]NALAE code 17.1.13.09.05, a letter from Šimäles Aduňa (Chief Commissioner of Relief and Rehablitation) to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no.ՈՈ 24/6/14/37, dated 5 Mäskäräm 1969 E.C.
[46] Informants: Abé, Gétahun, Sisay, Wädaj, and Haylé.

emperor's family founded the EDU in London in March 1975.[47] The leading founders and executive members of the EDU were *Ras* Mängäša Seyum, Maj. Gen. Näga Tägäň, and Lt. Gen. Eyasu Mängäša. Eyasu Mängäša, who was of Eritrean origin and Ethiopian's ambassador to Britain during the outbreak of the Revolution, was the chairperson of the organization. Mängäša was vice-chairman; Näga headed military operations and logistics while Däräjä Därésa was principal secretary.[48] Initially, EDU leaders considered themselves as a movement and not as a political party. They believed that since sections of the army and most Ethiopians were anti-Därg, the EDU had to give merely a coordinated leadership and financial assistance to the opposition groups to see the downfall of the Därg.[49] That was why the EDU leaders tried to organize the already started independent local opposition groups in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings.

Like local opposition leaders in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings, the EDU opposed the two basic reforms of the Därg: the public ownership of rural land and the nationalization of urban land and extra houses. EDU leaders believed that public ownership of rural land turned the peasants into the state's tenants and the nationalization of urban land and extra houses deprived the source of income of numerous Ethiopians.[50]

EDU leaders arrived in the Sudan and attempted to organize anti-Därg groups in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in late 1975. Local anti-Därg opposition leaders warmly welcomed

[47]Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1987: A transformation from an aristocrat to a totalitarian autocracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 125-126; Yoséf Yazew, *Tegel Ayqomem* (Addis Ababa, Alefa Publishing, 2007 E.C), 131-132; Aregawi Berhe, "A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilisation in Ethiopia" (Amsterdam, 2008), 125.
[48]John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton: the Red Sea Press, 1986), 159-160; Teferra Haile-Sellassie, *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1991:from Monarchical Autocracy to Military Oligarchy* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1997), 193.
[49] Andargachew, 127-129; Markakis and Nega, 160-161.
[50] Markakis and Nega,160-161; Andargachew, 128.

the EDU and agreed to struggle against the Därg under the umbrella of the new movement. For example, Ayälä Čäkol's letter distributed to the people of Aläfa-Ţaqusa in November 1976 stated he arrived with a news of support from EDU as "**በልዑል ራስ መንገሻ ስዩምና በጀኔራል ነጋ ተገኝ አማካኝነት የተነናጸፈ የምስራች ይዠ ዘልቄአለሁ።**"[51] (I come with a good news of support from *Ras* Seyum and Gen. Näga)

EDU leaders also crossed into the northwestern Ethiopian borderland region and incited the local people against the Därg.[52] Among the local opposition leaders in Gondar province, EDU leaders first contacted and gave some rifles to Aţanaw Wasé in Mätäma and *Bitwadad* Adanä Mäkonnen in Armacheho and Wägära.[53] Initially, EDU leaders had problems related to finance, military training, and operation programs, and lacked a clear program on how to govern areas after they were "liberated" from Därg control.[54] The financial problem of EDU was reduced beginning mid-1976 when Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, North Yemen and the Sudan opposed the socialist Därg and offered assistance to it following the Cold War politics.[55]

Course of the Counter-Revolution

The course of the counter-revolution war in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings had three phases: first phase (1975 to December 1976), second phase (January to June 1977) and third phase (July 1977 to 1980). The first phase was characterized by the beginning of the fighting

[51]NGAZRO, a copy of the letter attached in a letter from Lt. Col. Yilema Mengestu to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 5/582/69, dated 27 Hedar 1969 E.C.
[52]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäzabeh Gäbré to Lägäsä Wäldämariyam, Ref.no. 35/1395/67, dated 10 Nähasé 1967 E.C; a letter from Feqeré Abäbä to Brg. Gen.Berhanä Täfära (Commander of Ethiopian Police), Ref. no. 418 /9/ 100, dated 24 Ţeqemet 1968 E.C.
[53]Yoséf,132. Although some writers consider Aţanaw and *Bitwädäd* Adanä as founding members of EDU, these two only joined the movement later on.
[54] Yoséf, 132-135.
[55]Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa* (Addis Ababa: Eclipse Printing Press, 2016), 86; Andargachew, 129; Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation Part lI: Ethiopia: Transformation and Conflic; The History of the Ethiopian People 's Revolutionary Party* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), 116.

between local opposition groups and Därg forces and the growing power of local opposition groups under the umbrella of EDU. The second phase was characterized by the climax of the fighting between EDU and Därg forces in which the period was a victory in the early months and a loser in June for EDU. The third phase was characterized by the decline and final collapse of EDU in Chilga.

The First Phase (1975 to December 1976)

The fighting between local opposition leaders and the Därg forces in Bägémder was started in the rainy season of 1975. *Gerazmač* Admasu Bälay, secretary of Däbrä Tabor *Awraja* in the pre-revolution period, was a pioneer in organizing and fighting the Därg in the province. By organizing the peasants of Däbrä Tabor and Gayint *Awrajas*, Admasu scored a series of victories over the Därg army. Among the fighting, the one at Gassay (near Däbrä Tabor on the road to Gayint), fought in early September 1975, was the major one and it consumed the lives of Bäzabeh Gäbré, *Gerazmač* Agäň Bälačäw (commander of the *näch läbaš ţor* of the province), and other government officials.[56] For some years, Admasu remained a fugitive until he was killed in the lowlands of the Täkäzé River in 1980.[57]

Resistance against the Därg started in other parts of Bägémder independently of each other. The main anti-Därg leaders in Chilga *Awraja* were Ayalnäh Däsé (in Chilga), Aţanaw Wasé (in Mätäma), *Gerazmač* Ayälä Čäkole, *Fitawrari* Daňenätu Šaräw and Sebahatu Bayabel (in Aläfa-Ţaqusa), and Dämas Käfalä (in Quara). The main anti-Därg leaders in Gondar *awraja* were

[56]Addis Zemen, "Yä-Bägémder ena Semén Wana Astädadari Adhariyan Bäţalut Adäga Aräfu", 14 Mäskäräm 1968 E.C; Abuhay, 39-40; NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Bägémder and Semén Administrative Office, Ref.no.14/154, dated17 Tahesas 1968 E.C.
[57]Addis Zemen, "Qändäňaw Wänbädé Admasu Bälay Tädämäsäsä", 3 Hamlé 1972 E.C.

Zäläqä Jämbär and Näga Näwäṭä (in Lower Armacheho), Bärihun Gäbräyäs in (Upper Armacheho), and *Fitawrari* Täsfayä Asnakä (in Bäläsa). The main anti-Därg leaders in Wägära *awraja* were *Bitwädäd* Adanä Mäkonnen, and *Fitawrari* Tayä Golla (in Wälqayt). The military Junta regarded these men as the opponent of "Ethiopia First" philosophy.[58] Lack of coordination was one of the features of the counter-revolution war in the province of Gondar in the early days of the Därg. That was why the EDU leaders tried to coordinate them against Därg.

Därg members deployed different mechanisms in the province to contain the local opposition in the early months of 1975. First, they tried to induce the local people to accept the philosophy of 'Ethiopia First'. To this end, in July 1975 Därg members like Captain Haylé Mäläse, Admasu Ayalew, Haylé Gäbäyähu and Däsaläñ Bälay toured Chilga sub-province and its surroundings and gave orientation to the local people about the Därg, its philosophy of 'Ethiopia First', and the aims and goals of the military Junta.[59] Second, the Därg members attempted to negotiate with opposition leaders like *Bitwädäd* Adanä, who presented himself in the markets and other places and called on the local people to stand up against the Därg.[60] Since there was a rumor that Adanä had planned to raid Dabat town in June 1975, the Därg members and Bäzabeh sent Ambassador Daňäw Wäldä Selasé (a native of Wägära district) to negotiate with Adanä to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. Daňäw met Adanä who agreed to halt temporarily his plan of raiding Dabat.[61] However, these methods did not lead to a lasting peace. Soon after this in July 1975 Yirga Dästa,

[58]NGAZRO, a document entitled a report of events in the Gondar province in 1966 and 1967 E.C; various letters between and among officials of Bägémder and Semén and Ministers of the Därg, dated 1967-68; Abuhay, 35-36.
[59]Addis Zemen, "Yä-Därg Abaloč Lä-Chilga Awraja Hezeb Gäläṭa Adärägu", 16 Miyaziya 1967 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Gondar Yä-Därg Abaloč Yäsera Gubeňet Adärägu", 10 Hamlé 1967 E.C.
[60]NALAE code 17.1.13.08.02, a letter from Ministry of Interior to the Council of Ministers, Ref.no.12/380 19, dated 5 Säné, 1967 E.C; Liqu Ejegu, *Yä-Kebur Bitwadad Adanä Mäkonnen Aba Däfar YäHeywät Tarik 1893-1975 E.C* (Addis Ababa:Artistic Printing Enterprise, 1997 E.C), 205-234.
[61]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäzabeh Gäbré toTäfäri Banté (chairman of the PMAC), Ref.no 33/1330/67, dated 23 Hamlé 1967 E.C; Daňäw, 48-51; Liqu, 235-236.

the vice-administrator of the province, defected to the EDU's side in the Sudan. Subsequently, Därg appointed Ambassador Daňäw as chief administrator of Bägémder and Semén and Major Bäräta Gämoraw vice-administrator on 30 September 1975,[62] following the death of Bäzabeh. Därg members told Daňäw as "**ከጎንደር ጋር ከመዋጋት አስጥሉን**"[63] (Help us out from fighting against the people of Gondar).

Due to its strategical location along the border with the Sudan and the Därg's hostile relations with the Sudanese government, Chilga sub-province emerged as a haven for the anti-Därg leaders. It served as a main corridor to and from the Sudan not only for the anti-Därg leaders of Gondar but also from Gojjam and Wällo. *Fitawrari* Awudäw Habäša of Ačäfär and *Qäňazmač* Seménäh Dästa of Agäw Meder used it as their shelter and base of operation until the Därg killed the latter in July 1977 at Terfit, in northern Ačäfär, while the former fled to the Sudan and became a refugee.[64] Gugsa Ambaw with about his 600 followers also came from Lasta and Wag and took shelter in Chilga and Armacheho.[65]

One of the basic features of the resistance against the Därg in Chilga sub-province was the fact that most of its leaders were imperial government officials. Some of them had been members of the Chamber of Deputies at different times. Ayälä Čäkol, a native of Aläfa, served in different posts during the imperial regime as secretary of Chilga *Awraja*, member of the Chamber of Deputies in the first election, as governor of Aläfa-Ţaqusa, and a representative of Mahbärä

[62]Addis Zemen, "Addisu Wana Astädadari Gondar Gäbu", 1 Ţeqemet 1968 E.C; Negarit Gazeta, General Notice no.5 of 1975.
[63] Daňäw, 53.
[64] NGAZRO, a letter from Mamo Ayu (vice-administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province) to the Province Police Department, Ref. no.5/260/68, dated 19Ţeqemet 1968 E.C; a letter from Aläfa District Police Office to Chilga *Awraja* Police Office, Ref. no.17/1/83/68, dated 20 Mäskäräm 1968 E.C.
[65] NGAZRO, a letter from Wägära *Awraja* Administrative Office to the Seventh Division Army Command Center at Azäzo, Ref. no.5546/12/70, dated 14 Genbot 1970 E.C.

Selasé Monastery after his retirement towards the end of the imperial era. He had good relations and acceptance among the clergy of the monastery and he was their representative in the meetings with the provincial officials.[66] *Fitawrari* Daňenätu, a native of Aläfa, was a judge and a member of the Chamber of Deputies in the fourth election together with Alämnäh Bälay representing Chilga sub-province.[67] Dämas Käfalä was a native and governor of Quara during the imperial period. Aţanaw Wasé was a rich man in Mätäma, engaged mainly in commercial farming and trade, disadvantaged greatly by the nationalization of rural lands and extra houses.[68]

Pamphlets and letters by these anti-Därg leaders, EDU and EPRP members steadily distributed to different sections of the society, including the government army, police, militiamen and peasants in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings and they called on the people to rise up against the Därg.[69]

Anti-Därg resistance leaders in Chilga sub-province started fighting against the government force after the rainy season of 1975. Aţanaw fought the government force in Mätäma starting from September 1975 on. On 27 September, the anti-Därg groups held a meeting at Kumär; and they agreed to attack Mätäma's police office to help the inhabitants of the town to immigrate to the Sudan and to broadcast the news to the outside world. However, they did not implement this. Bärihun Fänta, Mätäma district administrator, asked military assistance from the provincial officials. However, he could not get this and it greatly eroded the district officials' efforts to fight

[66] NGAZRO, various documents; Informants: Sisay, Sinor, Abé and Alämnäh; Addis Zemen, "Yä-Amakariwäč Sem Zerezer Ena Yä Märäţačäw Agär", 23 Ţeqemet 1950 E.C.
[67] Addis Zemen, "YäHezeb Endäraséwäč", 29 and 30 Ţeqemet 1962 E.C .
[68] Informants: Wädaj, Arun Ahmed, and Sisay; Yoséf, 132.
[69] NGAZRO, copies of the pamphlets attached in a letter from Bägémder and Semén Police Office to the Ethiopian Police Office, Ref. no. 18/11/155, dated 17 Hedar 1969 E.C; copies of the pamphlets attached in a letter from Daňäw Wäldäselasé to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 33/461/68, dated 23 Hedar 1968 E.C; a petition letter from Asäfa Omär and Said Laqäw (Wällo settlers' representative) to Bägémder and Semén Province Police Ofiice, dated 6 Ţeqemet 1968 E.C.

the opposition groups.[70] Soon, in November/December 1975 Lt. Banteyidäru Alämu, a commander of Mätäma police, and Täšomä Kidanäwold, a court judge at Mätäma, took asylum in the Sudan.[71] Aţanaw, Zäläqä and *Bitwädäd* Adanä also tried to organize a united front against the government force. On 2 December 1975, they suddenly attacked a government army about 21 km far from Mätäma while traveling to Abdärafi. In the fighting, four soldiers were killed and eight wounded on the side of the government army, a car destroyed, and a tank partly damaged.[72] In response, the army confiscated Aţanaw's property in Mätäma,[73] and the 25th Infantry Battalion Rapid Deploying police commanded by Lt. Col. Mäkonnen Haylämareyam transferred from Humära to Mätäma in the late 1975.

The anti-Därg resistance in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings was accompanied by banditry and local instability. In the name of the counter-revolution and lack of government control in the area, bandits organized and intensified their activities. Many bandits also escaped from the area under government control and joined the anti-Därg groups. Murdering, thieving of property, raiding cars travelling on the road from Gondar to Mätäma, and burning of commercial farms expanded. The anti-Därg members also transported looted commercial crops, cattle, goat, sheep, and pack animals to the Sudan.[74] The Gondar-Mätäma road was the main corridor where

[70]NGAZRO, a letter from Bärihun Fänta to Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office, Ref.no.54/12/68, dated 7 Mäskäräm 1968 E.C.
[71]NGAZRO, a letter from Kiros Abära (administrator of Mätäma district) to Haylu Mäkonnen (administrator of Chilga *Awraja*), Ref. no.496/12/68, dated 22 Hedar 1968 E.C.
[72]NGAZRO, a letter from Major Nägaš Täsfaşiyon (Commander of Mätäma Police) to Col.Feqeré Abäbä, Ref.no. ***Ø***1/ 571, dated 22 Hedar 1968 E.C; Informants: Sisay, and Wädaj.
[73] NGAZRO, a letter from Daňäw Wäldä Selasé to Lägäsä Wäldämareyam, Ref.no.5/511/68, dated 30 Hedar 1968 E.C.
[74]NGAZRO, a petition from Abdärafi people to the Commander of the Fourth Battalion Army, dated 25 Tahsas 1968 E.C; a petition from Abdärafi people and around to Daňäw Wäldäselasé, dated 30 Miyaziya 1968 E.C; a letter from Alämnäh Bälay (administrator of Lower Armacheho District) to Daňäw Wäldä Selasé, Ref.no.147/16/68, dated 7 Mägabit 1968 E.C; a letter from Asräs Agedäw (provisional administrator of Mätäma district) to Bägémder and Semén Province Administrative Office, Ref. no.1104/12, dated 10 Yäkatit 1969 E.C.

car robbers and bandits from Adaň Hagär, Armacheho, and Chaqo were gathered and robbed vehicles. The area was also a place where looted cattle, property, and firearms were collected.[75] Government officials tried to keep the road from bandits by deploying guards. However, this was not successful because the bandits were numerous and were equipped with automatic rifles than the road guards.[76]

Bandits and anti-Därg forces also attacked and raided the Sudanese Ansar refugees in Mätäma. The Ansars were opponents of Jaafar El Numeiri's government and Mätäma was one of the routes that imperial government tried to give military assistance to them in 1969/70 as subversive activity against Numeiri. In January 1970, a group of about 17 Ansars with about 30 camels arrived at Mätäma to receive weapons. Since the weapons did not arrive on time, some of them were returned to the Sudan.[77] Lorries loading weapons arrived at Mätäma in April 1970, when Ansar representatives were not there to receive because they were wounded by Numeiri's destruction of their base (Aba Island) in March 1970.[78] Soon the Ansars started to take asylum in mass in Mätäma. Although the two governments agreed to return their refugees to their countries and Ethiopian local officials tried to push them to return to their country, the Ansars refused to go because they feared the possible retaliation and bad treatment from Numeiri's government.[79] Based on the two governments' agreed to relocate their refugees at about 50 miles (80km) far from the border, the Ansars were relocated to Gändawuha (about 50 kms east of Mätäma town)

[75]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt.Col.Mäkonnen Haylämareyam (Commander of the 25th Battalion at Mätäma) to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration, Ref. no.3/75/ምሃ4/3144, dated 8 Säné 1968 E.C.
[76]NGAZRO, a letter from Germa Mäsälä to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration Office, Ref. no. 3868/12/68, dated 1 Säné 1968 E.C; a letter from Sisay Ayälä (president of Wälqayit Sätit-Humära Farmers Cooperative) to Daňäw Wäldä Selasé, Ref.no.189/37/68, dated 6 Tahsas 1968 E.C.
[77]NGAZRO, a telegram from Brg. Gen. Seyum Gäsäsä (Commander of Bägémder and Semén Governorate Police) to Tamrat Yigezu, Ref no.ኦመ/ቁ/2/62, 16 Yäkatit 1962 E.C.
[78]NGAZRO, a telegram from Seyoum Gäsäsä to Maj.Gen.Yilma Šibäš (Commander of Ethiopian Police), Ref.no.51/19/434, dated 5 Miyaziya 1962 E.C.
[79]NGAZRO, a letter from Major Maru Garäd to Bäqälä Zäläläw, no Ref. no., dated 5 Genbot 1962 E.C.

in mid-1971.[80] Gradually, their number had increased and by 1974 there were about 6,000 Ansar refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Ethiopian government gave support to the refugees at Gändawuha. However, in mid-1974, the UNHCR closed its branch office in Gondar and interrupted its support. Därg started to make them self-supporting by settling and engaging in agricultural activity and area for settlement was identified at the bank of Jarma River, in Armacheho, and land preparation was started.[81]

Following the hostile relationship between the Därg and Numeiri, some Sudanese also arrived in Mätäma and found spying for their government. In the late 1975 and February 1976, clash broke out at Mätäma when those Sudanese who found spying refused to go Gändawuha. The conflict led to material destruction and injury among the Sudanese and Ethiopians. Several Sudanese, who were believed to be instrumental in the conflict, were imprisoned at Gondar and Gorgora until the completion of the Jarma project.[82] A joint OAU and UNHCR fact-finding mission was sent to Gondar and Mätäma in March 1976. The mission came up with a report that the causes of the conflict were lack of food supplies, lack of security and the constant attack of the local bandits that led to death of the Sudanese refugees.[83] Due to the counter-revolution movement and

[80]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Amarä Dämsé to Bäqälä Zälläläw, Ref.no.3066/21, dated 4 Pagumé 1964 E.C; a letter from Efrém Bäqälä (UNHCR head of refugees at Gändawuha) to Tayä Räta (assistant Minister of Interior), dated 6 Nähasé 1966 E.C.

[81]NGAZRO, a letter from Tayä Räta to Maj. Gen. NägaTägäň, Ref.no.29/29228, dated 11 Nähasé 1966 E.C; a letter from Nägaš Däsé (manager of North Sudanese Refugee Resettlement Project) to Gondar *Awraja* Governor Office, Ref.no. አፀ 18/6/72, dated 28 Yäkatit 1972 E.C.

[82]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Col. Asäfa Mäsälä (vice-commander Gondar Province Police) to Daňäw Wäldäselasé, Ref. no.51/19/326, dated11 Yäkatit 1968 E.C; a letter from Nägaš Däsé to Bägémder and Semén Governorate Office, Ref.no. ሠ4/69, dated 22 Ţeqemet 1969 E.C.

[83]NGAZRO, a letter from Tayä Räta to Major Bäräta Gämoraw (assistant administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province), Ref.no. date 25 Miyaziya 1968 E.C.

local instability, the construction of Jarma project was interrupted. EDU fighters looted the construction materials of the project.[84]

The existence of a small number of police along the frontier districts was one of the factors that paved the way for the consolidation of anti-Därg groups on the frontier. For instance, in November 1975, there were 26 regular and 37 *Fäţeno Däraš* police in Mätäma; there were 9 regular in Quara; there were 22 regular in Humära; 27 regular and 37 *Fäţeno Däraš* at Abdärafi.[85] Thus, it was difficult for the police to curtail the anti-Därg groups and thereby bring stability in the lowlands.

The appointment of Daňäw Wäldä Selasé as chief administrator of the province could not contain the fighting and spread of the counter-revolution movement in the province. Daňäw was in disagreement with Därg members on the issue of the existence of class difference among the people in Bägémder and Semén. While Därg members argued there was a class difference and class struggle among the people, Daňäw rejected this idea. Members of the Därg disliked Daňäw's view and kicked him out from his post in August 1976 by saying "since there is no revolution without class struggle and since you do not accept this, it is decided that you are returned to your former position of ambassadorship."[86] On 22 August 1976, the military junta appointed Col. Emeru Wändé, another native to the province, chief administrator of the Bägémder and Semén province.[87]

[84]NGAZRO, a letter from Nägaš Däsé to Gondar *Awraja* governor, Ref.no. አፄ 41/16/72, dated 27 Genbot 1972 E.C
[85]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Feqeré Abäbä to Brg. Gen. Berhanä Täfära (Commander of Ethiopian Police), Ref.no. 418/9/ 123, dated 10 Hedar 1968 E.C.
[86]Daňäw, 57-58.
[87]Negarit Gazeta, General Notice no.10 of 1976; Addis Zemen, "Yä-Gizéyawi Wätadärawi Mängest Šumät Sätä", Nähasé 16 1968 E.C.

The bad relations between the Därg and Jaafar El Numeiri in the rainy season of 1976 helped EDU to consolidate its power. Numeiri blamed the Därg for the July 1976 unsuccessful coup against him. He therefore allowed the EDU to open a radio station to broadcast hostile propaganda against the Därg. He also allowed EDU to operate in the Sudan freely by opening its office at Gedarif.[88] Then after, the anti-Därg force moved to and from the Sudan with and material support of the Sudanese government.

Moreover, there was no smooth relations at Mätäma and Humära between the regular police force on one side and the army and Rapid Deploying Police (*Fäţeno Däraš* Police) on the other side in 1976 because of various reasons. The first was the imprisonment of some regular police members by Lt. Col. Tariku Ayené (Commander of the Fourth Infantry Battalion Army at Humära) and Lt. Col. Mäkonnen Haylämareyam (Commander of the 25th Infantry Battalion). Second, there was a lack of provisions to the regular police at Abdärafi while the army and the Rapid Deploying Police obtained relatively better provisions. Thus, instead of blocking the anti-Därg groups with unity and cooperation, the police force and the army created disagreement among themselves and paved the way for the consolidation of the anti-Därg groups in the frontier area.[89]

November 1976 was a turning point in the history of the resistance against the Därg in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings because the anti-Därg leaders started a full-fledged invasion of the interior districts. Until November 1976, the activities of the anti-Därg leaders was limited to the districts of Mätäma, Mahbärä Selasé, and Lower Armacheho. Since the Sudan openly supported

[88] Markakis and Nega, 161; Andargachew, 129, 206.
[89]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Col. Asäfa Mäsälä (Commander of Bägémder and Semén Province Police) to Ethiopian Police Office, Ref. no. 153/26/1126, dated 5 Ţeqemet 1969 E.C.

the anti-Därg groups at least some arms after the rainy season of 1976, the anti-Därg leaders like Aţanaw sent a message to the local people along the frontier to go to the Sudan and receive rifles and bullets. As a result, hundreds of the local people flocked to the Sudan and returned with rifles and bullets in October 1976.[90] The attempts by government officials to repulse the invasion were not successful from the onset due to various factors. Lack of road communication system was one hindering factor.[91] The anti-Därg forces destroyed the already limited infrastructure of the sub-province thereby adding to the problem. They cut telephone lines and buried bombs on the dry season road from Mätäma to Aykäl. This made communication and mobility of government forces much more difficult.[92]

One of the main routes the anti-Därg forces entered Quara from the Sudan was the route via Tiya (Tiha) to Mahbärä Selasé Monastery. This led to friction between government officials and the monastery in the course of the resistance against the government.[93] Government officials blamed the monastery for being a supporter of the anti-Därg forces by preaching to the people to fight against the government and condemning those who would not cooperate with anti-Därg groups. The government officials were also said to have blamed the monastery for slaughtering about 40 bulls to about 300 Aţanaw's forces in November 1976 and promised to continue their support.[94] Informants, however, rejected the above government officials allegations as groundless. Although the monastery lost many benefits following the coming to power of the Därg, it was

[90]NGAZRO, a letter from Eyasu Mäläsä (Mahbärä Selasé Security and people organizer) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.41/28/69, dated 29 Ţeqemet 1969 E.C.
[91]NGAZRO, a letter from Germa Mäsälä to Bägémder and Semén Police Office, Ref.no.596/43/69, dated 4 Ţeqemet 1969 E.C.
[92]NGAZRO, a letter from Gétahun Wäldämareyam (Secretary of Chilga *Awraja*) to Emeru Wändé, Ref. no.1453/12 / 69, dated 9 Tahsas 1969 E.C; a letter from Ayälä Täsäma (administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no.1806/12/69, dated 28 Tahsas 1969 E.C.
[93]NGAZRO, a document prepared by Germa Mäsälä containing the plans and preparation to eliminate reactionary forces in Chilga, no Ref. no, no date, Hedar 1969 E.C.
[94]NGAZRO, a document prepared by Germa Mäsälä ….cited above, no date, Hedar 1969 E.C.

not in a position to give active support for anti-Därg groups. This was because since it was a religious institution, the monastery did not need to bring bloodshed among the people.[95]

The anti-Därg forces invaded Quara in November 1976 and brothers fought on both sides of the fighting groups. Dämas Käfalä and his sons (Alämqän and Gošu) led the anti-Därg forces, fought the government force on 28 November 1976, and captured Téwodros Kätäma. The remaining police together with Asmarä Haylu, administrator of the district, retreated to Aykäl.[96] Tayačäw Dämas, administrator of the Šaho Wädiya sub-district, fought against the anti-Därg force. However, he could not resist his brothers' force due to lack of bullets and support from the local people; and he retreated to Gondar.[97] Mäbratu Damţäw, administrator of the Šaho Wädih sub-district, soon defected to the anti-Därg side. Soon the anti-Därg groups informed the people of Quara travel to Tiya to bring rifles and other incentives from the Sudan and EDU. As a result, hundreds of people from Quara went to Tiya.[98]

Like in Quara, *Gerazmač* Ayälä Čäkol's force attacked the militiamen of Aläfa-Ţaqusa and controlled the district in November 1976.[99] Many factors helped Ayälä's force to capture the district. First, he was native and a respected district governor during the imperial period and he had many relatives and associates. Second, he gave rifles and bullets to the peasantry and he was able to gather many followers against the government.[100] Soon Ayälä Čäkol appointed Fäläqä Tägäňä and Admasu Käbté administrator of Dälgi sub-district and Säraqo sub-district

[95] Informants: Sisay, and Wädaj.
[96]NGAZRO: a document prepared by Germa Mäsälä…cited above, no date, Hedar 1969 E.C; an letter from Taddäsä Seyum (administrator of Aläfa sub-district) to Germa Mäsälä, Ref. no.142/12/69, dated 25 Hedar 1969 E.C; a letter from Asmarä Haylu to Bägémder and Semén Province Administration Office, Ref.no 6/69, dated 9 Tahsas 1969 E.C.
[97]NGAZRO, a letter from Tayačäw Dämas to Col. Emeru Wändé, no Ref.no, dated 24 Hedar 1969 E.C.
[98]NGAZRO, a document prepared by Germa Mäsälä ….cited above, dated Hedar 1969 E.C.
[99] NGAZRO, a letter from Lägäsä Wäldämareyam to Emeru Wändé, Ref. no. 7/9557, dated 23 Hedar 1969 E.C.
[100] NGAZRO, a letter from Yäqoyä Abé …cited above, Ref. no **የመቁ** 2/69, dated 23Ţer1969 E.C.

respectively, and he returned to the Sudan to bring more arms.[101] Aţanaw's force intensified its fighting against government force along Mätäma to Chilga direction and closed the road. They controlled the towns of Kumär and Kokit on 2 January 1977.[102]

The government tried to deal with the activities of the anti-Därg forces using different tactics. One tactic was to use propaganda in the *Addis Zemen* newspaper stating that hundreds of people in Chilga *awraja* who had been misinformed and misled by the reactionary forces had given their hands to the government. The government called the anti-Därg groups by different names as *adehari* (reactionaries), *wämbädé* (gangs), and *wäslata* (brigands).[103] The use of these terms by the Därg might have been to humiliate them and show that they lacked public support and hence they were anti-Därg and anti-local people with no political program more than looting the people. Side by side with the propaganda work, the government officials also recruited militiamen and tried to fight the anti-Därg groups. Different names were given to the local militiamen in the districts of Chilga sub-province. The militiamen were named Tagäl Ţor (struggle force), Damţäw Ţor (smash fluat force), Käskes Ţor (dash force), and Mänţer Ţor (uproot force) in Quara, Aläfa-Ţaqusa, Chilga, and Mahbärä Selasé respectively.[104] However, from the onset the effort to mobilize the peasantry was not successful because parts of the local people were not interested to campaign for the government (probably they feared raiding of their property by EDU force). Chilga *awraja* reported to Daňäw Wäldä Selasé (administrator of the province) as follows: "**አሁን ለተጀመረዉ የዘመቻ ሁኔታ የዚህ አዉራጃ ህዝብ ፈቃደኛ ባይሆንም የመንግስት ሰራተኞች የወረዳና የምክትል ወረዳ አስተዳዳሪዎች እንዲዘምቱ በ** 10.9.68 **ዓ.ም ክቡረነትዎ**

[101] NGAZRO, a letter from Aţenafu … cited above, Ref. no 18/12/69, dated 23Ţer,1969 E.C.
[102] NGAZRO, a letter from Emeru Wändé to Lägäsä Wäldämareyam, Ref no 5/906/69, dated 27 Tahsas 1969 E.C
[103] See Addis Zemen from Genbot 1967 E.C to 1970 E.C.
[104]NGAZRO, a document prepared by Germa Mäsälä ….cited above, Hedar 1969 E.C.

በስልክ ባዘዙኝ መሰረት […] **በቅርቡ ያሉት ለመገመት መጠዋል።**[…].[105] (The people of this *awraja* are not willing to take part in the campaign that has started now. However, the nearby civil servants and district and sub-district administrators have arrived here to take part in the campaign based on your Excellency's order to me by telephone on 18 May 1976). Many of the militiamen abandoned their fighting and defected to the anti-Därg side. The local militiamen also made partnership with the anti-Därg forces and defected to their sides with their arms and bullets. They were halfhearted when fighting the anti-Därg groups and it was therefore difficult for government officials to defeat their opponents. The majority of the local people in various districts like Tänkäl and Aläfa-Ţaqusa were also sympathetic to the EDU's forces.[106] The support of the local people to EDU's forces was perhaps related to the fact that since part of the EDU forces were bandits, the local people feared the looting of their cattle and property if they sided with the Därg. Also the anti-Därg leaders preached to the local people that the Därg was anti-Amhara (for removing the emperor from power and the summary execution of imperial higher officials).

The failure to contain the resistance against Därg in Chilga sub-province at the end of 1976 forced the government to appoint *Fitawrari* Ayälä Täsäma, a retired a half-Qemant and a half-Amhara imperial official native to Chilga, as administrator of the sub-province in January

[105] NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Daňäw Wäldä Selasé, Ref.no.3642/12/68, dated 16 Mägabit 1968 E.C.

[106] NGAZRO, letters from Täklu Ayänačäw (administrator of Aläfa-Ţaqusa) to Emeru Wändé, Ref.no 547/12/69, dated 30 Hedar 1969 E.C, Ref. no. 576/12/69, dated 2 Tahsas 1969 E.C, and Ref. no. 590/12/69, dated 15 Tahsas 1969 E.C; a letter from Šebabaw Mängäša (administrator Tänkäl Sub-district) to Bägémder and Semén Province Administration Office, Ref. no 63/12/69, dated 27 Hedar 1969 E.C; Informant: Šebabaw Mängäša.

1977.[107] *Fitawrari* Ayälä was a respected and experienced imperial official in Chilga district. His appointment was designed to bring the local people behind him in support of the government. Chilga *Awraja* governors before him were mainly military men unknown among the local people. That was why partly the local people disregarded the government officials call to fight the anti-Därg forces. The appointment of *Fitawrari* Ayälä was however too late to achieve that design. Like his predecessors, instead of preaching to the local people to follow behind him, Ayälä who himself was an underground pro-EPRP frequently asked Col. Emeru who was also another pro-EPRP man to deploy an army into Chilga *Awraja* to fight the anti-Därg forces. However, this was not practiced and hence the anti-Därg forces had strengthened their position in the sub-province.[108] This was because the Därg army had other serious task of local instability like in Eritrea.

Picture.5 *Fitawrari* Ayälä Täsäma, governor of Chilga district (1963-73) and Chilga *Awraja* (January to August 1977 G.C) at his retired age in the early 1970s; Source: NGAZRO

[107]NGAZRO, a letter from the Ministry of Interior to Bägémder and Semén Province, Ref.no.27/15417/, dated 10 Ţer 1969 E.C; a letter from Bäräta Gämoraw (vice-administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province) to *Fitawrari* Ayälä Täsäma, Ref. no.1723/364-1/60, dated 27 Ţer 1969 E.C.
[108] NGAZRO, a letter from Emeru Wändé to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.1436/12/69, dated 8 Tahesas 1969 E.C.

The Second Phase (January to June 1977)

By the end of 1976, EDU leaders had come to realize that organizing and supplying the local opposition groups was not be sufficient to remove the Därg from power. Therefore, they decided to fight the Därg army and occupy the key towns of Humära and Mätäma as a base for further expansion to the highlands. To this end, EDU leaders gathered information on how to attack the 25th Infantry Battalion stationed at Mätäma and the Fourth Infantry Battalion at Humära, which they considered an obstacle to the EDU's drive towards the interior parts of northwestern Ethiopia. They first gave priority to attack Humära because there were many commercial farmers who would support them since they were victims of the rural land proclamation and the branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia to plunder. *Fitawrari* Tayä Golla, the anti-Därg leader in Wälqayt, served as intelligence man to Maj. Gen. Näga about the Fourth Battalion. Since Lt. Col. Feseha Gäbräwubät, the commander of the Fourth Battalion replacing Col. Tariku Ayené, was said to have had no smooth relations with a number of his officers, Maj. Gen. Näga and Major Yoséf Yazäw (vice-commander of the EDU's army) sent a secret letter to him to defect with his battalion to the EDU's side.[109] Subsequently, Feseha defected with most of his 450 troops on 13 January 1977 and EDU controlled Humära without any fighting.[110] According to Yoséf, about 80% of the lesser officers and about 50% of the ordinary soldiers of the 4th Battalion joined the EDU.[111] Then EDU's force plundered at Humära the Commercial Bank Ethiopia. At the same

[109]Yoséf, 134-146.
[110] NGAZRO, *EDU Advocates* Vol. 2 No.1, March/April 1977.
[111]Yoséf, 147, 149 -152; Addis Zemen, "Adahariwu Yäţor Azaž Ejun Lä-Adehariw Täsfa LäZäwude Derejete Säţä", 13 Ţer 1969 E.C; The Ethiopian Herald, "Former Army Officer Betrays Revolution", datd 21 January 1977; Mängäša Seyoum, *YäTewuled Adära* (Addis Ababa:Ethiopia Science Academy, 2010 E.C), 217.

time, fearing immediate reprisals from the Därg, the inhabitants deserted Humära and Abdärafi to Mätäma and the Sudan for security.[112]

The defection of the Fourth Battalion and the occupation of Humära helped the EDU gain popularity and many followers in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. Soon EDU established a military training center at Sofawa, in the Sudan, where the defectors from the Fourth Battalion started to offer military training to its fighters.[113] EDU recruited its fighters from Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan, laborers who have become jobless following the nationalization of commercial farms, and peasants of the borderlands. These recruits received rudimentary military training for a few weeks and were then deployed along the frontier under the leadership of local bandits, nobles, and members of the former Ethiopian army who have defected to the EDU.[114]

After the occupation of Humära, the defection of the government army, police and local militiamen to the EDU's side intensified and EDU increased its military activities inside the Bägémder and Semén province and Širé sub-province in Tegray. According to EDU advocates, the number of government soldiers that defected to the EDU in the first two months of 1977 was more than one thousand.[115] This strengthened the EDU in terms of military supplies, equipment and training since the defectors fled with their rifles. Before the advent of the EDU, a group that called itself "Tigray People's Liberation Movement Committee" (*Ţärnafit* or unifier) have been operating in Širé. *Ţärnafit* had been fighting against another Tegrean based anti-Därg movement

[112]Yoséf, 149-152, 184-185; NGAZRO, a letter from Yilma Mängestu to Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.5/553/70, dated 22 Hedar 1970 E.C.
[113]Yoséf, 149-152, 184-185; NGAZRO, a letter from Yilma … cited above, dated 22 Hedar 1970 E.C.
[114] Gebru, *The Ethiopian*…, 86.
[115] NGAZRO, *EDU Advocates*, Vol.2 No.1 (March/April 1977), 3.

called Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the area. *Ʇärnafit* soon became a branch of EDU in the province and continued to fight the TPLF since they were strategic enemies. EDU was a right-wing group that struggled for Ethiopian unity while TPLF was a left wing group that primarily sought to detach Tegray from Ethiopia. TPLF also viewed *Ʇärnafit* as bandits and feudal remnants that sought to reinstate the old regime to power. After several engagements, the TPLF was successful in driving out the EDU's army from Tegray in 1979.[116] As compared to Gondar province (named so after March 1977), Tegray was also far from the EDU's base in the Sudan and this limited EDU's capacity to give support to its fighters in the province.[117] Partly due to lack of logistic assistance, EDU fighters in Tegray lacked discipline, involved in robbing, raping and random killing. These activities alienated them from the local people.[118]

The people of Chilga *awraja* along the escarpments like the sub-districts of Adaň Agär and Chaqo were strong followers of the anti-Därg groups and EDU. These sub-districts had more population and bandits than the lowland districts. Thus, they were more important to the EDU than the less populated lowland districts. EDU therefore gave better rifles to the people of these sub-districts.[119] The following poem was composed among the local people to show how much the people were armed with rifles. It says:

እንደምን ይለያል ወንዱ ሴቱ ታጥቆ
እንደ ነብሰ ገዳይ ሁሌ ተጠንቅቆ
ትዝታው መጣብኝ አዳኝ አገር ጫቆ። [120]

One cannot differentiate between men and women since all are armed
They are always cagey like killers

[116]Keflu, *the Generation…*, part II,p.116; Aregawi, 128-135; Gebru Asrat, *Lu'alawinet ena Democracy Bä-Iteyopeya* (Addis Ababa: np, 2007 E.C), 52-53.
[117]Andargachew, 207.
[118] Gebru, *The Ethiopian*…, 87.
[119] Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, and Sinor.
[120] Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, and Sinor. It is a popular music poem in Gondar Province.

I am nostalgic for the land of Adaň Agär and Chaqo

From the above poem it is clear that the sub-district of Adaň Agär and Chaqo have been infested with bandits for decades and that both the local people and bandits had armed themselves. They were already armed even before the EDU gave them rifles. This made the sub-districts to some extent different from their surrounding areas.

EDU made preparation to attack the government force at Mätäma in February 1977. However, without a proper discussion with the EDU leaders on how to carry out the operation, Aţanaw launched an attack on 28 February 1977 on the 25th Battalion Rapid Deploying Police.[121] It was said Aţanaw did that to start a large-scale war between Ethiopia and the Sudan. Believing that the Ethiopian army had opened war against the Sudan, the Sudanese army responded by attacking the 25th Battalion on the following day and the residential houses of the battalion and the town were destroyed.[122] The fighting between Aţanaw's force and the 25th Battalion continued up to 3 March 1977. However, Aţanaw failed to defeat this government force.[123]

The local people of Mätäma suffered in various ways due to the fighting that Aţanaw provoked. Between 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants of Mätäma evacuated into Šähädi (Gändawuha) where they lacked basic provisions and shelter. Government officials reported that unless basic provisions were given to them, these refugees would join the anti-Därg camp.[124] Aţanaw was a terror to the people of Mätäma and caused the loss of many lives in the engagements against the

[121]Yoséf, 152-155.
[122]NGAZRO, a letter from Asräs Agedäw to Bägémder and Semén Province Administrative Office, dated 29 Yäkatit 1969 E.C; Informant: Sisay.
[123]NGAZRO, a letter from Emeru Wändé to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.5/14488/69, dated 25 Yäkatit 1969 E.C.
[124]NALAE code 17.1.13.26.02, a letter from Emeru Wändé to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.5/1518/69, dated 29 Yäkatit 1969 E.C; a letter from Ethiopian Red Cross Society to the Ministry of Interior, Ref.no. 441/69, dated 11 Miyaziya1969 E.C; The Ethiopian Herald, "Sudanese Regime Commits Aggression", dated 11 April 1977; Informants: Sisay, Wädaj, and Arun.

government forces. The laborers in Mätäma composed the following poem in reference to his activities:

ባሶንዳ ላይ ሆኖ አጣናዉ ቢያገሳ
ኩመር ጠቀለለ ኮኪት ጓዝ አነሳ፡፡

When Aţanaw roars standing at Basonda
Kumär enfolds and Kokit picked up their luggage

የአጣናዉ ዋሴ እናት የተመነሸችዉ፤
ሰጢጣዉን ወልዳ ህዝቡን አስፈጀችዉ፡፡

How brave is Atnaw's mother
She caused the death of people by giving birth a hot pepper [Aţanaw]

ፀሀይቱ ልትገባ አለች ነብሴ ነብሴ፤
መተማን ዋኘበት ያ አጣናዉ ዋሴ፡፡[125]

The sun is getting dim preparing to set
That man Aţanaw swims in Mätäma

Soon after the fighting government force officers visited Mätäma and tried to examine the event. Lt. Col. Qumelačäw Däjäné, the campaign officer in the Headquarter of Gondar Province Union Commands, was the one who visited and reported it. He stated that the Sudanese army had attacked Mätäma with heavy guns with a cover reason to halt the Ethiopian bandits from entering into the Sudan. Qumelačäw also noted that the 25th battalion had several problems related to water, food and arms supply, and the size of troops. The battalion had only 268 soldiers against the normal 630 it was required to have. The 15th *Fäţeno Däraš* battalion that deployed there before the fighting had 475 soldiers against it initially had 500 soldiers. The number of soldiers in the 15th and 25th battalions was reduced due to death in the engagements, and wounds, as well as other health and discipline problems.[126] Among others, Qumelačäw recommended the shift of

[125] Informants: Sisay, Arun, and Wädaj.
[126]NGAZRO, a letter from Qumelačäw Däjäné to the Commander of Gondar Province Union Command Headquarter, dated 28 Yäkatit 1969 E.C.

the remaining inhabitants of Mätäma town to a location in the interior for safety reason, since Mätäma was vulnerable to external attack due to its location on the border. He concluded his report by noting that the fighting moral of the government force at Mätäma was very low and it lacked determination and self-confidence due to several problems.[127] Many government militiamen had also deserted to the enemy camp for various reasons.[128]

Since they received a lesson from the 4th Battalion army defection at Humära, the police and army officers from Gondar visited and closely followed up the government force at Mätäma fearing possible defection to EDU's side. Major Ešätu Haylämareyam, the vice-commander of the 25th Battalion, reported to Lt. Col. Mängestu Haylämareyam (PMAC's chairman) more or less along lines as similar to Qumelačäw. Major Ešätu stated the EDU's force, encouraged by their success at Humära and Abdärafi, had consolidated their power around Mätäma with the intension of making the town their center of operations on the border. He also indicated that the 25th battalion fate would be like the Fourth Battalion unless proper measure was taken against the EDU. Major Ešätu also criticized Col. Emeru Wändé, the provincial administrator, for not having visited and encouraging the government forces at Mätäma.[129]

Supported by the Sudanese army, the EDU's army attacked the government force at Mätäma on 5 April 1977. The fighting was paused at night while the town burnt and resumed the next day. Although the Därg force supported by the air force and heavy guns fought the EDU's force for two days, it was defeated and the remaining force retreated to Gändawuha. Thus, Qumelačäw and Ešätu's fear were realized. However, the EDU army was not able to pursue the retreating

[127]NGAZRO, a letter from Qumelačäw to…, dated 28 Yäkatit 1969 E.C.
[128]NGAZRO, a letter from Qumelačäw Däjäné to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 2/181/914/1017/1835, dated 28 Mägabit 1969 E.C.
[129]NGAZRO, a letter from Ešätu to Mängestu Haylämareyam, Ref.no. 3/75/ያ/4/3378, dated 24 Mägabit 1969 E.C.

army beyond Mätäma town which remained under its control until August 1978. The news of EDU's victory at Mätäma and its radio program run by Captain Asrat Däfäräsu at Omdurman further increased the number of forces who joined EDU.[130] The EDU began to brag about its intention to capture the city of Gondar.[131] Its fighters controlled the highways linking Gondar, blocked transportation and basic supplies to the city.[132]

Därg condemned the Sudanese government for violating Ethiopia's sovereignty and called it an "imperialist power". Lt. Col. Mängestu Haylämareyam addressed and urged the Ethiopian people to defend the country's sovereignty. Since the Därg had other problems from Eritrea and the Somalia, initially it preferred a diplomatic means to resolve the crisis and hence brought the Sudanese case to the OAU at the regular meeting of Heads of States and Governments held in April 1977 in Libreville, in Gabon.[133]In the subsequent months, the two countries threw accusation at each other and their relationship deteriorated.[134]

Angered by EDU's occupation of Humära and Mätäma, the Därg organized a mechanized army named Gäseţ under Lt. Col. Zäwdé Gäbräyäs to crush EDU. Gäseţ consisted of the Fourth Artillery Battalion (commanded by Lt. Col. Gétačäw Gädamu), the 99th Mechanized Brigade (commanded by Major Gäzemu Bäzawärq), and other army units. In late April 1977, Gäseţ with its many vehicles carrying heavy guns left Addis Ababa for Gondar.[135] In the same month,

[130]Yoséf ,168-170.
[131]Andargachew, 206.
[132]NGAZRO, a document prepared by Col. Gétačäw Balča (Commander of the 21st Nebelbar Brigade) to liberate Chilga *Awraja*, Gondar, Ref.no. 3/181/ሥ5/1081/97 dated 15 Miyaziya 1969 E.C.
[133]Addis Zemen, "Sälä Sudane Mängest Wärära Ethiopia Lä-Africa Derejet Semota Aqäräbäč", 4 Miyaziya 1969 E.C; Täfära, 210.
[134]See Articles in Addis Zemen from 4 April 1969 E.C to June 1969 E.C.
[135] Gétačäw Gädamu, *Yä-Gäseţ Del ena Fätänawäču* (Addis Abba: np,1997 E.C), 14, 106-107.

EDU's peasant force encircled Gondar town within five kilometers radius.[136] Gäseţ arrived Gondar on 1 May 1977 and stationed at Wäläqa, the northern outskirt of the city. Fighting between EDU's force and Gäseţ started at Gend Mäţaya on the next day and Gäseţ sustained some losses. Major Gäzemu was wounded heavily and returned to Addis Ababa, and Major Märedasa Lélisa took the commandership of the 99th brigade. Since Gäseţ needed an additional army for its campaign to Humära, the 205th Näbälbal *hayel* (a lieutenant army) commanded by Major Bäqälä Gabi was brought from Aksum and joined Gäseţ at Wäläqa on 12 May.[137]

EDU's forces tried to halt Gäseţ's advance from Gondar to Humära in different ways. They fought, broke the road, and tried mobilizing the people by saying that the army group that arrived in the area had no religion. They also attacked people that were considered sympathetic to Därg like Tekel Dengay town that Gäseţ found plundered and almost deserted.[138] This was because the Qemant supported the Därg and were the predominant inhabitants of the town. Although the pro-EPRP man Col. Emeru rejected it, there was a rumor that the Qemant had tried to block the EDU's advance to capture Gondar city. Later on, Abäbaw Yirga, the vice-administrator of Gondar province, stated against Emeru that the Qemant in Tekel Dengay and its outskirt "served as a fence" and fought alongside the government force. This was because they were forgotten people before the revolution and they understood that the revolution had come for them and it benefited them.[139]

Gäseţ faced considerable obstacles from the EDU force *en route* to Humära. It encountered stronger resistance at Musé Bamba, Feyäl Qoläţ, Gäbrä Hariya, and Tärkan. However, with the

[136] Addis Zemen, "Gondar Bä-Ahunu Sä'at Kä EDU ena Kä-EPRP Eyäşädač Näw", 1 Pagumé 1970 E.C.
[137] Gétačäw, 11-18.
[138] Gétačäw, 19-20.
[139] Addis Zemen, "Yä-Gondar Hezebe EDU ne Yätäfawu Mähonu Tärägagäţä", 12 Hamlé 1970 E.C.

help of the air force, Gäseţ was able to defeat the EDU's army.[140] On 9 June 1977, Gäseţ met with a group of EDU force under Doctor Major Täfäri Täklähaymanot (Commander of EDU's army on the Humära front) and Lt. Bayu Geday at Bakär. In the fighting that followed, the EDU's force was defeated and retreated; Täfäri was killed, and Bayu was captured.[141] Unlike the road from Gondar to Bakär, the road from Tärkan to Humära has been plain and it was not suitable for EDU's guerrilla fighters. Gäseţ defeated the EDU's force and occupied Humära on 11 June 1977. The remaining EDU fighters retreated to the Sudan.[142] The people of Humära fled mainly to the Sudan.[143]

After it liberated Humära, Gäseţ could not stay in the area and pursue further operations for various reasons. It had a plan to attack the EPLF fighters beyond Täkäzé River. However, the destruction of Täkäzé Bridge made this impossible. On 8 July 1977, the 17th Brigade deployed to Humära and the 205th Näbälbal returned to Tegray. On 15 July, Mängestu Haylämareyam, visited Humära. The Ethiopian and the Sudanese armies exchanged heavy gunfire the next day.[144] Därg also announced to support the South Sudanese opposition group.[145] Since the Ethio-Somalia war was escalating, the Därg transferred the 4th Artillery Battalion to Somalia front and it left Humära on 1 August 1977.

The Third Phase (July 1977 to 1980)

[140] Gétačäw, 20 - 33.
[141] Gétačäw, 37 - 39; Addis Zemen, "Yä-Gäseţ Ţore Yä-EDU Menedäňočen Mäderäša Eyasaţa Näw", 3 Säné 1969 E.C; Yoséf, however, said Täfäri was committed suicide.
[142] Gétačäw, 39 - 43.
[143]NALAE code 17.1.13.13.06, a letter from Col. Lägäsä Ešätu (Commander of Gondar Province Police) to Col. Negusé Wäldä Micka'el (Commander of the Ethiopian Police), Ref.no.18/11/825, dated 2 Nähasé 1969 E.C; Gétačäw, 42 - 43.
[144]NALAE code 17.1.13.13.06, a letter from Lägäsä Ešätu to Negusé Wäldä Micka'el, Ref. no.18/11/825, dated 2 Nähasé 1969 E.C; Gétačäw, 43 - 49.
[145]The Ethiopian Herald, "PMAC Chairman Affirms Ethiopia's Preparedness to Train Fighting Force for the Liberation of War in South Sudan", 6 July 1977 G.C.

The departure of Gäseţ to Somalia front was good news for the EDU's forces in Chilga *Awraja* and they were encouraged to continue their struggle against the government forces. Fearing the possible advance of Gäseţ from Humära towards Mätäma, an EDU unit demolished flood injured bridges of Angäräb and Guang in June. They had also a plan to demolish other bridges along Gondar to Aykäl road.[146] In July and August, EDU's force in Aläfa-Ţaqusa fought against the Därg force that caused the loss of lives on both sides.[147] The rainy season was also good for EDU's force because the local militiamen were engaged in agricultural activities and this reduced the capacity of the government forces. The rapid deploying police at Gändawuha had also reduced almost by half for various reasons in the rainy reason of 1977. In August 1977, the 15th Battalion had about 266 soldiers (excluding those who were sick) against the regular time 500 forces and it was in a difficult condition even to defend itself from EDU attack.[148]

The chronic problem of defection of government officials to the anti-Därg groups in the rainy season of 1977 in Gondar province including Chilga sub-province was the other characteristics of the war of counter-revolution in the third phase. Like Ambassador Daňäw, Col. Emeru, a pro-EPRP man, did not have a smooth relation with Mälaku Täfära (the representative of the Därg in Gondar province). The army and rapid deploying police commanders at Mätäma and Humära criticized him for not visiting the local people and government force/army when EDU's force attacked them. Col. Emeru was in Addis Ababa to attend a military parade in late June 1977. Although the Därg members had planned to arrest him, Emeru was able to flee from the capital

[146]NGAZRO, a letter from Ašagré Tadässä (asistant administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to administrator of Mätäma District, Ref.no.5427/12/69, dated 10 Säné 1969 E.C;a letter from Yilma Mängestu to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.2097/69, dated 21 Säné 1969 E.C.
[147]NGAZRO, a letter from Taddäsä Seyum (administrator of Aläfa-Ţaqusa) to Gondar Province Därg leader, Ref. no. 2/12/69 , dated 24 Hamlé 1969 E.C; Informant: Sinor.
[148] NALAE code 17.1.13.13.06, a letter from Lägäsä Ešätu to Negusé Wäldä Micka'el, Ref.no.18/11/825, dated 2 Nähasé 1969 E.C.

dressed like a priest to Sälalé, Gojjam and arrived Däbrä Tabor *Awraja* (his birthplace) after several days of journey. (Kiflu Taddese says he helped Emeru while escaping from the capital). He then joined the EPRP and struggled against Därg in the province.[149]

Following Emeru's defection, Mälaku Täfära monitored closely other officials whom he suspected would defect to the enemy. *Fitawrari* Ayälä who was pro-EPRP was one of these men. Although a group of police surrounded Ayälä's home, he was able to escape on the night of 23 August 1977, after a fighting that caused the death of two police men.[150] Ayälä's defection is said to have greatly increased the number of forces joining the anti-Därg group. Chilga *Awraja* officials reported that when *Fitawrari* Ayälä left from Aykäl, many people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings went to the area where he was hiding.[151] By making his birth place, Daza Giorgis, his base, Ayälä Täsäma opposed the Därg and he reached to the extent of capturing a helicopter that landed there due to weather problem and lack of fuel while traveling from Humära to Gondar and on 15 August 1978. Ayälä's force detained it with its passengers until they were released through negotiation.[152] The other defectors to the anti-Därg camp in Chilga sub-province were Täklé Rädda (Ayälä's nephew and the then administrator of Chilga district), Haylu Aragäw (commander of Chilga *Awraja näch läbaš ţor*), Molla Fäţänä (Aykäl Municipal official), and *Qäňazmač* Abuhay Fänta (administrator of Tänkäl sub-district). On 30 August 1977, Chilga *Awraja* placed under *ţebeqe* (caretaker) administrator of Major Bäqälä

[149]Eteope (Amharic Megazine), "Yäţäbmänjaw Šum Šer Yeqäţelal", Vol. 2. No.2.017/93 (Ţeqemet 1993 E.C); Keflu, *The Generation*…., Part II, 440,442.
[150]Informants: Alämnäh, Täsfaläm Wärqu, Mulugéta Abuhay, and Jämbäru Ţelayä; NGAZRO, letters from Gondar Police Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no 370/5/858, dated 18 Nähasé 1969 E.C and Ref.no 370/5/860, dated 18 Nähasé 1969 E.C.
[151]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 789/12, dated 12 Ţeqemet 1970 E.C.
[152]NGAZRO, a letter from Gondar Provice Police Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 8439/ 25/2, dated 12 Nähasé 1970 E.C; Asmamaw Haylu, 45; Asnarä Engeda, 145.

Banjaw, the commander of the 13th Brigade army stationed in Säraba. Major Bäqälä found almost the whole of the sub-province, with the exception of military station (Säraba and Šähedi) and Aykäl, under the control of the anti-Därg forces.[153]

One of the activities of the EDU officials carried out to attract fighters in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings was by giving military titles to local opposition leaders. The title of Major and Captain were given to those who had no politico-military title previously while the title of Brigadier General was given to zonal operation leaders like Major Yoséf Yazäw. Atanaw Wasé, for instance, received the title of major. Several people submitted applications to EDU leaders to get such titles.[154]

EDU leaders, however, faced internal problems and their military activities began to decline beginning at the end of 1977 because of several factors. First, several political parties and individuals criticized EDU's economic and political program as an attempt to restore the old order.[155]Second, there was a power struggle between Näga and Mängäša that led to the formation of Näga's and Mängäša's factions. Näga blamed Mängäša for being absent from many of EDU's meetings and communicated military issues with local leaders without consulting him. Due to this power struggle, many EDU members, including the chairperson and the secretary, resigned from the party.[156] The third factor was the attempt to re-occupy Humära in September 1977. Mängäša's faction attempted to realize this objective and failed because of the determination and military superiority of the Därg army. Subsequently, the Sudanese government ordered EDU

[153]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäqälä Banjaw to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, no Ref.no, dated 3 Mäskäräm 1970 E.C; Informants: Alämnäh, Bäläṭu, and Abuhay.
[154] Yoséf, 225; Informants: Sisay, Wädaj, and Abuhay.
[155]Andargachew, 130.
[156]Yoséf, 180 - 213, 220 - 224.

officials to revise their military strategy or otherwise, it would withhold its support from them. Due to financial problem, the EDU army deserted and Sofawa military training center was closed. Partly lack of proper support of provisions many EDU fighters lacked discipline and resorted to banditry by looting local people. This alienated EDU from the local people.[157] Thus, the local people's trust in the EDU declined, and hundreds of its fighters gave their hands to the government in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings and were given amnesty by swearing as "abiwäté mariň" (lit. forgive me my revolution).[158]

The last month of 1977 and the early months of 1978 was a difficult period for the EDU in both the Sudan and Chilga sub-province. The OAU had set up a commission to reconcile Ethiopia and the Sudan and the Foreign Ministers of the two countries signed a memorandum at Freetown in December 1977 to resolve their disagreements diplomatically and to improve their relations.[159] Soon the Sudanese government forced the EDU leaders to leave the Sudan and to struggle against the Därg from inside Ethiopia. In the last month of 1977, when *Leul Ras* Mängäša left for London, other EDU's members met at Gedarif and elected Näga as EDU's chairperson. Näga accepted the Sudanese government's proposal and in turn the Sudanese government recognized Näga's new position. EDU's members also established three operation zones. Zone One was in Tegray, Zone Two was in Armacheho, and Zone Three was in Chilga *Awraja* and nearby areas of Gojjam. However, except Zone Three, under the leadership of Major Yoséf, the others did not start military activity.[160]

[157] Informants: Abuhay, Sisay, and Sinor; Gebru Asrat, 53 - 5.
[158]See Addis Zemen from April to the end of 1969 E.C and also Ethiopian Heralds from April to July 1977; Informants: Sisay, Sinor, Abuhay, Gäbyaw, and Alämnäh.
[159]Addis Zemen, "Iteyopeya ena Sudan Qeranén Lämaswägäd ena Ya-Ayär Geneňuntän Lämäqäţäl Täsämamu", 16 Tahsas 1970 E.C.
[160]Yosep, 221-224.

On its part, the Därg carried out different activities that contributed to the further decline of EDU in the early months of 1978 in Chilga sub-province. One of the actions of the government was arming some of the Gumuz in Maṭäbiya. Most of the Gumuz and Qemant supported the Därg against the counter-revolution leaders. As in the Italian occupation period, they were sympathetic to Därg that was considered at the time as the anti-Amhara government for murdering of high imperial officials and working for some time in collaboration with Mäison. The government officials also gave political and military training to the Gumuz.[161] Since there was a little conflict between some Qemant and some Amhara in Dawa sub-district and nearby Upper Armacheho area that exacerbated banditry and local instability, government officials arranged reconciliation between elders of the two ethnic groups. However, the anti-Därg members blocked the reconciliation meetings by opening fire on the government officials. Soon Gäbré Tächanä, administrator of Dawa sub-district, defected to the EDU's side in February of the same year.[162] The other action that the government carried out in the early months of 1978 was intensifying its *asäsa* (a campaign of searching anti-Därg forces). A unit of from the 25th and 15th Battalions deployed to Maṭäbiya where the force of Ayälä Čäkol was gathered. The government force with the support of local Gumuz defeated Ayälä's army at Metrahad on 24 February 1978. In the fighting, the government army killed many anti-Därg forces including *Gerazmač* Ayälä Čäkol and captured some others.[163] The government force of Aläfa conducted *asäsa* and killed Admaw

[161]NGAZRO, a letter from Yäšinäh Yimär (administrator of Maṭäbiya District) to Yilma Mängestu, dated 7 Ṭer 1970 E.C; a letter from Lämésa Héy (Commander of the 15th Battalion) to Yilma Mängestu, Ref.no. 1674/4/13, dated 10 Ṭer 1970 E.C.
[162]NGAZRO, a minute held among officials on 9 Ṭer 1970 E.C; a letter from Ašagré Taddäsä to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no.2525/12/70, dated 6 Yäkatit 1970 E.C; a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Police Office to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no. 5/1379/70, dated 2 Genbot 1970 E.C.
[163]NGAZRO, a letter from Gondar Province Police Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 413/6 /150, dated 20 Yäkatit 1970 E.C; Yoséf , 226-240, 241-250.

Nägaš (anti-Därg leader in Gazegé sub-district and was head of Aläfa *näch läbaš ţor* before his defection to EDU) and three others in the fighting at Ferawuda Kidanemehret on 6 March 1978. The government force beheaded Admaw and displayed his head to the people of Gazegé.[164] A unit from the 25th Battalion army also killed Sebehat Bayabel in a fighting on 27 March 1978 in Maţäbiya.[165] A government force led by Tadäsä Seyum, vice-administrator of Chilga sub-province, toured Chilga sub-province for 21 days in April 1978 to install Eyasu Mäsälä (the newly appointed Quara administrator) in office and to search anti-Därg members before the arrival of the rainy season. One of the actions of the campaign was hanging Captain Dämälaš Bälay (EDU member captured at Mertrahad while Ayälä Čäkole was killed) at Aşädä Mareyam (capital of Säraqo sub-district) on 18 April 1978, on a market day, attended by about 15,000 people.[166] This shows that government officials were ruthless to some anti-Därg members.

The rainy season of 1978 was the period when the fighting of the opposition forces against the Därg entered its last stage and came to an end in Chilga *awraja*. The anti-Därg force fought against Eyasu Mäsälä (the administrator of Quara district) from 2 to 9 May 1978 and in the course Fäläqä Bezunäh (Šaho Wädiya sub-district administrator) was killed while Eyasu retreated to Aykäl.[167] The anti-Därg force fought the government force in Kulit (in Maţäbiya), burnt down houses, and looted the local people in May 1978. Since part of the Gumuz supported the government army and were instrumental for the death of Ayälä Čäkol, the anti-Därg forces

[164]NGAZRO, a letter from Gondar Province Police Office to Gondar Provice Administration Office, Ref. no. 5917/ 25/2, dated 28 Miyaziya 1970 E.C.
[165]NGAZRO, a letter from Gondar Provincial Administration Office to the Seventh Division Army Headquarter, Ref.no. 5/1171/70, dated 21 Mägabit 1970 E.C; Asnaqä Engeda, *Šäkem Yämaykäbedäw Hezeb* (Washington DC, 1994 E.C), 112-113.
[166]NGAZRO, a letter from Taddäsä Seyum (assistance administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to leader of Gondar Province Därg member, Ref.no.3721/25/70, dated 2 Genbot 1970 E.C; Asnaqä, 113.
[167] NGAZRO, letters from Eyasu Mäläsä (administrator of Quara) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref. no. 60/12/70, dated 26 Miyaziya 1970 E.C and Ref.no. 1/12/70, dated 8 Genbot 1970 E.C.

avenged them by looting their property and forcing to evacuate from Šinfa and Maṭäbiya into Dangura (in Mätäkäl).[168] In late June 1978, about 125 EDU soldiers under Major Yoséf entered Kulit and made it a center for EDU's zone three military activities.[169] The majority of local people were sympathetic to Yoséf by giving provisions and participating in meetings (perhaps they feared looting and burning of their property). After defeating Säṭargäw Endäšaw (provisional administrator of Maṭäbiya) at Bohboh on 19 July 1978, Major Yoséf proceeded to the interior of Aläfa-Ṭaqusa and Chilga where he stayed until he returned to the Sudan in late 1978.[170] In June, Lt. Akelilu Bälaynäh was appointed as administrator of Chilga *Awraja* and Major Bäqälä Banjaw prepared to liberate Mätäma from EDU's hand. Major Bäqälä leading the 13th Brigade with seven cannons and large local militiamen started to open the road from Säraba to Mätäma. The road was difficult due to the rainy season, mud, destruction and since it was planted with mines. This army took three weeks to arrive and liberate Mätäma Yohannes on 9 August 1978.[171] The Sudanese raised white flag around Gallabat as a sign of peace with the Ethiopian army.[172] The 13th Brigade stayed in Mätäma until October 1978, when it was transferred to the northern front after the 15th battalion *Fäṭeno Däraš* force, commanded by Major Lämésa Héy, replaced it.[173] Subsequently, government officials intensified *asäsa* in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings and many anti-Därg leaders took shelter in the Sudan while several others gave their hands to the government. The anti-Därg leaders like Mäkonnen Adämä,

[168] NGAZRO, a petition from Kulit people to Därg members of Gondar province, dated 17 Genbot 1970 E.C.
[169]NGAZRO, a letter from Säṭargäw Endäšaw to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no 698/12/70, dated 24 Säné 1970 E.C; Yosef, 257-284.
[170]NGAZRO, a letter from Säṭargäw Endäšaw to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.14/12/70, dated 25 Hamlé 1970;Yoséf, 257-284.
[171] NGAZRO, a letter from Asäfa Käbädä (administrator of Mätäma district) to Major Mälaku Täfära (administrator of Gondar Province), Ref.no.አዘአሕ307/54, dated 13 Ṭeqemet 1971 E.C; Informants: Sisay, Gäbeyaw Bäré.
[172] Informants: Sisay and Wädaj.
[173]NGAZRO, letters from Asäfa Käbädä to Major Mälaku Täfära, Ref.no. አዘአሕ 307/54, dated 13 Ṭeqemet 1971 E.C and no Ref.no, dated 19 Ṭeqemet 1971E.C; Informants: Sisay, Abuhay, Därso, Géṭu Ṭebäb, and Sinor.

Haylu Aragaw, Molla Fäṭänä, Admas Käbté, and Abuhay Fänta submitted to the government and were given amnesty in the early months of 1980.[174]

Consequences

The fighting between the Därg and its opponent forces under EDU had administrative, political, economic, and social consequences for the people of Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings. Thousands of people died in the fighting.[175] Thousands of people became homeless and took refuge in the Sudan. It was a hard task for the government to rehabilitate them when they returned to their country after amnesty.[176] Agricultural activity declined and commercial farming in Mätäma and its surroundings was interrupted. As a result, thousands of laborers became jobless.[177] Due to local instability, contraband trade expanded while legal commercial activity declined. The frontier custom posts of Maṭäbiya, Dubaba, and Mätäma were closed. The prices of some goods like salt skyrocketed. For instance, the people of Aläfa-Ṭaqusa in 1977 bought one spoonful of salt with one *berr*.[178]

Although the EDU army had no power to remove the Därg from power, the fighting led to the destruction of public government offices, roads, health centers, and schools. They buried bombs

[174]NGAZRO, a letter from Aläna Käbädä (administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 3698/28/72, dated 11 Säné 1972 E.C.
[175]Addis Zemen,"Yä-Gondar Hezeb EDUne Aneqero Yätäfaw Mähonu Tärägagäṭä", 12 Hamlé 1970 E.C; NGAZRO, a letter from Aläna Käbädä to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no.3698/28172, dated 11 Säné 1972 E.C.
[176]NALAE code 17.1.13.09.05, a letter from Major Bäräta Gämoraw to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Ref.no.15761/21/17, dated 4 Genbot 1968 E.C.
[177]Addis Zemen, "Bä Haräregé ena Gondar Bä Ṣäṭeta Mätawäk Yätädakämäwun Yämeret Tägebar Gäbäréwäč Mafafam Jämeräwal", 3 Genbot 1971 E.C.
[178]NGAZRO, a letter from Seyum Ejigu to Gondar Province Trade and Tourism Office, Ref.no. 3342/3-2/46, dated 12 Hedar 1970 E.C.

on the road and committed atrocities. The EDU's force plundered various towns in the province of Gondar, except Gondar city.[179]

Disorder prevailed in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings; banditry and cattle stealing were intensified. The anti-Därg groups opposed the Revolution and they killed and looted the property of those who supported the revolution.[180] Since the anti-Därg groups had no basic provision supplies from an organized party or country, they were involved in robbery and this was one of the causes why the local people disliked them later on. The fighting also led the people obtain rifles than the earlier years for security of their lives. The local people who served as anti-Därg fighters were given rifles from EDU while the government armed those who served as militiamen. Thus, a large number of rifles were distributed among the local people.[181]

The various programs of the Därg were delayed from being implemented in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings. Due to local instability, the local people injured, insulted and robbed the National Development through Cooperation campaigners. Since the peasants and anti-Därg groups suspected the campaigners of being Därg's agents, they did not welcome them. The campaigners evacuated their stations and sub-stations like Dälgi, Chäw Deba, Šahura, Kulit, Mätäma, and Säraba to Gondar for security. The campaigners were not sent to Quara due to local instability and inaccessibility of the district.[182] In fact, unlike the southern parts of Ethiopia, in

[179] NGAZRO: a letter from Yäqoyä Abé (Aläfa district Agriculture Office) to Bägémder and Semén Province Agriculture Office, Ref. no. **የመቁ** 2/69, dated 23 Ţer 1969 E.C; a letter from Col. Lägäsä Ešäté (Commander of Bägémder and Semén Province Police) to Emeru Wändé, Ref.no.413/6/341/69, dated 2 Ţer 1969 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Yä-Gondar Hezeb EDUne Aneqero Yätäfaw Mähonu Tärägagäţä", 12 Hamlé 1970 E.C.

[180]NGAZRO, a letter from Aläna Käbädä to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no.3698/28172, dated 11 Säné 1972 E.C.

[181]Informants: Sinor, Abuhay, Wädaj, Därso, Géţu and Gäbeyaw; various archival documents that show the distribution of government rifles to militiamen.

[182]NGAZRO, a letter from Yäšifana Kasa (leader of Šahura sub-station campaigners) to Dälgi Campaigners station, dated 22 Ţer 1968 E.C; a letter from Sergeant Kasahun Alämu (leader of the campaigners at Dälgi) to Bägémder and

the northern regions the campaigners were viewed as the political agents and spies of the Därg that destroyed the Amhara supremacy and Christian symbol.[183]

The local administrative reform of the Därg that abolished the sub-district administrative level was not implemented in Chilga *Awraja* and other areas of Gondar Province. Efforts were made to abolish the sub-districts administrative level in the provincial administrative hierarchy, although this activity was started during the imperial period. The Därg justified that the duties and powers of the sub-district administrators were given to the newly established peasant associations. As a result, in some provinces of the country the sub-districts were abolished totally or partly. However, in some provinces like Bägémder they were not terminated believing that they were important to the peace and stability of the province.[184] The administrators of Chilga sub-province and districts opposed the cancellation of the sub-districts. It was argued that due to the broader geographical area, difficult terrain and land features, large number of human population, and lack of infrastructure were responsible for the inefficient local administration and local instability in the areas adjacent to the border with the Sudan. The administrative centers of the sub-provinces, districts and sub-districts were remote for many localities. Thus, instead of folding the sub-districts in the area, it was compelling to set up other additional districts and sub-provincial administrative units. Since Aykäl, located at a remote distance, was impossible to

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Semén Provincial Administration Office, Ref. no.ዘ 69/144/48/68, dated 27 Ţer 1968 E.C; a letter from Asmarä Haylu (administrator of Quara) to Germa Mäsälä, Ref.no.946/47/68, dated 4 Nähasé 1968 E.C; a petition from Täšalä Jeba (Director of Kulit School) to Bägémder and Semén Provincial Administrator, dated 11 Genbot 1967 E.C

[183] Clapham, *Transformation*…., 49-50.

[184]NGAZRO, a letter from Lägäsä Wäldämareyam (Minister of Interior), to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref. no. ሠ4/5/ኽ4, dated 25 Ţer 1970 E.C

control the instability created on the far distant districts of Quara, Mätäma, and Mahbärä Selasé. This condition was understood in the period before the revolution.[185]

Realizing the problems, the Ministry of Interior allowed Gondar province to retain the sub-district administrative level as a district branch, until the establishment and consolidation of peasant associations and the restoration of peace and stability.[186] As a result, in much of the Därg's period, the sub-districts existed in Chilga *Awraja*; and a new district named Maţäbiya was established in late 1976 from the former domain of Mahbärä Selasé Monastery.[187] Furthermore, due to the counter-revolution movement and the subsequent local instability, the numbers of government officials in Gondar province, including Chilga sub-province, were increased. The government faced difficulties to control the local instability and assistant district and sub-provincial administrators were appointed.[188]

The implementation of public ownership of rural land proclamation was delayed until 1981 primarily due to the resistance against the government. The failure to implement the various programs of the Därg in Chilga sub-province was partly associated to the incompetence of Akelilu Bälaynäh, the administrator of the *awraja*. A group of people criticized Akelilu for lack of determination to implement the various proclamations of Därg. The provincial administration set up a committee to investigate Akelilu's case and the committee confirmed his weakness. Among his failures, Akelilu failed to give amnesty to those who were anti-Därg opposition groups. He even imposed heavy amount of money as fine on the returnees and when they were

[185]NGAZRO, a letter from Alämnäh Bälay (administrator of Mätäma District) to Näga Tägäň (Administrator of Bägémder and Semén Province), Ref no.325/62/67, dated 22 Hedar 1967 E.C; a letter from Major Gétačäw Wubnäh to Bägémder and Semén Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 6854/60/67, dated 3 Säné 1967 E.C.
[186]NGAZRO, a letter from Lägäsä Wäldämareyam to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref.no.ጣ4/5/አ 4, dated 25 Ţer 1970 E.C.
[187]NGAZRO, a letter from Emeru Wändé to Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 4026 /88-3/25, dated 27 Hedar 1969 E.C.
[188] NGAZRO, a letter from Emeru Wändé to the Ministry of Interior, Ref. no. 2, dated 3 Hedar 1969 E.C.

unable to pay Akelilu jailed them. The committee concluded that Akelilu be urgently transferred to another area or else the resentment of the local people on Akelilu would transformed into another problematic direction.[189] Finally, Akelilu was transferred to Gayint *Awraja* in September 1980.

Due to the resistance against Därg, the government could not collect parts of the annual taxes from the local people. Some planned infrastructure and social service works like schools and clinics were not commenced in Chilga *Awraja* from 1975 to 1980 due to lack of security and finance.[190]

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how much the local people in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings rallied and fought against oppressive government that came against their religion and *rest* land. Since Chilga sub-province and its surroundings was strategically located adjacent to the border with the Sudan, it was home to the anti-Därg groups from different provinces. Most of the administrators of Chilga *Awraja* in the early years of the military junta like Haylé Gäbäyähu and Akelilu Bälaynäh were founding members of the Därg. However, they could not control the sub-province and contain anti-Därg groups. The basic causes of the opposition were the various measures and reforms of the military junta. The opposition leaders were mainly officials of the imperial regime and bandits supported by the Sudanese government and EDU. In the course of the resistance against Därg, banditry, burning and plundering of commercial farms were common

[189] NGAZRO, a report from an investigating committee to Bägémder and Semén Province Chief Administrator, dated 11 Säné 1972 E.C.
[190]NGAZRO, letters from Aläna Käbädä to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no. 141/28/2/28, dated 16 Mäskäräm 1972 E.C and Ref.no. 3698 /28/ 72, dated 11 Säné 1972 E.C.

in the sub-province. Since the anti-Därg leaders convinced the local people that the military Junta was anti-Amhara and fear of cattle raiding from the anti-Därg groups, much of the peasantry in Chilga *Awraja* were sympathetic to them.

EDU began to decline and failed to create an impact in Chilga sub-province after 1979, although some of its members independently continued to operate in the area for some times. On its part, the EDU force was not strong enough to remove the Därg from power since it lacked training, disciple and logistics. The fighting impoverished the frontier sub-province that lacked access to social services and infrastructural developments for long years. With the decline of EDU's activity, a fresh force of the EPRA appeared in Chilga *Awraja* to struggle against the Därg.

CHAPTER VI

Därg, Its Socialist Projects and Opponents in Chilga *Awraja*, 1980 to 1991

Introduction

The population of Chilga sub-province experienced various challenges during the Därg period. Since it was located usefully along the border with the Sudan, the sub-province was home to anti-Därg groups like EDU and EPRP/A. While the military activity of the EDU took place in the first four years of Därg rule, EPRA's operations were carried out in the last 13 years of Därg rule. The chapter first examines how the EPRP/A faced different challenges from local people in Chilga and Armacheho districts until it shifted its center of operation to Quara as of 1982. The chapter then proceeds to examine how the EPRA posed a great challenge to local administration of Chilga *Awraja* by making Quara its center of operation. It also discusses how the military government sought to capture the peasantry by introducing different socialist projects and how the EPRP contested and undermined these projects. The chapter then offers a discussion of how the EPRDF army defeated the EPRA and the Därg army in Chilga sub-province and controlled the area. I argue that the Därg did not effectively control the sub-province of Chilga due to opposition from EPRP and in consequence it was not able to implement its administrative and socio-economic projects among the people of the area.

Early Challenges of EPRP/A

The Ethiopian People's Liberation Organization (EPLO) was founded in April 1972 in Berlin and it followed a clandestine form of struggle until August 1975 when it was renamed the

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP).[1] The EPRP was guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology which aimed "to strengthen the unity and alliance of the workers and peasants so as to ultimately establish Proletarian Dictatorship in the era of Socialism and eventually establish a classless Communist Society free from oppression and exploitation of man by man." [2]

The EPLO organized its zonal committees in different provinces of Ethiopia. Its zonal committee in Bägémder was set up in 1974. Zonal committee of Bägémder had a clandestine communication network called "Yähebu'e babur" ("underground railroad") and it dispatched to the districts messages, propaganda materials (like *democraciya*), letters, and recruits.[3] The zonal committee through its newsletter named *Arso Adär* (lit.Farmer), a hand written newsletter started in 1975, agitated the peasantry to reject participation in the Raza Campaign against the EPLF in Eritrea. The EPRP believed that the campaign would bring loss of lives and destroy Ethiopia's economy.[4] *Arso-Adär* contributed a lot in reducing peasant recruitment in Bägémder for the Raza Campaign.[5] To discourage peasant participation, the zonal committee composed and disseminated the following poem in *Arso-Adär*:

ትግሬና ጎንደሬ ማዶ ለማዶ ነዉ፤
ከአንገት በላይ እንጅ ልባቸዉ አንድ ነዉ።[6]

On either side of Täkäzé River are Tegré and the Gondaré
They are of one heart although their faces differ in appearance

[1] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part II, 27-47.
[2] EPRP, "The Ethiopian Peoples'Revolutionary Party Program" (August 1975), iv.
[3]Taklo Täšomä, *YäDäm Zämän*. Part One (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading Ltd, 2008 E.C), 188; Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part II, 421- 422.
[4] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part II, 57 - 60, 423.
[5] NGAZRO, "Democracia", dated 15 Nähasé 1968 E.C; "Areso Adere", Vol. 1, No. 8, dated Ţeqemet 1969 E.C; Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part, II, 57- 60, 423.
[6] NGAZRO, "Areso Adäre", dated 1968 E.C.

The poem suggested that the Gondaré Amhara and Tegrean people who lived on either side of the Täkäzé River had common political stand that opposed the Därg. Thus, there was no need to participate in the campaign and fight the Eritrean (Tegreans) since they had no problem with the Gondaré people. Thus, due to the agitation of the EPRP members and the propaganda of the local opposition groups under EDU, the government did not recruit peasants in Chilga *awraja* for the 1976 Raza Campaign, unlike the other sub-provinces of Bägémder and Semén.[7]

While the EPRP refused to collaborate with the military junta, the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM or Mäison) gave "critical" backing to the Därg after the passage of the Land Reform proclamation in March 1975. The EPRP demanded the establishment of a provisional people's government and involved in an urban guerrilla warfare targeting the supporters of the government.[8] In return, the military regime murdered, tortured and detained without trial thousands of the Ethiopians as "anarchist" EPRP members and supporters. As a result, several urban centers of Ethiopia encountered a state-organized violence commonly known as the "Red Terror" between 1976 and 1978.[9]

The "Red Terror" in the province of Gondar was led by Mälaku Täfära who was first the representative of the Därg in the province until July 1978 and then the chief administrator of the province from July 1978 to 1982. A public gathering was organized in Gondar city on 8 December 1976 to oppose and condemn the activities of the anti-Därg groups (EDU). However,

[7]NGAZRO, a document prepared by Germa Mäsälä containing the plans and preparation to eliminate reactionary forces in Chilga, no Ref. no, no dated, Hedar 1969 E.C.
[8]Wudu Tafete, "Mäison: From Opposition to Critical Support, 1974-77,"*Journal of Ethiopian Studies,*Vol. XLIV (December, 2011), 66-67; Jacob Wiebel, ""Let the Red Terror Intensify": Political Violence, Governance and Society in Urban Ethiopia, 1976-78," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, (2015), 17-19; Gebru Tareke, "The Red Terror in Ethiopia: A Historical Aberration," *Journal of Developing Societies,* Vol. XXIV, No.2 (2008), 190-192.
[9] Gebru Tareke, "The Red Terror…", 195-198.

against its designed objective, the gathering turned against the government. Without the consent of Col. Emeru Wändé (administrator of the province) Lt. Mälaku ordered opening of fire on the demonstrators that killed many people.[10] In response to this massacre, the Bägémder zonal committee of the EPRP wrote a newsletter entitled *Ameş* (lit. revolt). The incident also pushed the zonal committee to commence urban military struggle against government officials and supporters.[11] In Gondar, the EPRP members killed many government officials like Major Berru Mäsfen (commander of Gondar town police) in April 1977 and Ali Erahmato (chairperson of Gondar town *qäbälé* 08) in May 1977.[12] Mälaku was responsible for the death of many people in the province and the local people gave him the nickname "The butcher of Gondar".[13]

Although the "Red Terror" focused on the urban areas ended mainly in 1978 in many provinces of Ethiopia and the center of revolutionary violence shifted to the rural areas, it continued in the province of Gondar for another year.[14] The Gondar zonal EPRP members faced difficulties to perform their activity in the town due to Mälaku's harsh measures and they were forced to leave the town to the rural areas. Subsequently, many youths fled from the urban centers to the rural areas and joined the EPRA, the EPRP's rural army wing. This gradually swelled the size of the EPRA in the province.[15]

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[10]Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part II,136; The Ethiopian Herald, "Anti-Revolutionaries Incite Conflict in Gondar", dated 11 December 1976 G.C; Taklo Täšomä, *Yä-Däm Zämän: Yächänägäfä Ra'ey –Yaltequachä Tarik.* Part One (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading plc, 2008 E.C), 195-196.

[11] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part II, 423.

[12]Addis Zemen, "Yä Guad Šaläqa Berru Mäsfen Yäqäber Senäserat Täfäşämä", 30 Miyaziya 1969 E.C; Addis Zemen, "Yä Guad Ali Erahmato Yäqäber Senäserat Bä Gondar Täfäşämä", 12 Genbot 1969 E.C; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, Part One, 194-195.

[13]Melakou Tegegn, "Mengistu's 'Red Terror'," *African Identities,*Vol. X, No. 3 (August 2012), 255; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, Part One, 185-208.

[14] Wiebel, 28.

[15] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part. II, 417, 424; Mästawätä (Amharic Magazine), "Käwäyzärit Ayalnäš Gar Yätädärägä Qalä Meleles", Vol. 1. No.1. (Mägabit 1985 E.C), 18-20.

Beginning in 1978 a large number of EPRA fighters turned up in Chilga *Awraja* and engaged in military activities.[16] This was partly because of the defeat and expulsion of the EPRP from Tegray by TPLF in 1978. While parts of the EPRA members went to Eritrea, others crossed the Täkäzé River to Gondar and joined their fellow EPRA members. Since it was strategically located along the border with the Sudan, Chilga sub-province and Armacheho were important in the conduct of EPRA's external relations. Soon the EPRA organized Gondar province into four military regions. Region one was Semén sub-province; Region two was Gondar and Chilga sub-provinces; Region three was Däbrä Tabor and Gayint sub-provinces; and Region four was Wägära sub-province.[17]

The EPRA faced several challenges following its arrival in Chilga and Armacheho districts. The first was the insubordination of the local people. The peasants of Dawa sub-district, in Chilga, were initially hostile to the EPRA[18] because they were supporters of the EDU. Although both the EDU and EPRP were multi-ethnic organizations by incorporating members from different ethnic groups, they had different political programs. EPRP criticized EDU as feudal remnants that sought to restore the old regime since EDU opposed the various reforms of the Därg and its leaders had marriage relations with the royal family. EDU's ideology was non-Marxist while EPRP was Marxist. The EPRP members of Gondar even regarded the EDU and Därg as "imperialists" by saying in *Areso Adär* as "**ኢትዮጵያ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ህብረትና ፋሽሽቱ ደርግ**

[16]NGAZRO, a letter from Major Bäqälä Banjaw to Gondar Province Revolutionary Campaign Coordinator Office, Ref. no. 4034/12/70, dated 19 Genbot 1970 E.C.
[17] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, part II, 428.
[18]Kiflu, *The Generation…*, part II, 428; Asmamaw Haylu, *Ihe'asä (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Army):* Part II (Addis Ababa, np, 2006 E.C), 21 - 32; Taklo, *Yä-Däm Zämän*, Part One, 278 - 280.

የኢምፔሪያሊስት ቡችሎች::".[19] (the Ethiopian Democratic Union and Fascist Därg are imperialist doggy).

Since the anti-Därg resistance leaders were convinced by the non-Marxist ideology of the EDU, the EPRA faced opposition partly from the local people in Chilga and Armacheho districts. The anti-Därg leaders believed that they fought the Därg alongside with the EDU since the Därg was Marxist. In the same way, they were determined to fight the EPRP since it was a Marxist organization. They also believed that the "Red Terror" that occurred in the country was brought by educated Ethiopians, and that the EPRP was mainly a group of educated Ethiopians and hence EPRP members were part of the problem.[20]

Although the peasants of Chilga and Armacheho had a militaristic culture and were excellent at guerrilla warfare and therefore could be mobilized for a military campaign without much training, the EPRP faced it difficult to recruit them to its cause. In addition to ideology, there were several reasons for this. First, the EDU had given them better and modern automatic rifles like M-14s and Kalashinkovs. Unlike the EDU, who brought rifles mainly from the Sudan and distributed these to the local people, EPRA members in Chilga and its surroundings had no such foreign support; EPRA members armed themselves only by sudden attacks and raids against government police stations. Second, the peasants had also better food and clothing than the EPRA. The socio-cultural beliefs of the EPRA were said to be incompatible with that of the local people. Banditry, cattle stealing, and raiding were common among the local people and the EPRA did not tolerate such activities since they contradicted with the principles of the party that supports justice, freedom and equality. The dressing style of the EPRA was not also attractive to

[19]NGAZRO, "Areso Adäre", Vol. 1, No. 8, dated Ţeqemet 1969 E.C.
[20] Liqu, 289.

the local people because they wore old and torn clothes. The local people also regarded the EPRP as a party that lacked foreign support.[21]

EDU and EPRP also had differences regarding the Darg's land reform proclamation. It was clear that EDU was partly able to get many followers in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings because it opposed the land reform of the Därg like local opposition leaders. However, EPRP did not oppose the land proclamation of the Därg. Thus, unlike other parts of the country, the EPRP could not use the land issue to mobilize the population of Chilga and its surroundings.[22] As Kiflu Taddese noted:

> In the lowland areas of Begemidir, the *rist* (lineage system) was in effect. The ratio of arable to non-arable land per person was quite high and EPRP could not use the land question to rally the peasantry. Lack of administration, that is, lawlessness and banditry and the total absence of health facilities were major concerns of the peasantry.[23]

Due to the aforementioned factors, people in Chilga and Armacheho districts did not welcome the EPRA in the late 1970s. Soon some EPRA members set up a new organization to mobilize the local people behind EPRP. In mid-1978, "YäIteyopeya Hezeb Agär Wädad Democraciyawi Derejet" (Ethiopian Patriotic Democratic Organization, or EPDO) was founded at Fachena, in Upper Armacheho by former EDU members, some EPRP members, and notable peasants. Col. Emeru Wändé was the president, Col. Asnaqä Engeda was the vice-president, and Alämantä Gäbrä Selasé was the secretary of the organization.[24] From the onset, however, the other EPRP members criticized the formation of the EPDO because its program contravened the EPRP's principles. The EPDO was not successful in mobilizing the local people due to financial

[21]Asmamaw Haylu, 26, 33-45, 61-65; Kiflu, *The Generation…*, part II, 430; Informant: Bäqälä.
[22] Informants: Bäqälä, Sinor and Abuhay.
[23] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, part II, 429.
[24]Kiflu, *The Generation…*, part II, 424 - 425, 462; Asmamaw Haylu, 255 - 264; Asnaqä Engeda, 110 - 112; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, part One, 277.

problems and disagreement among its leaders.[25] Soon it was renamed the Ethiopian People's Democratic Alliance (EPDA). Yet, the EPDA was not also able to exert influence on the local people. Due to disagreement among the leaders of the organization, Emeru and Asnaqä resigned from their positions in the alliance and subsequently the organization disappeared.[26]

Resisting the early challenges from peasants in Armacheho and Dawa and, the EPRA tried to attack the government force in the area by making Chaqo Region Two's operation center. For example, in September 1979, an EPRA unit ambushed the Därg army at Dälgi town and killed about 35 soldiers. On 2 November 1979, the EPRA attacked Tewodros Kätäma and controlled it. After the EPRP was defeated and expelled from the urban centers in Gondar province in 1979, they consolidated their influence on Maţäbiya, Quara, and the nearby sub-districts.[27]

The EPRP/A was also in a difficult condition in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in 1980. There was leadership crisis and discontent among the EPRA in Region Two after the fourth plenum held in Chilga in June 1979. Several EPRA members deserted to the Sudan and the fighting spirit among the EPRA was low. In June 1980, a seminar was organized for the remaining EPRA members near Šinfa River, close to the border with the Sudan. The seminar was chaired by Kiflu Taddese and it was designed to solve the internal problem among EPRP/A members and then to continue the armed struggle against the Därg.[28]

[25] Kiflu, *The Generation*, part II, 424 - 425; Asmamaw Haylu, 255 - 264.
[26]Asmamaw Haylu, 261 - 263.
[27]NGAZRO, letters from Alänä Käbädä (Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no.254/28/72, dated 5 Ţeqemet 1972 E.C, Ref.no.1024/28/72, dated 11 Tahsas 1972 E.C and Ref. no. 2655/ 28/72, dated 10 Mägabit 1972 E.C.
[28] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, part II, 456-459; Asmamaw Haylu, 275-280, 298.

However, the seminar that had disagreements among the participants could not solve their problem. While several EPRA members remained in Chilga sub-province to continue the armed struggle, many EPRA members went on a strategic retreat to the Sudan in an organized form, after they buried rifles at Bendus (Askänit) in Maṭäbiya. The deserters were not willing to give the rifles to the EPRA who remained in Chilga. In early September 1980, the Sudanese army took the buried rifles with the help of the EPRA that deserted to the Sudan.[29] Gondar provincial officials had the information regarding the buried rifles but the rainy season hindered them from travelling to the area and recover the rifles. After the rainy season, government officials made *assäsa*, arrived at the site in late September 1980, after the Sudanese had taken the rifles and returned to Gondar by capturing some EPRA members.[30] Some of the EPRA abandoned the struggle altogether, surrendered to the Därg, while others from Bäläsa and Semén sub-province went to Tegray and established the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) in November 1980.[31]

The remaining EPRA continued their struggle in Chilga and Gondar *Awrajas*. In 1981, the EPRA had an army below a battalion size in Quara and military training to its members was started at Näbes Gäbäya, in Aleṭaš forest, close to the border with the Sudan. The EPRA units also expanded their operations to Chilga, Baher Dar, Mätäkäl, and Agäw Meder *Awrajas*.[32] In August of the same year, a ruthless man named Gäbrähiwät Gäbrägziyabehér, administrator of Semén

[29]Asmamaw Haylu, 275-280, 298; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, Part One, 282 - 284; Kiflu, *The Generation*, Part II, 456 - 459; NGAZRO, a letter from Major Germa Wäldäyäs (Commander of Gondar Province Police) to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref.no.1604/25/2, dated 26 Ṭeqemet 1973 E.C.

[30]NGAZRO, a letter from Major Germa Wäldäyäs to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref.no.1088/25/2, dated 12 Ṭeqemet 1973 E.C.

[31] Kiflu, *The Generation…*, Part II, 212-213, 454, 462.

[32]NGAZRO, a letter from Lt.Col. Bäqälä Ebsa (Gondar Province Public Security Office) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.ጎደ3/369/አወ33/ሸ/73, dated 9 Tahsas 1973 E.C; Solomon Ejigu, *The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party: Between a Rock and a Hard Place, 1975-2008* (Asmara: Red Sea Press, 2014), 93-95

sub-province, was appointed as chief official to stabilize Chilga and Wägära *Awrajas*.[33] Gäbrähiwät together with hundreds of militiamen and local officials conducted *asäsa* in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings in the first five months of 1982. Consequently, several anti-Därg members were captured and killed in the fighting. Among others, the bandit and EDU leader named Mamo Malädä was killed.[34]

Quara: EPRA's Last Fortress

Beginning in 1983 Quara became the center of EPRA operations in Chilga *awraja* and its surroundings. Its remoteness and inaccessibility due to forestland for shelter and lack of road was the basic reason behind EPRA's selection of the district as its operational center. One of the events that led to the concentration of the EPRA in Quara was the tragedy it experienced in Lower Armacheho in 1983. When *Bitwädäd* Adanä with his group came from the Sudan with arms and other materials and arrived at a place called Zämänä Bäriq, a group of EPRA 'defectors' opened fire on Adanä's group and killed about seven including Adanä and Abäbä Jämbär on 26 January 1983. This event led to a strong anti-EPRA feeling among the local people. Efforts to smoothen their relations did not bear fruit and fighting ensued.[35] In order to redirect the attention of the local people from the incident, another EPRA unit in Armacheho led a raid on Aykäl on the night of 17 February 1983 and destroyed the administrative, finance, and

[33]NGAZRO, a letter from Abay Gošu (assistant administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province COWPE Office, Ref.no. 1255/28, dated 21 Hedar 1974 E.C; Negarit Gazeta, General Notice No. 24 of 1983.
[34]NGAZRO, letters from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no. 5225/28/74, dated 7 Hamlé 1974 E.C and Ref.no. 829/28/75, dated 30 Ţeqemet 1975 E.C.
[35]Asnaqä, 248-254; Taklo Täšomä, *Yä-Däm Zämän: Yächänägäfä Ra'ey* –Yaltequachä *Tarik*. Part Two (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading plc, 2008 E.C), 258-260; NGAZRO, a letter from Negusé Bälay (Gondar Province Police Office) to Different Offices, Ref.no.ፅመ25/436/75, dated 3 Genbot 1975 E.C; Liqu, 295-303.

telecommunication offices with their documents.[36] This action did not solve the hostile relations between the local people and the EPRA members in Armacheho and its surroundings. Bärihun Gäbräyäs cursed the people of Armacheho as "**ኤህአፓን የተቀበልክ ጥቁር ዉሻ ዉለድ እንዋጋቸዉ**"[37] (let us fight them, those who would support EPRP let them give birth to a black dog!). The local people under Bärihun Gäbräyäs fought the EPRA at Sanki, on 3 and 4 March 1983, when the EPRA returned to Armacheho after raiding Aykäl. Five EPRA members, including the operation leader nicknamed "Danger" were killed. The fighting continued on other days, especially at Hareš, and it resulted in the death of several local people, including Wakšem Näwäţä and Zäläqä Jämbär and veteran EPRA members like Hadiš Bäyänä.[38] Since the local people hated them, about 300 EPRA evacuated Armacheho for Quara in June 1983.[39]

After much of its army was concentrated in Quara, the EPRA consolidated its position by attacking and raiding district centers, service and agricultural producers' cooperatives. Raiding government offices and cooperatives was the main source of income for the EPRA until the mid-1980s. An EPRA unit attacked and controlled Tewodros Kätäma on 29 June 1983. They captured several rifles and looted an estimated $40,540 *berr* from various government offices. In November of the same year, another EPRA unit invaded Aläfa-Ţaqusa and looted the service

[36]NGAZRO, a letter from Alämnäh Bälay to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref.no.112/28/75, dated 25 Yäkatit 1975 E.C; Informants: Alämnäh, Abuhay, and Lamäsgen.
[37]NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Akelilu Mulugéta (Commander of Gondar Province Police) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no.ማ25/319/75, dated 9 Mägabit 1975 E.C.
[38]Solomon Ejigu, 83; Asnaqä, 248-254; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, Part one, 292-293; Liqu, 303-304; NGAZRO, a letter from Col. Akelilu Mulugéta to …. Cited above, dated 9 Mägabit 1975 E.C.
[39]NGAZRO, a letter from Yigzaw Tayä (assistant administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Provincial Administration Office, Ref.no. 1807/12/75, dated 24 Säné 1975 E.C.

cooperative shops in Dälgi, Aṣädämareyam, Dängäl Bar, and Šahura. On 10 February 1984, another EPRA unit attacked Kulit, raided government offices and other properties.[40]

Since the mid-1980s, things were changed for the better for the EPRA in Quara. Shortage of food and supplies had been EPRA's major problems and these had partly hindered it from recruiting many fighters. However, the EPRA was successful in implementing the principle of "self-reliance" (self-support) in Quara starting from mid-1980s under a capable leader named Gayim (his original name Gäbräegziabehér Haylämikael). They involved in various income-generating activities. They cultivated lands along Gälägo River, Mertrahad and Dirhassen localities using tractors captured from the government and they sold sesame to the Sudan. They also reared thousands of cattle, goats and engaged in honey production.[41] They opened shops and engaged in trading activity with the Sudan. They also collected tax from merchants traveling to and from the Sudan via Quara and from pastoralists on the borderland. They rent trucks and equipment to the Sudanese along the border. They had flour and oil processing mills. They also opened several elementary schools and clinics in Quara. They also tried to eliminate thieves and bandits in the area. According to Solomon Ejigu, the history of the EPRA in Quara was "returning to the Golden Age." All these activities helped them get support from the local people [42] and the EPRA became the *de facto* administrators of much of Quara and Maṭäbiya.

[40]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 1009/28/76, dated 19 Tahsas 1976 E.C; a letter from Yäšnäh Yimär (administrator of Maṭäbiya district) to Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office, Ref.no.35/12/76, dated 14 Yäkatit 1976 E.C; a letter from Yigzaw Tayä to Wägayähu Sahlu, Ref.no.2134/17/76, dated 14 Mägabit 1976 E.C.

[41]Solomon Ejigu, 93-95; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, part two, 260-262; NGAZRO, a letter from Zäläqä Bäyänä (COWPE Head of Gojjam Province) to Mälaku Täfära (COPWE head of Gondar Province) Ref.no. ክሀ16-51-አ 21/ 11/76, dated 7 Ṭer 1976 E.C; Informants: Bäqälä Mogäs, Qoyä, Sinor, and Abé.

[42] Solomon Ejigu, 93-95; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, part two, 260-262; Informants: Bäqälä, Qoyä, Sinor, and Abé.

Since Quara was inaccessible and safe from attacks by the government, it was selected to host the only EPRP party congress in Ethiopia. EPRP's veteran members came from abroad and held the Second Party Congress between 21 March and 4 April 1984, twelve years after it held its First Congress in Berlin. The EPRP made revisions to its principles. It acknowledged the self-determination of nationalities, but abandoned the idea of the right to secession. It also declared land ownership had to be an individual right; it should not be public or communal right and hence it dropped Marxism-Leninism as its ideology.[43]

Hearing the news of the Second Party Congress, the Därg army tried to attack the EPRP from different directions in April and May 1984. While an army from Mätäma campaigned to Quara and Maṭäbiya, a group of EPRA escaped to the border with the Sudan. Another army of about 1000 militiamen from Aykäl marched to Quara and fought the EPRA at Dubaba in the early days of May 1984. The government army was defeated and returned to Aykäl.[44] EPRA's victory against the government army in Quara and Maṭäbiya increased its popularity and intensified its operations in Quara and its surroundings. In 1984, The EPRP also opened its radio program that had a contribution in raising the popularity of the party in the areas.[45]

The government army carried out unsuccessful campaigns against the EPRA in Chilga sub-province in 1985 and this forced it to reorganize the Northwest Command. On 25 March 1985, an EPRA unit fought and defeated the government force at Bohboh, in Maṭäbiya, where the EPRA killed Chané Bälay (administrator of Šaho Wädiya sub-district) and Säṭargäw Endäšaw

[43] Solomon Ejigu, 95-100; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, part two, 260-262.
[44]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 2137/28/76, dated 14 Mägabit 1976 E.C; Solomon Ejigu, 101.
[45] Solomon Ejigu, 101.

(administrator of the Dawa sub-district).[46] The challenge of EPRA together with TPLF and EPDM in Gondar and Tegray in 1985 forced Därg to rearrange the Northwest Command, which was responsible for keeping the security of the provinces of Gondar, Tegray and Wällo from its headquarter at Mäqälä. By March, the Northwest Command was divided into the Tegray Command at Mäqälé and the Northwest Command based at Gondar. The Northwest Command was given the task of securing Gondar and Gojjam provinces.[47] In May of the same year, the government was forced to appoint Maj. Gen. Abäbä Gäbräyäs, WPE central member and commander of Northwestern Command, as the supreme head of Gondar provincial administration.[48]

On its part, the EPRA equipped with different rifles including machine guns in Quara increased its number and continued to attack the government army and administrative centers. In August 1985, Mogäs Bäqälä, Chilga *Awraja* administrator, reported that the EPRA had about a battalion of well-trained army at Gälägo.[49] According to Solomon Ejigu, the EPRA's army had grown to four battalions (i.e. about 4,000) in Quara and its surroundings by November 1987.[50] This figure however seems to have been much exaggerated.

Hearing the popularity of the EPRA in Chilga *Awraja*, a group of EDU army from the Sudan entered the area in 1986. The EPRA unit informed the local people in Chilga that EPRP had made an agreement with the EDU to struggle together against the Därg and that they should give

[46]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administraticve Office to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref.no. 2276 /28/77, dated 26 Mägabit 1977 E.C; Solomon Ejigu, 101.
[47]Fantahun Ayele, "The Northwestern Command's Response to Insurgent Assaults on Dabat, Ethiopia*," Northeast African Studies,*Vol. XVI, No. 2 (2016), 4, 16.
[48] Negarit Gazeta, General Notice no.25 of 1985.
[49]NGAZRO, a letter from Mogäs Bäqälä (administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no.ዞን 29/12/77, dated 8 Nähasé 1977 E.C.
[50] Solomon Ejigu, 105.

their sons to fight the government and to oppose the TPLF since it aimed to detach Tegray from Ethiopia. Initially, the EDU force operated in Säraqo and tried to conscript its former supporters.[51] However, according to Solomon Ejigu, EDU's force committed several "illegal" acts that led it to conflict with the EPRA. The EDU force was involved in forcefully requisitioning food from the local people, punishing innocent people, collaborating with bandits, highly taxing traders, and defaming the EPRA. Soon, fighting between the EPRA and EDU started in Säraqo and Maṭäbiya. The EDU's force harassed some of the EPRA units and wanted them to evacuate into Gojjam since they operated in Chilga sub-province that the EDU had liberated from the Därg in the late 1970s.[52] The local people also did not have a positive attitude towards the EDU's force because as compared to the EPRA, the former were regarded as bandits while the EPRA were liberation fighters.[53]

EDU and EPRA units tried to resolve their problem by negotiation, but their effort did not bear fruit. In September 1987, they fought in Maṭäbiya where the EDU force was defeated and retreated to the Sudan. After preparing for a few months, more than a thousand EDU fighters defeated the EPRA unit at Šukuriya and controlled Maṭäbiya in early April 1988. Soon the EPRA brought a reinforcement from Aläfa and Gazegé and deployed these to Maṭäbiya. On 18 April 1988, the EPRA unit crushed the EDU fighters at Mertrahad; several EDU's army were killed and the EPRA lost some of its veteran members.[54] Thus, the fighting between them wasted

[51]NGAZRO, a letter from Bäzabeh Aligaz (secretary of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no.6666/28/78, dated 29 Hamlé 1978 E.C; Solomon Ejigu, 102-103.
[52] Solomon Ejigu, 102-103.
[53] Informants: Mogäs, Bäqälä, Wädaj, and Abuhay.
[54]Solomon Ejigu,104; NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 6603/28/80, dated 2 Hamlé 1980 E.C. Informants: Wädaj and Bäqälä. Report from the government indicated about 400 EDU and 200 EPRP were killed in the fighting.

their armies and energy, and it was important for the Därg. After crushing the EDU's force, the EPRA units continued their fighting against Därg in Quara and its surroundings.[55]

Därg and its Projects

Local Administration and Road Constructions

In addition to fighting against the EPRA, government officials carried out different strategies to crush EPRA and control Chilga *Awraja* in the 1980s. The retreat of several EPRA members to the Sudan in 1980 and the appointment of Gäbrähiwät as a chief official in the task of stabilizing the area in 1981 gave provincial officials a chance to look at administrative issues of the province. Thus, with the restoration of peace temporarily in 1981/82, government officials turned their attention to administrative cases. To control effectively the border areas and to introduce the projects of Därg to the local people, the provincial government conducted administrative study in 1982. Since the districts and sub-provinces located along the border with the Sudan had wider geographical areas, they had to be reorganized for administrative convenience.[56] The study team recommended raising the number of districts and sub-provinces in the province. It proposed setting up of two new *awrajas* named Mätäma and Humära. Mätäma *Awraja* was designed to include the districts of Mätäma, Maṭäbiya, Quara and parts of the lowland of Chilga district and its center was to be at Gändawuha. Humära *Awraja* was planned to comprise the districts of Tač (Lower) Armacheho, Sätit, Humära, and Wälqayit, and Om Hager with a center was to be at Humära town.[57]

[55]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 6603/28/80, dated 2 Hamlé 1980 E.C.
[56]NALAE Code 17.1.13.01.01, a letter from Mälaku Täfära to Ministry of Interior, Ref.no.10/37/74, dated 3 Ṭeqemet 1974 E.C.
[57]NALAE Code 17.1.13.01.01, a letter from Zämänä Kasa (study team leader and vice-administrator of Gondar Province) to Mälaku Täfära, no Ref.no, no dated, Mäskäräm 1974 E.C.

Table 6.1 The number of districts and sub-provinces to be established in 1982 based on the Study

No	Name of the sub-province	The number of districts existed before the study	The number of additional districts to be set up	Total
1	Däbrä Tabor	4	5	9
2	Gayint	3	4	7
3	Semen	5	4	9
4	Wägära	5	5	10
5	Libo	3	4	7
6	Gondar	4	4	8
7	Chilga	5	5	10
Total		29	31	60

Source: NALAE Code 17.1.13.01.01: a letter from Gondar Province Administration to the Ministry of Interior, dated 9 Mäskäräm 1974 E.C

As the above table shows, the study proposed to increase the number of districts in the province to sixty, by adding 31 districts to the existing 29 districts. In the sub-provinces along the border with the Sudan (Chilga, Gondar, and Wägära), 14 new districts and two new *awrajas* were proposed. However, for reasons that are not clear (probably due to financial shortage), the study was never implemented and administrative difficulties of the borderlands continued.

During the Därg period, local administration of Chilga *Awraja* lacked stability. Administrators appointed to the five districts of the *awraja* were short lived and most of them were *täţebabaqi* (caretaker) administrators. Due to EPRA's attack, mostly the administrators of Quara and Maţäbiya districts shifted their centers to Aykäl and Mätäma, where the government army was stationed and local conditions were relatively stable. The administrators spent most of their time in *assäsa* (search operations) and fighting against the EPRA and former EDU members.[58] Since the EPRA repeatedly harassed the centers of the districts in Chilga sub-province, district officials

[58]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 829/28/75, dated 30 Ţeqemet 1975 E.C.

were forced to shift the center of Aläfa-Ṭaqusa from Dängäl Bär to Dälgi and then to Aṣädämareyam, Quara from Tewodros Kätäma to Gändawuha, Maṭäbiya from Bohboh to. Gändawuha. It was hard for the government army to expel the EPRA from the districts of Quara, Maṭäbiya, and part of Aläfa. Thus, the administrative offices, schools and clinics in these districts and adjacent areas were mostly closed.[59]

One of the factors that hindered the government army from crushing the EPRA in Chilga *Awraja* from the onset was the inaccessibility of the area due to lack of road networks. This forced the government to construct rural roads and secondary feeder roads in the area in the 1980s. The Farm Roads Construction Brigade, a unit under the Rural Infrastructural Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, constructed the rural roads.[60] For example, rural roads were partly constructed from Aykäl to Dälgi (51kms), Säraba to Dängäl Bär (46kms), Dälgi to Šahura, and Dängäl Bär to Qunzela. However, some of these roads were destroyed by floods, and the construction of other roads was interrupted due to insecurity and lack of finance, especially following the outbreak of famine in the country in 1984.[61] The rural roads were used only in the dry season since they were poorly constructed and lacked maintenance. Since the roads were not repaired and completed, the government army faced obstacle to move from place to place against the EPRA.[62] The construction of Azäzo to Mätäma and Gondar to Humära

[59]NGAZRO, letters from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 1274/28/76, dated 26 Tahsas 1976 E.C and Ref.no. 1972/12/76, dated 24 Yäkatit 1976 E.C.
[60]DMUAC, Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, "Development of Transport Network in Northwestern Ethiopia" (Physical Planning Department, Baher Dar, np, 1986), 10-11.
[61]NGAZRO, a letter from Wägayähu Sahlu to the Ethiopian Road and Transport Authority, Ref.no. **ጎክ** 29/110/**ጠ**, dated 26 Säné 1978 E.C; a letter from Aläna Taddäsä to Wägayähu Sahlu, Ref.no. 6320/44/78, dated 21 Säné 1978 E.C
[62]DMUAC, Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, 11; NGAZRO, a letter from Taddäsä Seyum (assistant administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Maj. Gen. Abäbä Gäbräyäs (Commander of Northwest Command), Ref. no.167 /44 /79, dated 22 Mäskäräm 1979 E.C.

secondary feeder roads was suspended in the mid-1980s due to security problems, and their construction was pushed to 1989/1990.[63]

The military government also initiated resettlement project in Mätäma and Pawi (Mätäkäl) following the 1984 famine. In the latter area, the government also started commercial farms at Jawi. However, the EPRA considered the road construction and resettlement projects of the Därg as instruments to control the districts under the control of the EPRA. Thus, the EPRA units attacked and raided the road constructors, resettlement villages, and commercial farms. For instance, in March 1986, an EPRA unit attacked cars that belonged to the Italians engaged in road construction and mineral explorations in Jawi.[64] On the night of 25 April 1986, another EPRA unit attacked and raided village 2 at the Mätäma resettlement site.[65] Another EPRA unit attacked Ţana Bäläs Project that was under construction by the Italian Salini Construction Company in 1987 and destroyed cars that belonged to the project and detained two Italians. It was said that in the subsequent negotiation between EPRP and Italian government, the EPRP leaders in the Sudan obtained a considerable amount of food provision, clothes and money in exchange for the release of Italian captives.[66]

Since the EPRA in Quara became a great obstacle to the government-initiated projects around Quara, the Därg decided to crush the EPRA's military base in the district. In March 1987, the Därg sent its army to Quara from three directions: from Pawi (in the south), Mätäma (in the

[63] DMUAC, Regional Planning Office for North-Western Ethiopia, 9-10.
[64] Solomon Ejigu, 101-102.
[65] NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 6271/28/78, dated 18 Säné 1978 E.C.
[66] Taklo, part two, 261; Solomon Ejigu, 106.

northwest), and Chilga (in the northeastern). The attempts however were not successful in defeating EPRA.[67]

The End of *Mofär Zämät* and Land Distribution

The land proclamation of March 1975 was the most radical measure initiated by the *Därg* to change the socio-economic and political conditions of Ethiopia.[68] The proclamation made rural land the collective property of the Ethiopian masses; it prohibited private ownership of land by individuals or organizations. It declared that the maximum amount of land that a household could hold was ten hectares (1/4 *gaša*) and it made impossible to transfer land by sale, and exchange. Tenancy was made illegal and tenants were given the right to use the land, which they had cultivated previously, until the peasant associations distributed land to the masses.[69] Thus, the decree abolished the dominant land tenure system, the *rest* system, throughout northern Ethiopia.

The rural land proclamation was not implemented in Chilga sub-province and other areas of Gondar province until 1981, mainly due to the local instability created by the activities of anti-Därg groups. The fact that parts of the land was mountainous and full of gorges was another delaying factor in the implementation of the land reforms.[70] The local instability also delayed the formation and consolidation of the peasant associations in the province.[71]

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[67] Solomon Ejigu, 106-107.
[68] Andargachew, 97; Teferra Haile-Sellase. *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1994: From a Monarchical Autocracy to a Military Oligarchy* (London and New York: Kepan Paul International, 1997), 158; Markakis and Nega, 160.
[69] Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, "Public Ownership of Rural Lands Proclamation"; NGAZRO, a letter from Lt. Mälaku Täfära (leader of Gondar Revolution Campaign) to the seven *awarajas* Revolutionary Campaign Coordinators and 39 districts of the province, Ref.no. አዘአኮ/አስ3/826/70, dated 12 Tahsas 1970 E.C
[70] NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 4523/28/73, dated 13 Hamlé 1973 E.C.
[71] NGAZRO, a letter from Haylé Gäbäyähu to Mälaku Täfära, Ref.no.2506/28/73, dated 16 Yäkatit 1973 E.C

Several writers have argued that the 1975 land reform brought little change to the northern provinces where the *rest* system of land tenure was dominant. This was because most farmers had not held more than ¼ *gaša* of land.[72] However, the land reform had a great effect when we see conditions at local level in Chilga *Awraja* in relation to the end of the *Mofär Zämät*. *Mofär Zämät* was a common farming system that involved the occupation and the cultivation of land by peasants in areas outside of their localities. Peasants claimed lands outside of their locality as *rest* land through family connection with a *rest* land holder. However, this farming system consumed both the time and labors of the farmers because they had to travel long distance.[73] By criticizing the practice of *mofär zämät* among the peasantry, the Därg officials carried out a campaign against it. They underlined its wastefulness and unfair land holding system among the peasantry; while many peasants owned much lands by birth rights, other peasants (who had no birth rights) owned small lands.[74]

The effect of the land proclamation was minimal in the highland parts of Chilga sub-province where most households had small plots of land. However, in the western parts of the sub-province, the lowland part, several associations and individuals owned large plots of land (more than ¼ *gaša*) and were engaged in commercial agriculture. Most of them were absentee farmers. Thus, the proclamation had great effect on the lowlands adjacent to the Sudan.

In September 1981, Lt. Akelilu Bälaynäh, who was criticized for lack of initiative in implementing the reforms and programs of the Därg, was transferred to Gayint *Awraja* and Second Lt. Haylé Gäbäyähu was transferred from Gayint to Chilga *Awraja* as chief

[72]Tefera, 60; Markakis and Nega, 164.
[73] Informants: Sinor, Abuhay, Sisay, and Gäbyaw.
[74]NGAZRO, a letter from Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement to Gondar Province Revolutionary Campaign Coordinator Office, Ref. no.1/ሠመክ 4/80, dated 3 Tahsas 1971 E.C.

administrator.[75] Haylé, who was also a founding member of the Därg, tried to implement the reforms of the Därg besides struggling against the EPRA units in the sub-province.

The distribution of land which started in 1981 passed through several stages in Chilga sub-province. The first step was the abolition of *mofär zämät* by demarcating of the boundary of each *qäbälé* (PA). Based on the proclamation, a PA was to be formed in an area of not less than 800 hectares (20 *gaša*) and membership was open to everyone except those who had more than ten hectares of land until a fair land distribution was enacted. The PAs were given the power to distribute the land to the farmers in their respective localities.[76] The demarcation was to be done by taking into consideration the number of people, the size and fertility of land in each PA in the presence of the executive committees of PAs that shared common boundary. The executive members of the PAs were individuals who had not been officials of the imperial regime, had land not more than ¼ *gaša*, and had acceptance among the peasants, and if possible those who had received political and vocational trainings.[77] In the process of demarcation, farmers could shift from one PA to another PA. This was done mostly when a farmer's better land was transferred to a PA that was not his/her residence, or when a farmer hoped to get more land in another PA.[78] With the completion of the PA demarcation, *mofär zämät* was made an illegal practice. The farmers were authorized only to cultivate the lands in their respective PAs.[79] Land was also reserved for forest, grazing, families of campaigners of war (if possible irrigable and accessible),

[75] Pliny, 29, 34.
[76] Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No. 31 of 1975.
[77]NGAZRO, a letter from Mälaku Täfära to the 29 *Wäräda* Administration and others offices, Ref. no.ጎክ 35/ 42/ጠ, dated 17 Tahsas 1973 E.C; a letter from Mäläku Täfära to the concerned bodies and offices, Ref.no.ጎክ 35/41/ ጠ, dated 25 Hedar 1973 E.C.
[78] Informants: Gäbeyaw, Sinor, Därso, Gäbeyaw, and Haylé.
[79]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 5224/28/74, dated 7 Hamlé 1974 E.C.

cooperatives, PA offices, facilities like schools and clinics. Moreover, every household was required to report its family number to the PA executive committee. This was to establish that they were permanent residents of the PA and to allocate them farmland based on their family size. Everyone above the age of eighteen had the right to be registered in the PA and own land.[80]

After the demarcation of each PA, the next step was land distribution. Land distribution started first in the highland parts of Chilga sub-province, especially in Chilga and Aläfa-Ţaqusa districts in the early months of 1981 on 87 PAs.[81] With the arrival of the rainy season, it was postponed to the next year. By then the Wayţo people, who were not landholder previously, had obtained land in Aläfa,[82] although other factors discouraged them from cultivating the land. In May 1981, Mängestu Haylémareyam visited several areas in Gondar province including Chilga *awraja* and he erected a statue for emperor Yohannes IV at Mätäma.[83] He also encouraged local officials in implementing the land reform of the government. Finally, the land distribution was resumed and completed mainly in the eastern half of the sub-province in the early months of 1982. Land distribution in the western lowlands and parts of Quara highland was not carried out partly because some parts of it was under EPRA and partly because it was a sparsely populated lowlands.[84]

One of the sections of the society in the province who benefited more than other sections of the society from the rural land proclamation were the Bétä Israelites. The various internal and

[80] NGAZRO, a letter cited above,…., Ref. no.ጎክ 35/41/ጠ, dated 25 Hedar 1973 E.C.
[81]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 3828/28/73, dated 20 Genbot 1973 E.C.
[82]NGAZRO a letter from Abay Gošu (assistant administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no.1255/28/, dated 21 Hedar 1974 E.C.
[83]NGAZRO, a letter from Haylé Gäbäyähu to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 3828/28/73, dated 20 Genbot 1973 E.C.
[84] Informants: Gäbeyaw, Sinor, Därso, Gäbeyaw, and Haylé.

external factors in the early years of the Därg led them to leave the area into the Sudan and then to Israel with the involvement of different western governments and NGOs especially in the early 1980s. Thus, what is regrettable about the distribution of rural land in the province was that it did not give land to the Bétä Israelites who had been raising the question of land ownership for centuries.

The EPRA was an obstacle for the implementation of different programs of the Därg in Chilga *awraja*. Sometime in 1983, the government conducted a study in Maţäbiya to establish a state farm like the one in Humära. The study team identified about 3,000 hectares of land between the Šinfa River and Mertrahad that was suitable for the project. However, it was never implemented mainly due to insecurity problem in the area created by the EPRA.[85]

Like the earlier years, because of the struggle between the EPRA units and the government, lawlessness prevailed on most areas of the sub-province. The government could not collect taxes from the local people and render services to them in several areas. Banditry and contraband were expanded.[86] Let us now transfer to the other socialist projects of the Därg that was introduced in Chilga sub-province in order to capture the peasants.

Agricultural Producers Cooperatives (APCs) and Service Cooperatives (SCs)

In addition to distributing land to the peasantry, the PAs were authorized to set up cooperative societies.[87] Although there were four types of cooperatives (producers, service, thrift and credit,

[85] NGAZRO, a letter from Zämän Kasa (vice-administrator of Gondar Province) to North State Farm Corporation, Ref. no. ጎክ 28/588/ጠ, dated 1 Tahsas 1975 E.C.
[86]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 1742/28/77, dated 28 Ţer 1977 E.C.
[87]Negarit Gazéţa, Proclamation No.71of 975, "Peasant Associations Organization and Consolidation Proclamation".

and housing),[88] only the first two types existed in Chilga *awraja*. The APCs were organized voluntarily by the PAs to "control and then to place the main means of production under the mass, improve the instrument of production and to enhance production and eliminate exploitation and to bring unity in the rural areas and others." [89] However, most PAs in Chilga sub-province were not active in forming APCs. This was partly because of the scattered nature of the homesteads and the propaganda by anti-Därg groups that agitated the local people not to become members of the PAs and form APCs. As of 1983, there were only three APCs in Chilga sub-province. These were Dälgi Ţana, Awrdareda, and Šumgé. Dälgi APC, located in Aläfa-Ţaqusa, established in 1980, was a pioneer APC in the sub-province and was visited by Col. Mängestu Haylämareyam in May 1981. The Awrdareda and Šumgé were located in Chilga district and established in 1981. In the districts of Mätäma, Maţäbiya and Quara, there were no APCs.[90] Dälgi Ţana APC constructed about 55 tin roofed houses and obtained its legal personality in a ceremony held in June 1983.[91]

Government officials in Chilga *awraja* repeatedly encouraged and pushed the PAs to form APC, but their effort met with little success. Thus, APCs remained few in number in the sub-province. Some of the APCs were established parallel with the villagization program that was initiated in the late 1980s and they were at first level. One of the causes that discouraged farmers to set up APC was the looting by the EDU and EPRA fighters. Sometimes bandits also raided APCs and SCs in the name of EPRA and EDU. The EPRA fighters considered disrupting of the

[88]Negarit Gazéţa, Proclamation No. 138 of 1978, "A Proclamation to Provide For the Establishment of Cooperative Societies".
[89]Negarit Gazēţa, Proclamation No. 71 of 1975.
[90]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. 133/28/74, dated 13 Mäskäräm 1974 E.C; Informants: Däreso and Gäbeyaw.
[91] NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 2340 /28/75, dated 11 Nähasé 1975.

government program among the peasantry as an instrument of struggling the Därg to remove from power. There are many reports of raiding on APCs and SCs in Chilga *awraja* in the 1980s. For example, in August 1985, a group of EPDM attacked and looted about 51 cattle and other properties of the Šumgé APC. They also killed Mamo Alämayähu, the chairperson of the APC, in the fighting.[92] In November 1985, the EPRA unit raided about 61 oxen and several quintals of grain that belonged to the Šumgé APC.[93] In December 1985, an EPRA unit attacked Dälgi Ţana APC, and looted about 133 cattle and the SC shop.[94] The government officials sometimes gave some sort of financial support to the APCs to save them from total collapse.[95]

Table 6.2 number of the APCs in the districts of Chilga *Awraja* in 1989

No	Name of the district	No of APCs	Statue of the APCs		Level of APCs		No. membership			Land amount in Hectares	
			Regis.	Unregis.	Malba	Welba	M	F	T	Total owned	Cultivated
1	Chilga	2	1	1	2	-	140	2	142	904.91	277.81
2	Aläfa-Ţaqusa	5	1	4	4	1	169	12	181	520.45	384.60
3	Mätäma	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Maţäbiya	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Quara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		7	2	5	6	1	309	14	323	1425.46	662.60

Source: NGAZRO, YäSemén Gondar Astädadär Akababi YäPlan Ketetel ena Quţeţer Mämeriya, "YäKefelä Economiwu ena Mahebärawi Agälegelot Yä 5 Amät /1976-1980 E.C/ Kenewunena YäSemén Gondar Astädadär Akababi YäLemant Wana Wana Märäjawäč" (Gondar, Mägabit 981 E.C), p.22. Since Quara was under EPRA, it was excluded from government data

[92] NGAZRO, a letter from Mogäs Bäqälä (administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Chief Administrator, Ref. no. ዞ/ን 69/12/77, dated 10 Nähasé 1977 E.C.
[93]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administration Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 1013/28/78, dated 23 Tahsas 1978 E.C.
[94] NGAZRO, letters from Chilga …cited above, dated 23 Tahsas 1978 E.C, Ref.no. 6666/28/78, dated 29 Hamlé 1978 E.C, and Ref. no.1030/28/79, dated 28 Tahsas 1979 E.C; Informants: Gäbyaw, Haylé, Därso, and Sinor
[95] Informants: Gäbeyaw, Sinor, Abuhay, Därso, and Haylé.

Although the above data is from government report, it is not an exaggerated data. The table shows that there were seven APCs in the Chilga sub-province during the Därg period. They were located only in the districts of Chilga and Aläfa-Ţaqusa; there were no APCs in Quara, Maţäbiya and Mätäma. Among the APCs, only two were registered fulfilling the legal requirements; the others were not registered. Among the APCs only one was in the second level (*welba*). In this second level oxen and other materials are collective property. The other six were on the first level (*malba*). Members in *malba* only agricultural land was communal and oxen, tools and other inputs remain private property. They entitled to rent tools and oxen from members. Only about 323 people were members to the APCs and they owned about 1,425.46 hectares of land. However, the APCs were able to cultivate only 662.60 hectares of land.

Peasants were authorized to form SCs and the law fixed a minimum of three PAs and a maximum of ten PAs to establish a SC. The objective of the government to set up SCs was "to make the peasants free from exploitation of the private traders by giving a variety of services to the PAs." [96] As of 1983, there were about 24 SCs in Chilga *Awraja*.[97] In the SCs shops, several goods, brought from the Gondar branch of the Ethiopian Domestic Distribution Corporation (EDDC), was sold monthly to the SC members at prices lower than that of the private traders.[98] As they did on the APCs, the EPRA fighters and other brigand groups looted the SCs shops in Chilga sub-province. This was one the causes that discouraged the peasantry to form SCs. In March 1985, the group of EPRA raided the SCs shops in Šahura, Aşädämareyam and Guy

[96] Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No. 71 of 1975.
[97]NGAZRO, a letter from Chilga *Awraja* Administrative Office to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. 2340/28/75, dated 11 Nähasé 1975.
[98] Informants: Gäbeyaw, Sinor, Haylé, and Abuhay.

Mareyam in Aläfa-Ţaqusa. In April of the same year, a group of EPRA also raided the SCs shops at Chandeba town. In May 1985, a group of EPRA raided the shops of Chonchoq, Šumgé and Marhuna SCs in Chilga district.[99]

Table 6.3 Number of SCs in the four districts in 1989

No	Name of the district	No of SCs	No. PAs included	Statue of the SCs		Number of memberships			Capital amount in *berr*		
				Regis.	Not regist.	M	F	T	Movable asset /current account/	Immovable asset	Total
1	Chilga	11	38	4	7	7,975	498	8,473	216,684.60	70,640.42	287,325.02
2	Aläfa Ţaqusa	12	41	3	9	9,125	555	9,680	258,446.01	60,239.59	31,8685.60
3	Mätäma	4	12	-	4	2,167	80	2247	82,548.73	2,643.67	85,192.40
4	Quara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Maţäbiya	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		27	91	7	20	19,267	1,133	20,400	557,679.34	133,523.68	691,203.02

Source: NGAZRO, YäSemén Gondar…, 22

Although the above data is from government report, it is not an exaggerated data. From the table, it is clear that in Chilga sub-province, 91 PAs were able to establish 27 SCs. Relatively, many of the SCs existed in the districts of Chilga and Aläfa-Ţaqusa. They were located in the eastern half of the sub-province that had better government control than the western half which lacked effective government control. Since much of Quara and Maţäbiya were under the EPRA, they were excluded from the above data. Seven of the SCs were registered, and 20 SCs were

[99] NGAZRO, letters from Mogäs Bäqälä to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref. no. ፅ25/12/77, dated 3 Miyaziya 1977 E.C, Ref.no. 2276/28/77, dated 26 Mägabit 1977 E.C, Ref.no.2339/28/77, dated 2 Miyaziya 1977 E.C, and Ref.no. 2877/28/77, dated 28 Genbot 1977 E.C.

unregistered by fulfilling the legal requirements. The SCs had about 20,400 members; out of them 19,267 were males and 1,133 were females. The total amount of capital the SCs had was $ 691,203.02 *berr*; out of it about $ 557,679.34 *berr* was their current account/ movable assets/ and the remaining was immovable asset.

In the command economy of Därg, goods were mostly distributed to the local people via the SCs could not reach in Chilga *Awraja* and its surroundings properly. Since many areas in Chilga were under the control of EPRP in the 1980s and since many peasants could not establish SCs, they could not get goods from the EDDC. Even, founded SCs could not get the various goods on time. The EPRP force also looted many SCs shops.[100] Officials of the Chilga sub-province tried to distribute goods to areas that did not set up SCs via individual agents. Nevertheless, it was not successful.[101] Thus, the only option of the local people to get goods was via contraband. Salt was the dominant item smuggled from the Sudan and its price was high. In the late 1980s, there was a shortage of salt in the provinces of Gondar and Gojjam and smugglers brought it from the Sudan. In 1989, the customs officials of Mätäma captured 900 quintals of salt in Mätäma town smuggled from the Sudan and sold it to the local people.[102]

One of the actions of the government in relation with SCs was the introduction of quota system. Quota was system in which peasants were required to sell a fixed amount of grain to the SCs every year. However, the government was not successful in collecting grain in Chilga sub-

[100] NGAZRO, a letter from Solomon Mulunäh to Gondar EDDC Branch Office, Ref.no.ጎክ 59/483/ጠ, dated 11 Yäkatit 1979 E.C.

[101]NGAZRO, a letter from Asäfa Käbädä (administrator of Mätäma district) to Gondar Province Administration Office, Ref.no. ጎመወ 43/845/ጠ, dated 26 Yäkatit 1979 E.C.

[102] NGAZRO, a letter from Kiros Menelik (manager of SACIFA Private Ltd) to the Ministry of Ethiopian Foreign Trade, Ref.no.ኤፋ 21/666/80, dated 20 Nähasé 1980 E.C; a letter from Said Mähammäd to North Gondar Administrative region office, Ref.no.24/2537/81, dated 12 Hamlé 1981 E.C; a minutes of Mätäma Customs officials, dated 14 Säné 1981 E.C and 19 Säné 1981 E.C.

province due to the unstable political conditions created by the EPRA fighters.[103] Nevertheless, following the introduction of the "Mixed Economic Policy" in 1990 the grain quota was abolished and farmers were allowed to sell their grain at the open market freely. A relatively liberal policy was introduced in the agricultural sector, and the members of the APCs were allowed to dissolve their cooperatives if they wished so.[104] As a result, like many APCs in the country, the APCs in Chilga sub-province were dissolved.[105]

Resettlement and Villagization

Resettlement had a long history in Ethiopia. It had planned and unplanned (spontaneous) natures.[106] The resettlement type in the 1960s and early 1970s was predominantly spontaneous in nature. We have seen the Wällo settlers in Mätäma in the imperial period in chapter four. From 1975 to 1983, the Därg regime established resettlement sites for pastoralists, famine and war victims.[107]

In the province of Gondar, resettlement took place in 1976 in Mätäma and Humära. In the early months of 1976, the Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement Authority settled more than 300 Gumuz at Waša, about 6 kilometers south of Mätäma town.[108] A government official named Täsfayä Gädlägiorgis was involved in settling the Gumuz at Waša. However, he was criticized

[103] Informants: Sinor, Gäbeyaw, Sisay, and Abé.
[104]Desalegn Rahmato, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian Crisis: State and Peasantry in the Post Revolutionary Ethiopia," In Bahru Zewde et'als (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, April 1-6, 1991.* Vol. II (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 1994), 474.
[105] Informants: Gäbeyaw, Sinor, Abuhay, and Abé.
[106]Mengistu Woube, "Southward-Northward Resettlement in Ethiopia," *Northeast African Studies New Series*, Vol. II. No.1 (1995), 92-93.
[107]Helmut Kloos and Aynalem Adugna,"Settler Migration during the 1984/85 Resettlement Program in Ethiopia," *GeoJournal*, Vol. XVIV, No. 2 (Sept 1989), 114-115; Mengistu, 94.
[108]NGAZRO: a letter from Käfäläň Aserat (coordinator of Wällo, Bägémder and Semén Provinces Resettlements sites) to Daňäw Wäldä Selasé, Ref.no.10, dated 28 Säné 1968 E.C.

for committing corruption on the materials that were allocated for the resettlement program.[109] The government of Därg considered the Gumuz as the oppressed and "forgotten people" (yätäräsu mahbäräsäboč) during the imperial period. The objective of settling the Gumuz was to transform their way of life from shifting cultivation to sedentary agriculture. The government planned to give them technical and material support to help them. The government also planned to introduce other facilities like modern education and health in their localities.[110]

However, the fighting between the government and the EDU in 1977 interrupted the resettlement activity. The government tried to equip the Gumuz with rifles to protect themselves from the anti-Därg groups. However, they could not resist the anti-Därg groups and hence were evicted from the settlement sites, like other people in the area. Due to the warfare, many people in Chilga-sub-province took refuge in the Sudan. After the end of the fighting against the EDU in about 1978, the government gave amnesty to the Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan and gave support when they returned to Ethiopia. The Gondar branch of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission resumed to settle the Gumuz and the refugees at Kumär and Afeṭeṭ in Mätäma.[111] In 1979/80, the settlers at Kumär cultivated about 586 hectares of land and harvested 959.37 quintals of sorghum, 681.70 quintals sesame, and 348.76 quintals of cotton. In 1980/81, they cultivated about 585 hectares of land and harvested about 1,880 quintals of sorghum, 1,200 quintals of cotton, and 1,000 quintals of sesame. In July 1981, Kumär resettlement had 359

[109] NGAZRO, a letter from Kiros Abära (Administrator of Mätäma District) to Käfäläň Aserat, Ref. no.3151/27/68, dated 4 Säné 1968 E.C; a petition written by Gumuz people to Mätäma District Administration Office, dated 26 Genbot 1968 E.C.

[110] Zelalem Aberra, 32.

[111] NGZARO, a letter from Adanä Mamuyä (representative of Gondar Regional Office of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission) to Täšomä Wäldä Semayat (the vice-commissioner of Relief and Rehablitation), Ref. no. ዕ ጎ/3/6/4/5, dated 2 Tahsas 1974 E.C; Zelalem Aberra, 32.

households with 991 family members. They were resettled in a village and each house had 500 meter square area.[112]

The government also started settlement in Humära. In 1978, the Helegin and Rewal settlements were carried out for victim people of the counter-revolution war of the EDU. In May 1979, there were 512 settlers in Helegin and 283 in Rewan.[113] Another resettlement site in Humära was Maykadera, was set up in 1983 in for the Ethiopian refugees returned from the Sudan.[114]

Following the 1984/85 famine, the Därg hastily introduced a large-scale resettlement program to re-settle about 1.5 million people. The first objective was to relieve the degraded, overpopulated and drought prone region; and the second was to make productive those resettlement sites that were mainly sparsely populated, fertile and unexploited. Several individuals suspected that the Därg had a secret political motive to remove Tegrean from supporting the TPLF and to control the Oromo Liberation Front in the Western Ethiopia by settling people.[115] Moreover, several writers, NGOs and western countries criticized the Därg's resettlement program and questioned its feasibility, motives and consequences.[116] Despite such criticisms, the Därg practiced resettlement on Mätäma, Mätäkäl, Asosa, and Gambélla.[117]

Preparations were started in Mätäma for settlement. Like other settlement sites, Mängestu Hailemareyam visited the Mätäma resettlement site a few days prior to the arrival of the

[112] Relief and Rehablitation Commission, "R.R.C News" (June-July, 1981), 13-14.
[113]Tadele Biru,"The Relief Operation and Settlement Program in Gondar" (BA thesis, Yäkatit 66 Institution of Political Education, 1990), 15; Addis Zemen, "Bä Humära YäSäfära Ţabiyawäč 2000 Hectares Yitaräsal", 29 Genbot 1971 E.C.
[114]Tadele Biru, 15.
[115]Gebre Yntiso, "The Mätäkäl Resettlement in Ethiopia Why did it Fail?" *In People, Space and…*, 93-94,
[116]Getachew Woldemeskel, "The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia," African Affairs Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 352 (Jul.,1989), 359-360; Giordano Sivini, "Famine and the Resettlement Program in Ethiopia," *Africa (Rome)* (GIUGNO 1986), 211.
[117] Dessalegn Rahmato, "Settlement and Resettlement in Mettekel, Western Ethiopia," *Africa (Rome*), Anno XLIII, No. 1 (Marzo 1988), 16.

settlers.[118] Bulldozers and tractors prepared 12 villages that were identified by their serial number from village 1 to village 12. The settlement site was initially planned for about 50,000 households. However, due to shortage of time, it was difficult to implement it fully in 1985. Without preparing the land properly for settlement, about 10,702 settlers arrived at Gändawuha in March 1985. The settlers predominantly came from the Libo and Gayint sub-provinces, and a few from Tegray. The settlers faced several challenges on their arrival like shortage of cleared farming land, seeds, oxen, equipment, and outbreak of malaria epidemic.[119] The other problem the settlers faced in the first year was the absence of health centers, deep-water wells, flour mills, and shortage of food.[120] Although the construction of a 65 beds hospital with the help of the Democratic Republic of Germany was started in 1986,[121] its construction was delayed until 1989 when one hospital, eight clinics, one kindergarten, five elementary schools, eight deep-water wells, and four flour mills were introduced to the villages.[122]

Following the arrival of the 1985 rainy season, the settlers faced additional challenges. The road from Aykäl to Mätäma was difficult for the movement of vehicles. Among the cars that travelled carrying wheat in June 1985 to the settlement areas, eight cars could not return to Gondar until the end of the rainy season and the maintenance of the road in November 1985. Thus, transporting provisions to the settlers was difficult and some medicines and provisions had to be

[118] Addis Zemen, "Guad Wana Şähafi BäGondar Kefelä Hagär Yälemat Täquamočen Gobeňetäwu Mämäriya Sätu", 30 Yäkatit 1977 E.C.
[119]Gondar Planning and Supervision office, "Yä-Mätäma Säfära Yä-Mäsk Zägäba" (Gondar, Genbot 1977 E.C), 1-11; NGAZRO, a letter from Wägayähu Sahlu to Gondar Province Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch, Ref.no.ድመክ/ጎ1625/77, dated 29 Genbot 1977 E.C.
[120] NGAZRO, a letter from Alämu Täsäma (head of Gändawuha Clinic) to Gondar Province Branch of Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, no.Ref.no, dated 21 Mäskäräm 1978 E.C.
[121]NGAZRO, a letter from Wägayehu Sahlu to Mälaku Täfära (First Secretary of WPE in Gondar Province), Ref.no. ድመክ/ጎ/1101/78, dated 17 Hedar 1978 E.C; Addis Zemen, "BäMätäma Mäleso Mäquaquamiya YäLemat Sera Endiţänaqäre Mämäriya Säţu", 16 Miyaziya 1978 E.C.
[122]NGAZRO, YäSemén Gondar Astädadär Akababi …, 7-8, 34- 35.

transported using helicopters.[123] The settlers did not get sufficient food supplies from the government in the first year and they intended to desert the villages.[124]

The other factor that discouraged the settlers from the onset was locusts invasion. In November 1985, locusts originated in the Sudan invaded much of the frontiers regions of northwestern Ethiopia including the resettlement sites of Mätäma.[125] Traditional and modern methods of spraying of pesticides were used to reduce the damage by locusts. Unable to control the locust invasion by traditional way, pesticides were sprayed using airplanes in and around the resettlement villages, and it was effective about 95% in eliminating the locusts. The damage of the locusts on the crops varied from village to village as the field visit of the agricultural office experts indicated. Village 1 and 6 were free from damage, except loss of the grass. In village 2, it damaged about 19% to 20% of sorghum planted on 20 hectares of land. In village 3, it damaged about 10% to 15 % of sorghum crop planted on10 hectares of land. In village 4, it damaged about 5% to 8% sorghum crops planted on 2.33 hectares. In village 5, it damaged 8% to 10% of sorghum crop planted on 16 hectares of land. On village 12, it damaged about 10% to 13% on ten hectares of sorghum crop. Of the total 1,252.11 hectares of sorghum belonged to the settlers, about 58.5 hectares were damaged partly. The damage was minimal since the sorghum crop was

[123]NGAZRO, a letter from Täsfahun Chämärä (head of Mätäma Resettlement Project) to the 115th Brigade army at Gändawuha), no Ref.no. dated 20 Ţeqemet 1978 E.C; a letter from Negusé Abäbä (head of Ethiopian Road Transport Authority) to Gondar Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Branch, Ref.no.708/78, dated 20 Ţeqemet 1978 E.C.

[124]NGAZRO, a letter from Taddäsä Seyum to Administrator of Gondar Provincial, Ref.no.767/27/78, dated 27 Hedar 1978 E.C.

[125]NGAZRO, a letter from Dr. Haylu Käbädä (head of Gondar Province Agricultural Office) to Northwestern Region Agricultural Office, Ref.no. 444/8/5, dated 13 Hedar 1978 E.C; a letter from Wägayähu Sahlu to Gondar Province Agricultural Office, Ref.no. ድመክ/ጎላ1013/78, dated 17 Hedar 1978 E.C.

ready for cutting and spraying using airplane. One of the negative aspects of spraying the pesticide was it damaged about 65 beehives that belonged to the settlers.[126]

Without solving the various problems of the first settlers, the government planned in 1986 to settle in Mätäma about 5,000 households from the eroded and drought prone area of Gayint.[127] However, the program was not implemented, probably due to financial constraint of the government. Thus, lack of a well-prepared plan and the unhealthy ecology of the lowlands to the highlander settlers were believed to be the causes for the failure of the Därg's settlement program at Mätäma.

Table 6.4 Resettlement villages and their total population number in Mätäma and Humära in March 1989

No.	Name of resettlement village	Location	Number of Households			Number of Family members			Remark
			M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
1	Heligin	Sätit-Humära	168	5	173	200	208	408	Old (set up before 1985)
2	Maicadra	Sätit-Humära	184	7	191	228	291	519	Old
3	Mändär 1	Mätäma	324	26	350	289	353	642	New (set up in 1985)
4	Mändär 2	Mätäma	375	67	442	282	636	918	New
5	Mändär 3	Mätäma	394	42	436	370	445	815	New
6	Mändär 4	Mätäma	350	30	380	184	325	509	New
7	Mändär 5	Mätäma	208	21	229	200	403	603	New
8	Mändär 6	Mätäma	128	25	153	128	239	367	New
9	Mändär 7	Mätäma	129	22	151	144	248	362	New
10	Mändär 8	Mätäma	60	26	86	69	130	199	New
Sum Total			2,320	271	2,591	2,964	3,278	5,342	

[126]NGAZRO, a letter from Dr. Haylu Käbädä…cited above, Ref.no. 444/8/5, dated 13 Hedar 1978 E.C.
[127]WMTMAC, Northwestern Ethiopia Planning office, "Bä-Mätäma Yämisäferu 5000 Abawurawäč Lämäqäbäl Yämiyasčel Qedemä Zegejit ena Yä-Afäşaşäm Märehageber" (Baher Dar, Tahsas 1979 E.C).

Source: NGAZRO, YäSemén Gondar Astädadär…., 33

Although the above data is from government report, it is not an exaggerated one. From the table, it is clear that there were ten resettlement sites (two in Humära and eight in Mätäma) in March 1989. The resettlement sites in Humära were established before the 1984 famine for the refugees from the Sudan. Eight villages remained in Mätäma from initially established 12 villages in 1985; four of the villages were deserted due to the factors mentioned above. There were 2,591 households having a total family member of 5,342. The number of people in the villages was very small; almost reduced by half from the original number of settlers. The plan was to settle 500 people in each village. This indicated several of them were either deserted the villages or died due to the malaria epidemic.

Despite the various problems they encountered, the remaining settlers gradually expanded and increased the amount of cleared and cultivated lands. About 2004 hectares of land was cultivated and about 8,040 quintals of crops were produced in 1985/86. About 2,981 hectares of land was cultivated and about 9,882 quintals of crops were produced in 1987/87. About 2,747 hectares of land were cultivated and about 14,117 quintals of crops were produced in 1987/88. In terms of volume of production, the leading crops cultivated in the resettlement site were sorghum, sesame and cotton in that order.[128]

Villagization, one of the programs of the Därg, was an activity that sought to organize scattered rural households into more concentrated villages voluntarily. The Därg argued that scattered rural villages hindered the development of social services and infrastructures and villagization

[128] NGAZRO, YäSemén Gondar Astädadär Akababi …,7-8, 34- 35.

was taken as a solution to the socio-economic and political drawbacks of the country.[129] In June 1986, the National Villagization Coordinating Committee was formed and it declared the social, administrative and economic objectives of the program. These were to enhance agricultural outputs via modern techniques, use land properly, bring peace, initiate cooperative works, and introduce social services for the rural people.[130] The program placed the number of households in each village between 30 and 500 depending on the land features of the locality.[131]

It was in 1987 that villagization program was introduced in Gondar and other provinces in the northern Ethiopia. Attempts to implement the program began in Chilga sub-province in 1987 and 1988. A committee named *bétafraš* (Lit. house demolisher) was responsible to select village sites. The size of the area given to each household in Chilga sub-province was 25 meters' x 40 meters (1000 square meters). The committee was supported by a militia force called *šemeq* (militiamen assigned to the program) who punished those who opposed the program. The punishment included among others imprisonment and payment of penalty. Those farmers who had well gardens were mostly opponents of the villagization program.[132]

Due to opposition from the EPRA, the villagization program like other programs of the Därg did not succeed in Chilga sub-province. Like the implementation of rural lands, villagization was not implemented in most of the western half of the sub-province, the lowland parts, since the EPRA controlled the area. The eastern half of the sub-province was also inhabited by many people and was under the government control, and accessible to the planners. The EPRA units warned the

[129]NGAZRO, a letter from the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, National Revolutionary Development Campaign and Central Planning Supreme Council to Gondar Province Administrator, Ref. no. ፌፕ19/ 162/74, dated 10 Hamelé 1974 E.C.
[130]Alemayehu Lirenso, "Villagization: Policies and Prospects," In Siegfried Pausewang and etals (eds.), Ethiopia: Options for Rural Development (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1990), 139.
[131]Clapham, 175.
[132] Informants: Gäbeyaw, Sinor, and Haylé.

local people not to involve themselves in the villagization program, attacked government officials that participated of the program, and created obstacles on its implementation in the sub-province. For example, on 3 March 1987, EPRA members killed Agäru Täsäma, the administrator of Quara district (nominally, since he never went to the district rather he was symbolically live in Chilga) when he was working on the villagization at Chandeba, in Chilga.[133]

Table 6.5 Number of villages established and their total people in 1987 and 1988 in Chilga sub-province

No	Name of the sub-province		No of PAs implemented	No of Villages set up	No houses constructed			Total number people in the villages
					Tin roofed House	Grass roofed	total	
1	Chilga	1987	6	8	140	2,550	2,,690	16140
		1988	20	35	303	6,947	7,250	43,500
		Total	26	43	443	9,497	9,940	59,640
2	Aläfa-Ṭaqusa	1987	5	10	395	3,615	4,010	24,060
		1988	14	26	362	5,082	5,444	32,664
		Total	19	36	757	8,697	9,454	56,724
3	Mätäma	1987	-	-	-	-	-	-
		1988	6	6	0	1,265	1,265	5,105
		Total	6	6	0	1,265	1,265	5,105
4	Quara and Maṭäbiya	1987	-	-	-	-	-	-
		1988	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sum Total		1987	11	18	535	6,165	6,700	40,200
		1988	40	67	665	13,294	13,959	81,269
		Total	51	85	1,200	19,459	20,659	121,469

Source: NGAZRO, YäSemén Gondar Astädadär…, 27-28.

[133]NGAZRO, letters from Alänä Taddäsä (administrator of Chilga *Awraja*) to Gondar Province Administrative Office, Ref. no. 2406/28/79, dated 6 Säné 1979 E.C and Ref.no. 6603/28/80, dated 2 Hamlé 1980 E.C.

Although the above data is from government report, it does not seem to be exaggerated. From the table, it is clear that in 1987, the villagization program was undertaken on 11 PAs, and 18 villages were established. In the same year, about 6,700 houses were constructed; out of this 535 were tin roofed houses and the others were grass roofed. About 40,200 people were settled in the villages. These were only started in the districts of Chilga and Aläfa-Ţaqusa. Mainly due to the problem of the EPRA, the program did not start in Mätäma, Maţäbiya and Quara in 1987. The program was expanded in 1988 to 40 PAs and 67 villages were established. On these villages, about 13,969 houses were constructed; among them about 665 houses were tin roofed and the others were grass roofed. About 81,269 people were settled the villages. Generally, in the 1987 and 1988 the villagization program, about 51 PAs participated and 85 villages were established. About 20, 659 houses were constructed; out of them about 1,200 were tin roofed and the others were grass-roofed houses. About 121,469 people settled in the villages.

The intended objectives of the program such as the introduction of social services did not materialize in the villages in Chilga as elsewhere. Thus villagization program is said to have not successful at the national level because the government lacked financial resources and skilled manpower to fulfill its objectives. The program was also conducted forcefully without the consent of the peasants at local levels. The villages were also not suitable to live in the rainy seasons for those peasants who had more cattle. This was because the road became muddy. The protracted war in the north consumed much of its budget and aggravated the financial constraints of the government. With the declaration of ‘Mixed Economy’ in 1990, the newly set up villages were increasingly deserted since peasants were allowed to return to their old villages, and with

the downfall of the government in 1991, most farmers returned to the site of their former homes.[134]

The Triangular Fighting, 1989 to 1991

The Därg regime introduced a new administrative arrangement in the country in the late 1980s, by establishing autonomous and administrative regions. Accordingly, Gondar province was re-organized into North Gondar and South Gondar Administrative Regions. The North Gondar Administrative Region and South Gondar Administrative Region were reorganized into 16 *awrajas* and nine *awrajas* respectively in 1989. The former Chilga sub-province was organized into four new sub-provinces. These were Chilga, Aläfa-Ţaqusa, Quara and Mätäma (including Maţäbiya). The district (*wäräda*) administrative level was abolished.[135]

Alongside this administrative rearrangement, the government army fought against three opposition groups EPRA, TPLF and EPDM in Gondar province. The TPLF controlled some areas in Gondar province adjacent to Tegray while the EPDM controlled Bäläsa.[136] The Northwestern Command that had 603rd Corps army was in charge of military operations in Gondar and Gojjam provinces.[137] In July 1989, Brg. Gen. Ţelahun Aregaw was transferred from the 603rd to the 605th Corps (in Wällo Province) commandership. At the same time, Brg. Gen. Abäbä Haylé Selasé was transferred from the 605th Corps to the commandership of the 603rd Corps.[138]

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[134] Informants: Gäbyaw, Haylé, and Gétahun.
[135]Negarit Gazeta, Proclamation No.14 of 1987, "Proclamation to Establish Autonomous and Administrative Regions of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia".
[136]Abäbä Haylä Selasé, *Yä-17 Amät Felemiya* (Addis Ababa: Rohobot Printer, 2006 E.C), 220; ANDM CC Office, Yä Ihedén-Be'adén Tarik 1973-2008 E.C (Addis Ababa: Mega Printing P.L.C, 2008 E.C), 108-118.
[137] Fantahun, "The Northwestern Command…", 4, 16.
[138] Abäbä Haylé Selasé, 220, 234-237.

The struggle of these armed groups against the government in the province of Gondar created administrative gap and favorable time for outlaws in Chilga sub-province to raid cattle. Bandits from Chilga sub-province raided Sudanese cattle across the border. The brigands looted about 534 Sudanese cattle around Mätäma between July 1989 to December 1989. Some of the cattle were returned to the Sudanese and the Ethiopian local officials and army stationed at Gändawuha captured the suspected brigands. Since the Sudanese believed that the raiding was conducted with the support of the Ethiopian officials, meetings with the Sudanese victims at Mätäma town were held. Ethiopian officials informed the Sudanese that the government never involved in the raiding but rather a handful Ethiopian outlaws performed it.[139] However, in February 1990, a group of brigands also raided about 90 Sudanese cattle around Gallabat. The local officials and the 19th Nebelbal Brigade stationed at Gändawuha captured about 13 brigands and returned about 28 cattle to the Sudanese.[140]

The EPRDF army advanced from the north to Addis Ababa via Däsé and reached as far as northern Šewa in 1989. Its advance to the Lake Ţana areas was via the Wäräta-Wäldya road. Soon Brg. Gen. Abäbä transferred much of his army and his headquarter from North Gondar Region (mainly from Azäzo) to the South Gondar, mainly to Däbrä Tabor and Guna Mountain. Subsequently, Däbrä Tabor and its surroundings hosted the protracted fighting between the EPRDF and government army between 1989 and 1991.[141] Finally, the EPRDF launched "Operation Tewodros" in February 1991 and controlled the South Gondar region and Gojjam

[139] NGAZRO, a letter from Amsalu Gorfu (Secretary of Mätäma District) to North Gondar Administrative Region Office, Ref.no. መአ22/414/ጠ, dated 1 Ţer 1982 E.C.
[140]NGAZRO, letters from Ašänafi Musé (vice-administrator of Mätäma *Awraja*) to North Gondar Administrative Region Office, Ref.no.ጎመአ22/603/ጠ, dated 6 Yäkatit 1982 E.C and Ref.no.ጎመአ22/603/ጠ, dated 14 Yäkatit 1982 E.C.
[141]Abäbä Haylé Selasé, 240-263, 269-288.

province.[142] The EPDRF army directed to control Chilga sub-province and its surroundings in February 1991. The Därg's 154th Brigade retreated from Addis Zemen and was stationed at Qulqual Bär and Ţara Gädam delayed the EPRDF advance to Gondar for few days. In Aykäl and Säraba, the Därg had the 133th Brigade and the EPRDF army opened war on the government troops at Aykäl on 24 February 1991. After initial successful defense, the Därg army was defeated.[143] The Därg army that stationed at Gendawuha was also surrendered. Another EPRDF army from Baher Dar marched to Gondar along the western shores of Lake Ţana, via Qunzela-Dälgi-Gorgora. On 5 March, they fought at Chuahit town, in Dämbiya. On 8 March 1991, the government army was defeated and Gondar fell under the hands of EPRDF army.[144]

After it defeated the Därg's army at Aykäl, the EPRDF army turned against the EPRA in Quara and its surroundings. At the beginning of 1991, the EPRA army was re-grouped into three columns, three battalions and more than twenty stand-alone *Hailes* (lit. a lieutenant army). In April and May, supported by the Sudanese government under Gen.Omar Hassan al Beshir, the EPRDF army (mainly the TPLF) attacked the EPRA units in Quara and its surroundings from four directions: from Chilga, Achäfär, Pawi (Mätäkäl), and the Sudan. The superior EPRDF army defeated the EPRA unit at Mehadid and controlled Quara including EPRA's military training, logistic, and supply center, and *Fenotä Democracy* radio broadcasting. The EPRDF also took away other properties of the EPRA.[145]

Following the assumption of power in Addis Ababa on 28 May 1991, the EPRDF army continued its operation against the EPRA. The Sudanese government also took actions against

[142] Gebru, *The Ethiopian*…, 301.
[143] Fentahun, "The Ethiopian Army …", 227-228.
[144] Fentahun, "The Ethiopian Army …", 228-231; Informants: Haylé, Gäbeyaw, and Sinor.
[145] Solomon Ejigu, 116-119.

the EPRP/A especially on the Sudanese border towns of Tiha, Basonda and Fazra. The Sudanese government closed the EPRP offices; took away the EPRP's refugee identity cards, confiscated their properties, harassed, killed, and detained the EPRP members and handed them over to the EPRDF hands.[146] One of the popular women in the EPRA in Quara and its surroundings was Ayalnäš. Her original name was Yalämgäž Käbädä, born in Gondar town and joined the EPRA in 1977. To belittle her resistance against the Därg, the government said Ayalnäš was the daughter of a reactionary Seménäh Dästa and she rebelled since the government killed her father. Ayalnäš was captured together with the other EPRA CC members like Däbtäraw (Şägayä Gäbrämeden) in late June 1991 at Sankisa, on the bank of Ayima River, in Quara.[147] The EPRA was greatly weakened in the rainy months of 1991 and after due to defection to the government side, death, and capture of its senior members in Quara and its surroundings. Subsequently, the differences emerged among the EPRA/P leaders regarding the continuation of their armed struggle. Part of them demanded to continue the struggle while others wanted to stop.[148]

In September 1992, Samuél Alämayähu, the EPRP Central Committee member in the Sudan, sent a letter to the EPRA leaders in Quara and Mätäkäl to end fighting and bring the remaining army to the Sudan. The letter was sent as if it was the decision of the central committee members. The EPRA from Mätäkäl travelled to the Sudan and when they arrived at the border, they discovered that the letter was not the decision of the CC members. Soon Quara and Mätäkäl EPRA conducted a seminar for five days, in November 1992, at Jebra in the Aleţaš forest and decided to continue the armed struggle in Quara. However, the peasants in the area refused to

[146] Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, part two, 263-264; Solomon Ejigu, 118.
[147]Ţobiya (Amharic Magazine), "Ayalänäš Ayalänäš –Kelaš Legezaleš," Vol. IV. No. 9 (1988 E.C), 22; Mästawätä (Amharic Magazine), "Käwäyzärit Ayalnäš Gar Yätädärägä Qalä Meleles," Vol. I. No.1 (Mägabit 1985 E.C), 18-20
[148]Solomon Ejigu, 123-124, 141-145.

give support the EPRA units due to harsh punishment from the government officials and the EPRA was not successful then after. Subsequently, several leading members left for the Sudan and then to Europe and America while the Sudanese government captured other EPRP members and handed them to the EPRDF at Mätäma. With this, the armed struggle of the EPRA in Quara and its surroundings came to an end in 1992,[149] although some remnants were able to operate in the inaccessible areas of Quara for additional years.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the struggle between the Därg and EPRA in Chilga sub-province. Since the sub-province was inaccessible and located along the border with the Sudan and since EPRA was involved in income generating activities in Quara, the EPRA's struggle against Därg was relatively successful in the area. The EPRA had controlled the western half of Chilga sub-province and created challenges throughout the Därg period. This chapter also discussed the various reforms and programs of the Därg such as land reform, APCs, SCs, villagization and resettlement in Chilga sub-province. Although the Därg tried to introduce these reforms in the sub-province, it was not successful especially in the western half of the sub-province mainly due to the serious challenges from the EPRA but also because of the fighting between the EPRA and Därg army increased the political, social and economic problems of the local people in Chilga sub-province.

[149] Solomon Ejigu,127 - 130; Taklo, *YäDäm Zämän*, part two, 265 - 267.

EPILOGUE

Chilga under the EPRDF, 1991 to 2018

The Ethiopian People's Democratic Front (EPRDF) ousted the Därg from power and controlled Addis Ababa on 28 May 1991. A month later, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) that lasted until 1994 was set up. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) which dominated the EPRDF-led government initiated a new discourse on the relationship among ethnic groups in the country and created regional states largely based on ethno-linguistic lines. EPRDF's ethnic based federalism has been a major factor in reshaping relationships among ethnic groups across the country and generating new forms of collective self-consciousness.[1] The EPRDF destroyed the pre-1991 centralized administrative structure of Ethiopia. Although important power remained in the hands of the center, the government also tried to devolve some of its power to the regions. The EPRDF argued that the pre-1991 governments of Ethiopia had employed centralization as an instrument of imposing Amhara culture on other peoples of the country and to repress them.[2] It also believed that decentralization of the administration was vital to minimize inter-ethnic conflicts that had existed in the pre-1991 period.[3]

The various measures introduced by the EPRDF government changed greatly the socio-economic and political landscape of Chilga sub-province. This epilogue sketches the relationship between the EPRDF government and the peoples of Chilga sub-province focusing on three issues. The first issue is the local opposition in the area and its surroundings against the TGE's

[1]Jon Abbink, "Paradox of Power and Culture in an Old Periphery Surma, 1974-98," In Wendy James *et als* (ed.), *Remapping Ethiopia Socialism and After* (Addis Ababa: AAUP, 2002), 165-166.
[2] Merera Gudina, "The State, Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and Democratisation in Ethiopia," *African Journal of Political Science*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (June 2004), 27-28.
[3]John M. Cohen, ""Ethnic Federalism" in Ethiopia," *Northeast African Studies, New Series*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1995), 159-160.

action of partitioning Gondar Province and adding it to three regional states. The second concerns how the undemarcated Ethio-Sudan boundary along Mätäma and its surroundings has greatly affected the lives of the local farmers. The third issue is the complicated inter-ethnic interactions between the Qemant and the Amhara of the region. I argue that the largely positive relationship that existed before 1991 among the local people in Chilga sub-province deteriorated and the political instability in the area worsened following the coming to power of the EPRDF. This has greatly hindered the overall socio-economic and political developments of the people in the sub-province.

The regional boundary rearrangement of the early 1990s was one of the sources of local opposition against the EPRDF and instability in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. The Amhara region was one of the twelve regions established in the country in 1992. However, the TPLF dominated regime detached the lowlands of Mätäma and Quara from the Amhara regional state and added these to the Beni Shangul Gumuz regional state without the consent of the local people. Although some Gumuz live in the lowlands of Quara and Mätäma, the inhabitants of these districts were predominantly Amhara. This was a political decision made without taking into consideration the ethnic, historical and psychological make-up of the local people. Election cards printed by the TGE for the area were also prepared in the name of Beni Shangul Gumuz region. This seems to have been done to weaken generally the Amhara region and in particular Gondar by denying it access to its age-old neighbor, the Sudan. This action led to opposition by the local people including government officials against the federal/central government. District administrators like Däsaläñ Andargé of Mätäma requested his party for permission to leave his position since he was an Amhara and he would not have interest in that position if the district

was administered under Beni Shangul Gumuz. Realizing the difficulty of the situation, the government declared that the election cards were printed by mistake and corrected them.[4]

The other districts detached from Gondar Province and added to the Tegray region in the post-1991 period are the fertile lowlands like Humära, Wälqayit, and parts of Ţägädä and Ţälämt. Several individuals and writers said that since the former Tegray Province did not share a boundary with the Sudan, TPLF officials drew a map of Tegray that included Wälqayit, Humära, and parts Ţägädä and Ţälämt for their plan to detach the province of Tegray from Ethiopia and establish the republic of Tegray that would share boundary with the Sudan. Although there is no evidence on the other side, Därg had published this TPLF planned map in Addis Zemen newspaper in the late 1980s.[5] TPLF fought against the EPRP in the area and started evicting the Amhara and settled Tegreans in the area since the 1980s. TPLF not only settled about 30,000 demobilized TPLF soldiers in the areas in the 1990s[6] but also uprooted and looted properties including a large generator from Gondar and transported it to Tegray. All these TPLF actions brought opposition among the people of Gondar Province against the TPLF led EPRDF regime.

Abba Amehayäsus, ascetic in Adäbababy Iyesus Church, was the one who repeatedly preached to the people of Gondar city together with religious issues about the unity of Ethiopia, one country, and one flag.[7] TPLF officials regarded *Abba* Amehayäsus' activity as against the Charter of the TGE and accused him using the church for political activity by gathering ex-soldiers and brigands. In the later days of August 1992, TPLF officials also gathered religious

[4]Asmamaw Yäsuf, *Yä Ihe'apa Ena Yä Hewahat Ţose:Yä Anarchistoč Säläba* (NP, Printed by Argano, 2011 E.C), 133- 138; Čuču Aläbačäw, *Dagät Yabärätaw Yä-Amharawu Fenot* (Baher Dar: Berana Books, 2011 E.C), 212-213, 347-348.
[5] See the map of TPLF from Därg source in Addis Zemen, 18 Ţeqemet 1982 E.C.
[6]Yaréd Ţebäbu, *Wäţečä Alewäţahum* (np, 2010 E.C), 188-189; Achamyäläh Tamru, *YäWälqayit Guday* (Washington DC: Rohobot Publishers, 2012 E.C), 2-3.
[7]Asmamaw Yäsuf, 133- 138; Čuču, 210-212, 347-348.

leaders and representative people among twenty Qäbälés of Gondar town and asked them to condemn and bring *Abba* Amehayäsus to justice. The people, however, refused to condemn him; they supported his activities. The opposition of the people developed into an incident on 10 September 1992 in the church yard when a government force attacked people in the name of capturing *Abba* Amehayäsus. In the incident about 16 people were killed, 34 were wounded and hundreds were imprisoned. *Abba* Amehayäsus escaped but was later captured in Gojjam and imprisoned. The government politicized and redirected the opposition as an activity led by *Abba* Amehayäsus to loot the municipal office of Gondar. Following the incident, curfew was imposed on the people of Gondar from 7 PM to 5:30 AM. [8]

The local opposition against the TPLF led regime continued after the September 1992 incident in an organized manner. The people in Wälqayt and Ţägädé also opposed their transfer to Tegray region and submitted petitions repeatedly to the then North Gondar Administrative Zone. They claimed that they are Amhara and should not to be administered under Tegray region. Ambassador Daňäw Wäldäselasé, a native of Gondar and former administrator of the province, and Feteh'Ayä Asägu also submitted applications to the UN and the president of the TGE, *Ato* Mäläse Zénawi, in November 1993, expressing the grievance of the people due to their transfer to Tegray and opposing the new administrative arrangements.[9] While the lowlands of Mätäma and Quara were returned to the Amhara National Regional State with the end of the TGE, the fertile lands of Humära, Wälqayit, Ţägädä and Ţälämt remained under Tegray region. Government officials refused to listen to the voice of the local people and the matter remained a

[8] Mahlét (Amharic Magazine), "Gondar Täšänäšänä! Mängest Abba AmhaIyäsusen Wänäjälä!Gondaré Feyäl Wudih Qezemezem Wädiya Yeläwal," Vol.1.no.10, (Mäskäräm 1986 E.C); Lusi (Amharic Magazine), "Gondar Lay Damänä" Vol.1. no.7 (Mäskäräm 1986 E.C); Asmamaw Yäsuf, 145-149; Informants: Alämnäh and Jämbäru.
[9]Asmamaw Yäsuf, 138-141.

contentious issue in the relationships between the two regional states. Recently, the question of the local people is transformed into a committee named "YäWälqayit Ṭägädé YäAmhara Manenät Asemälaš Committee" chaired by Col. Dämäqä Zäwdu and it is struggling to return the area to the Amhara region. This committee submitted its petitions to different government offices like Tegray Regional State and House of the Federation (HoF) since 2014. In March 2016, Yaläw Abatä, the then speaker of the HoF, wrote to Tegray Regional State reminding them of the need to solve the committee's question. Again the committee submitted its question to the HoF stating Tegray Regional State has refused to listen to it. However, denying that the committee did not submit its case to Tegray Regional State as per the legal procedure, Kéria Ibrahim, a TPLF member and speaker of the HoF, replied to the committee by rejecting its case in 2018.[10] This issue is still ongoing process and it would be a blister in the relations between the Amhara and Tegray regional states.

Not only the boundary of Amhara regional state with the neighboring regional states of Tegray and Beni Shangul, but also its boundary with the Sudan along Mätäma, Quara and Lower Armacheho has been one of the hot issues of the post-1991 government of Ethiopia. Taking the advantage of the internal instability of Ethiopia in the early 1990s, the Sudanese stationed their army along the border, evicted Ethiopian farmers from their lands and looted their properties. The Ethiopian government tried to solve this peacefully, although the Sudan was not willing to do so.[11] In addition to the boundary, the relationship of the two states was soured by other events. Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir assumed power in Sudan with the support of the National Islamic

[10] Čuču, 353- 573; a letter from *Ato* Yaläw Abatä to Tigray National Regional State, Ref.no. **ፌዴም/አን/**144/2, dated 26 Megabit 2008 E.C; a letter from Kéria Ibrahim to the Wälqayit people YäAmhara Behertäňenät Asemälaš Committeee, Ref.no. **ፌዴም/**26/5/288, dated 4 Säné 2010 E.C (see Appendice in Čuču).
[11] Čuču, 543-544.

Front (NIF) that backed the 1989 coup. Since Sudanese foreign policy aimed to expand political Islam in North East Africa, Ethiopia with its large Moslem population was ideal target for NIF operations. The Sudanese government carried out various activities to achieve its goal in Ethiopia. The western countries also blamed the Sudan for backing Islamic terrorist organizations. The relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan reached a crisis point when an assassination attempt was carried out on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on 26 June 1995 in Addis Ababa by a group of men who came from the Sudan.[12] It seems that the Ethiopian government saw this incident as an opportune time to retake the unlawfully lost lands along Mätäma and forced out the Sudanese from Humära up to Quara in December 1995 and controlled these lands. Subsequently, the relations between the two countries was interrupted until 1998.[13]

Although Ethio-Sudan relations was improved after 1999, the undemarcated boundary (mainly with the Amhara region) continued to be a source of problem to the local Ethiopian farmers who live along the border. To resolve theirt boundary issue, several meetings and discussions were held between higher officials of the two states alternatively in Ethiopia and the Sudan. They signed an agreement in May 2001 to form a Joint Boundary Commission to demarcate their common boundary and in December of the same year the commission was established at Khartoum. A 'special committee' was also set up to evaluate and redistribute the disputed farmlands on the ground based on 1903 Gwynn's demarcation. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two states on 11 April 2005 by *Ato* Abay Şahayä (the then Minister of Federal Affairs) on the Ethiopian side and Maj.Gen. Abdulrahim Mohammed on

[12]Molla Mengestu, "Ethio-Sudanese Relations: 1991-2001"(MA Thesis, Department of PSIR, AAU, 2002), 38- 43; The Ethiopian Herald, 2 September 1995.
[13] Čuču, 544- 546.

the Sudanese side concerning farmlands and settlement areas.[14] The TPLF officials showed their anti-Amhrara outlook in this boundary discussion. Instead of deliberating their boundary as a whole, their discussion was focused only on the boundary of the Sudan and the Amhara regional state, on Mätäma and Lower Armacheho. Economically, this area is fertile accommodating several sesame farmers.

The memorandum established a Joint Field Work Committee and the two governments made redistribution of the farmlands in 2007 and 2008. Accordingly, in "Hilat Khatir" area, about 3,450 hectares of land, were divided equally for 167 Ethiopian and 170 Sudanese farmers. About 15,000 hectares of land cultivated and owned by the Ethiopian farmers from the junction of Angäräb and Guang Rivers to the Sudanese village of Abdulmejid was given to Sudanese farmers. In a locality called Dälälo, about 740 hectares of land and about 1,300 hectares around Abdulmejid area were given to the Sudan.[15] As a result, many Amhara farmers were evicted and displaced from their farmlands.

Since the Ethiopian farmers lost their cultivated lands they used for several decades, they opposed the actions of the EPRDF officials. The perception of Ethiopian farmers about Ethiopia's boundary in the area was unchanged from earlier periods. They believed that it extended to the junction of Guang (Atbara) and Angäräb (Bahre Selam) Rivers and other areas mentioned in Emperor Menelik II's 1891 circular letter. They had also used the land in the past several decades. The EPRDF officials also did not officially announce to the Ethiopian people about their boundary discussions with the Sudan. Thus, the action of the EPRDF government greatly irritated the people in Chilga sub-province and its surroundings. They regarded the

[14]Čuču, 555-556.
[15] Belete, "Setit…", 117-118; Mulatu Wubneh, *Yä Iteyopeya …*, 244-246.

government's action as an anti-Amhara measure and a treacherous act on the part of the EPRDF.[16] Local farmers expressed the loss of their lands as follows:

አንገረብ ተከዜ ጓንግ ነዉ ወንዛችን
ይመስክር ዮሀንስ ወሰን ጠባቂያችን። [17]

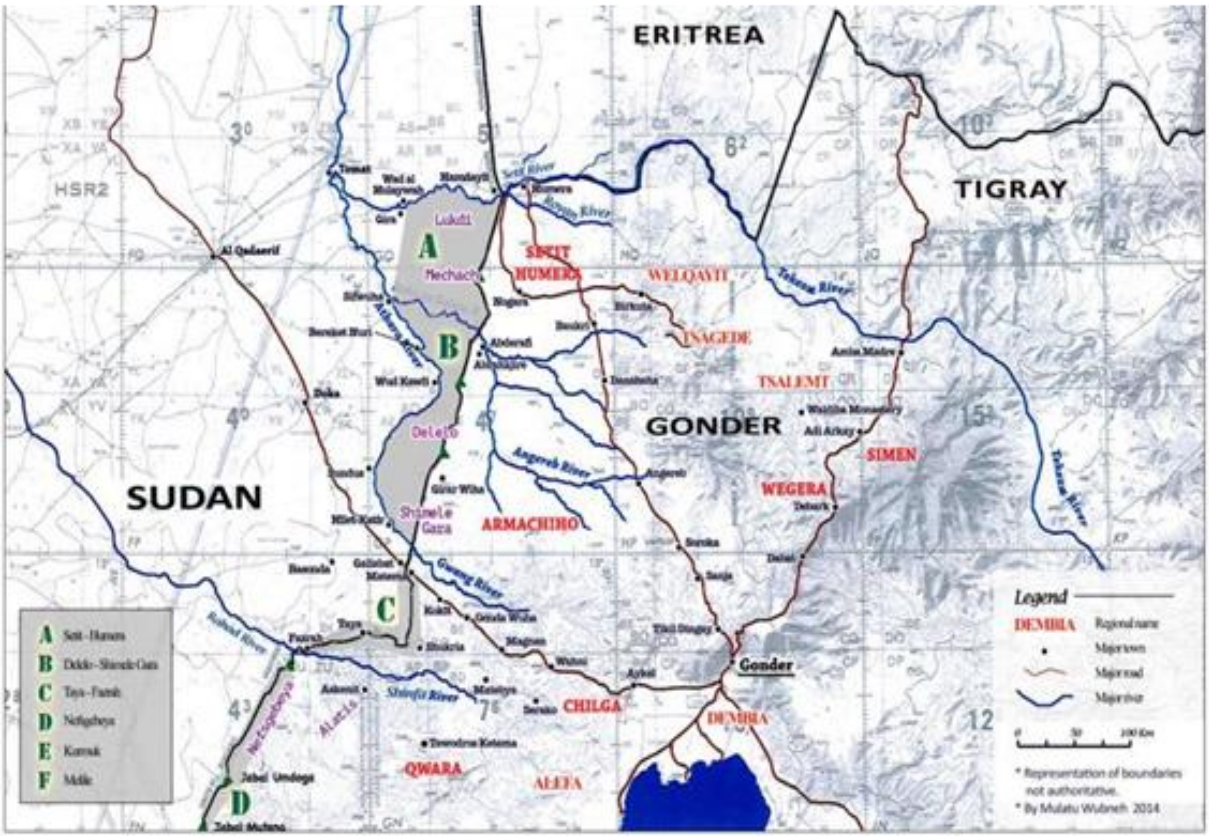
Angäräb, Täkäzé and Guang are our rivers
Let Emperor Yohannes IV, who was a defender of our boundary, give testimony

አረሱት ይሉኛል የሁመራን መሬት የመተማን መሬት የዉም የኛን ድርሻ የዉም የኛን እጣ፡
እነሱ ምን ያድርጉ ከኛ ሰዉ ሲታጣ።[18]

They told me that they [The Sudanese and Tigreans] are cultivating our lands in Humära and Mätäma
They do that since we (the Amhara) have no leader in the country

The above poem illustrates that the local Ethiopian farmers in Mätäma and Lower Armacheho considered the Ethiopian boundary as far as the junction of Guang and Angäräb Rivers that Emperor Menelik II mentioned in his 1891 circular letter to European states. However, by the 1902 boundary agreement part of this area was given to the Sudan. Since this agreement was not notified to the local people and the boundary never demarcated by representatives of the two states, the local Amhara farmers cultivated this fertile land especially since 1960s. The local Amhara farmers also regarded Emperor Yohannes IV as their hero and defender from the Sudanese since he died at Mätäma in 1889 while fighting against the Mahdists invasion. They were angered by the loss of their lands and the cultivation of the area by the Sudanese along Mätäma and by the Tegreans along Sätit-Humära. They argued this was done because there is no a true Amhara leader and representative in the EPRDF regime.

[16] Informants: Zämika'el, Wädaj, Ţegabu and Sisay.
[17] Mulatu, "This Land is…,"16-17; Informants: Zämika'el, Wädaj, Ţegabu and Sisay.
[18] Mulatu, "This Land is …,"16-17; Informants: Zämika'el, Wädaj, Ţegabu and Sisay. A musician Fasil Demoz also used it in his music contemporary to the year.



Map.2 Ethio-Sudan disputed areas in Mätäma and its surrounding since 1960s
Source: Adopted from Mulatu Wubneh, "This Land is My land…", 13.

The other issue that affected the relationship among the people of Chilga in the post-1991 period was the Qemant quest for ethnic recognition and self-administration. In August 1992, about 80 urban dwellers and educated Qemant chaired by Näga Géţé met in Gondar town and established a civic association named "**የቅማንት· የመረዳጃና የልማት· ማህበር**" (Qemant Self-Help and Development Association). Näga and Aduňa Wasé were made the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the association respectively. As its name indicates, the main objective of the association was to contribute money and labor for the socio-economic development of the Qemant population in Chilga district and its surroundings.[19] Soon after this event, Näga Géţé

[19]NGAZRO, a minute of the Qemant Self-Help and Development Association Committee, dated 10 Nähasé 1984 E.C

requested a letter of permission from the North Gondar Administrative Region for the committee to go to Chilga and other areas for consultation with the Qemant. Asmamaw Yäsuf, the administrator of the Region, provided him with a letter.[20] However, when Näga and his group went to Chilga in September 1992 to consult with the Qemant, they faced strong opposition from the local people including the Qemant. The justification of the opposition on the committee were in Chilga speaking as Qemant and Amhara was dividing the same people and to bring blood shading among them. They intermarried and lived together without difference between them for centuries. The local opposition against the committee was that Qemant Development Association was planning to carry out work without the knowledge of the Amhara Development Association in the name of Qemant ethnic group. Thinking the Qemant as different from the Amhara was being narrow minded.[21] Näga stated that the opposition was a chauvinist idea. Despite opposition from Chilga, he was said to have strongly supported by TPLF/APDM officials in the Amhara Regional State like *Ato* Helawi Yoséf, Addisu Lägäsä and Bäräkät Semeon. Mäsfen Amarä, a TPLF member, also encouraged and closely followed Näga. These government officials ordered Asmamaw Yäsuf to give an office to Näga in the North Gondar Administrative Region for his work and to conduct studies on the Qemant.[22]

Although there were about 172,327 Qemant registered in the 1994 national census, they lacked the essential elements to set up their own self-administration. First, they lacked a distinctive language area. Only some elders knew Qemanteňa language (a study conducted by the Amhara

[20]NGAZRO, a letter from Näga Gété to North Gondar Administrative Region Administration Office, dated 14 Nähasé 1984 E.C; a letter from Asmamaw Yäsuf to the concerned bodies, Ref.no. ጎክ/64/6/ጠ, dated 28 Nähasé 1984 E.C.
[21] NGAZRO, a letter from Näga Gété to the North Gondar Administrative Region Administration Office, Ref.no. ቅ.ቀ.መ.ል.ማ/02/85, dated 28 Mäskäräm 1985 E.C.
[22] Asmamaw Yäsuf, 158-160.

National Regional State indicated that there were about 6,000 Qemanteňa speakers in the area). The rest of the Qemant were Amharic speakers and it is difficult to draw ethno-linguistic line. Secondly, they do not live in a clearly defined geographical settlement area but rather live in villages intermixed with the Amhara. Their psychological make-up was also not different from the Amhara. Thus, they are inseparable from the latter. It is said that in his speech on Ethiopian Radio, *Ato* Tamrat Layné, the then Prime Minister of the TGE, rejected the existence of a distinct Qemant ethnic group as follows: "In the past, there were Qemant people who lived around North Gondar. These days, they do not exist; they became ordinary Gondarians. Those who discard this fact and consider themselves as Kemant are "backward" people living with the past."[23]

Gradually, with the support of the TPLF, the Qemant Development Association informed the Qemant about its program and transformed itself into a sort of political movement that had the objective of realizing the Qemant quest for recognition and self-administration which was not part of its initial objective. Some of the Qemant in Chilga started openly agitating beginning in 2007 for Qemant quest for ethnic recognition. The pretext for the commencement of hostile opposition and conflict with the surrounding Amhara was the omission of Qemant ethnicity and language from the 2007 National Population and House Census registration form which also removed the Kunfäl ethnic identity and counted them as Awi. Until then, the Qemant were counted by their own ethnic group and language.[24] However, in the 2007 registration form the Qemant name was removed with the justification that Qemanteňa does not exist as a mother tongue. Thus, the Qemant were not counted in the census. This disappointed most Qemant and enabled their activists to politicize Qemant ethnicity and mobilized the people for the recognition

[23]Yeshiwas Degu, "From "Melting Pot" to Quest for Recognition: The Kemant People in Ethiopia" (MA Thesis, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2013), 19.
[24]Yeshiwas Degu, 21; Informants: Ejargäw Asäfa, Masräša Alämu and Wäldé Färädä.

and protection of their ethnic identity. Hence, ethnic consciousness begun to develop across urban and rural areas since then. Several people believed that the TPLF led EPRDF government had deliberately removed the Qemant from the registration form in order to force them into open conflict with the surrounding Amhara. In May 2009, a new committee named "YäQemant Behéräsäb Manenät Ţeyaqé Yäras Astädadär Yefäqädelen Astäbabari Commiittee" was elected. The "committee" asked the various levels of the government up to the House of Federation for the recognition of the Qemant as a distinct ethnic group and self-administration.[25] This new "Qemant committee" was elected realizing that the previous committee was less effective in terms of mobilizing the Qemant.[26]

The activity of the "Qemant committee" became more offensive to the Amhara in Chilga. The TPLF officially hijacked the Qemant case by giving financial and political support and opening a television program to it to weaken and destabilize the Amhara region. The Qemant case was submitted to the Amhara National Regional State Council. However, in August 2013, the council members decided with an overwhelming majority vote that the Qemant question does not fulfill the constitutional legal requirements and it was rejected. But it also stated that the language and culture of the Qemant should be developed. The "Qemant committee" refused to accept the decision of the councel. Subsequently, the committee resorted to armed conflict that brought loss of lives and materials in 2015 and 2016. Due to the chaos created in Chilga by the "Qemant Committee" and the counter-actions of the Amhara, the Amhara Regional State Council decided to give a separate self-administration in Chilga district where the Qemant predominantly live.

[25]A letter from Endäšaw Bogalä (chairman of Qemant Committee for Ethnic Recognition and Self - Administration) to different concerned institutions, Ref. no. 02/9/02, dated 23 Hedar 2002 E.C; Informants: Ejargäw, and Wäldé.
[26]Yesiwas Degu, 21-22; Belay Shibeshi, "Minority Rights Protection in the Amhara National Regional State: The Case of the Kemant People in North Gondar" (LLM, AAU, 2010), 18.

But in eight adjacent localities a referendum was held in 2017 to decide whether they would be under the newly formed Qemant district or to remain under the neighboring Amhara districts. Seven of them decided to be administered under Amhara districts.[27] Subsequently, Chilga district is divided non-exclusively into two districts as Chilga number one for the Qemant and Chilga number two for the Amhara. In 2019, the Amhara regional state gave amnesty to the "Qemant Committee" members which were in the forest as outlaws by harassing civilians and looting people travelling on the road to realize their objective by force. Most committee members had given their hands to the government and negotiation between them is going on to give a separate self-administration. Still to this day the Qemant case is an ongoing process.

Following the disorder in Ethiopia as well as local chaos in Chilga and its surroundings in 2016 and 2017, a new zonal administrative division was carried out. In May 2017, the Amhara regional state council taking into consideration the vastness of the former North Gondar Administrative Zone, its high population size and difficult geographical features decided to reorganize it into three zones. These are the North Gondar Administrative Zone centered at Däbarq, Central Gondar Administrative Zone centered at Gondar, and West Gondar Administrative Zone centered at Gändawuha. This was decided in consultation with the local people and designed to give a response to lack of good governance and infrastructural developments. While Chilga, Aläfa, and Ţaqusa districts are placed under Central Gondar Administrative Zone, Quara, Mätäma and a new district called Adaň Agär Chaqo, and most parts of the former Lower Armacheho (now renamed Merab Armacheho) were placed under West

[27] Čuču, 222-229.

Gondar Administrative Zone.[28] I think, this arrangement addressed the question that was raised and has been rolling since the late 1950s to set up a new *awraja* administration in the area along the border with the Sudan to keep the peace and stability of the area and bring local development. Since it is arranged in a manageable way to the local administrators, I believe that this new zonal administrative arrangement would bring relative peace and stability, socio-economic and political developments to the local people. It would also help to control the chronic problem of local bandits and smuggling mainly firearms from the Sudan. Thus, in place of being home to anti-government groups, the areas of the present West Gondar Administrative Zone could become an integral part of national political life and economy.

[28]NGAZRO, a letter from *Ato* Gädu Andargačäw (President of Amhara National Regional State) to the former North Gondar Administrative Zone Office, Ref no. አብክመ 11/10044/መ/ክ, dated 17 Hamlé 2009 E.C.

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List of Informants

No	Name	Age	Place of interview	Date of interview in E.C	Remark

1	Abära Šaräw (*Ato*)	90	Aykäl town	10/04/2010	He is a farmer who was born in Daza Giorgis locality. He is Ayälä Täsäma's nephew and was his follower of during his anti-Darg struggle. He knows Qemanteňa language. He now lives in Aykäl town
2	Abé Ambaw (*Ato*)	72	Šahura town	23/04/2010	He was born in Šahura town. He lives in the town engaged in farming. During the war of EDU, he participated on the side of Därg. He knows well the history of Aläfa-Taqusa district.
3	Abuhay Tadäsä (*Ato*)	77	Aykäl town	11/04/2010	He was born in Chonchoqe locality, in Chilga district. He served in the government office for several years starting as typist, a secretary of Chilga district in late1960s E.C and a mayor of Aykäl town in 1970s E.C. Now he is retired and engaged privately in legal case consultant. He knows Qemanteňa language and has a good knowledge about the history of Chilga region.
4	Ahmad Nuru (*Ato*)	61	Gälägo town	20/04/2010	He was a trader between Chilga and the Sudan. Now he runs a shop.
5	Alämnäh Bälay (*Ato*)	87	Gondar city	05/04/2010	He was born in Dawa sub-district in Chilga. He is the son of *Däjjazmač* Bälay Mäkonnen, one of the patriots of Chilga. He is educated and served at different posts during the imperial period. He was employed in the Malaria eradication office, a member of House of Chambers twice in 1957 and 1961 E.C representing Chilga *awraja*. During the Därg period, he served as administrator of Mätäma and Lower Armacheho districts. He also served as assistant administrator Chilga, Wägära and Gayint *awrajas*. Wth the end of the Därg regime, he became a refugee in the Sudan and soon returned to Ethiopia. but imprisoned for seven years and released. Now he lives on pension and works in North Gondar Patriots Association.
6	Arun Ahmäd (*Sheik*)	67	Gända wuha town	16/04/2010	He was born in Gondar town. He went to Mätäma in the 1960s as commercial farmer but was displaced from his farm by the war of EDU. Now he is engaged in sesame farming in Mätäma.
7	Bäläṭu Šaräw (w/*ro*)	81	Aykäl town	10/04/2010	she was born and lived in Daza Giorgis locality until she went to Aykäl town by marriage. She is Ayälä Täsäma's neice and a younger sister of Abära Šaräw. She knows Qemanteňa language.
8	Bäqälä Jämbär (*Ato*)	77	Gända Wuha town	16/04/2010	He was born in Säqälet, in Dämbiya, and educated at Gondar town. During the Därg regime first he served as security member. But due to quarrel with Mälaku Täfära, he left his

					position and joined EPRP members in Quara. He involved in many of the attacks EPRP did in Chilga *awraja* in the late 1970s E.C. Now he lives with pension and works in Patriots Association Office at Gändawuha.
9	Därso Bälay (*Ato*)	68	Aykäl town	11/04/2010	He was born and grown up in Awrarda locality in Chilga district. He was the chairman of Awrarda APC. He was a member of National Shengo representing Chilga district.
10	Ejargäw Asäfa (*Ato*)	27	Aykäl town	10/04/2010	He is a civil servant and a committee member in the Qemant Development Association.
11	Gäbeyaw Bäré (*Ato*)	63	Dälgi town	27/04/2010	He was born and grown up in Dälgi. He was the chairman of Dälgi PA in 1967 E.C, and Dälgi APC for a decade until its dissolution in 1982 E.C. He was an alternative central committee of WPE. He was a member of the National Shengo representing Ţaqusa district. Now he is a chairman of Lake Tana Fishers association.
12	Gétahun Täšagär (*Ato*)	61	Šahura town	23/04/2010	He was born in Shahura town and engaged in farming. During the war of EDU, he participated on the side of Därg force. He knows well about the history of Aläfa.
13	Géţu Ţebäbu (*Ato*)	67	Šahura town	24/04/2010	He was born in Dängel Bär. He now live in Šahura town engaged in farming.
14	Haylé Wärqenäh (*Ato*)	88	Dälgi town	26/04/2010	He was born in Dälgi. He was a merchant traded as far as Asmara. He is now a farmer. He has a good memory of the history of the area.
15	Jämbäru Gälayä (*Ato*)	70	Gondar city	05/04/2010	He was a civil servant and now retired. He is now serving as secretary of the Patriots Association in North Gondar Zone. He has good information on the patriots of the area.
16	Lamäsgen Gétahun (*Ato*)	76	Aykäl town	11/04/2010	He was born in Amanuel, in Gojjam, and went to Gondar region as civil servant in the Rural Road Authority office. He went to Chilga in 1962 E.C as employ of malaria eradication program and since then he lives in Aykäl town. Now he lives with pension.
17	Masräša Alämu (*Ato*)	43	Aykäl town	10/04/2010	He is a civil servant and a committee member of Qemant Development Association
18	Mäkonnän Alähăň (*Ato*)	57	Gälägo town	20/04/2010	He was a commercial farmer in Mätäma. Now he lives and engaged in trade in Gälägo
19	Mulugéta Abuhay (*Ato*)	73	Gondar city	05/04/2010	He was a civil servant and now retired. He is now serving as chaireman of the Patriots Association office in North Gondar Zone. He has good information on the patriots of the area.
20	Qoyä Täfära (*Ato*)	80	Dälgi town	26/04/2010	He was born and live in Quara. He was a chaiman of a PAs. He has good memory of the history of Quara.
21	Said Issa	60	Gälägo	20/04/2010	He was a trader between Mätäma and the Sudan

	(*Ato*)		town		in 1970s E.C
22	Šibabaw Mängäša (*Ato*)	86	Dälgi town	27/04/2010	He was a administrator of Tänkäl Sub-district in the early years of the Därg. He fought on the side of Därg against EDU army.
23	Sinor Tägäňä (*Ato*)	85	Dälgi town	26/04/2010	He was born in Aläfa. He was administrator of Ţaqusa sub-district in the early years of the Därg. He fought on the side of Därg against EDU army. He has a good memory on the history of Gondar province.
24	Sisay Yimär (*Ato*)	89	Gända Wuha town	17/04/2010	He was born in Awsa, Lower Armacheho and went to Mahbere Sellassie Monastery in the 1940s as criminal due to murdering an individual. He was a local official under the monastery. He has a very good knowledge about the history of the area.
25	Ţegabu Zägäyä (Lieutenant)	71	Aykäl town	11/04/2010	He was police man in Chilga during the Därg period and now he is retired and engaged in trade
26	Wädaj Husén (*Ato*)	64	Genda Wuha town	16/04/2010	He was one of the Muslim settlers came from Gayint and settled in Mätäma. He served as government militiamen in the early years of the Därg and he was a refugee in the Sudan in the late 1980s and 1990s.
27	Wäldé Färädä (*Ato*)	54	Aykäl town	10/04/2010	He is a civil servant and a committee member of Qemant Development Association
28	Zämika'el Asäfa (*Märigéta*)	69	Mätäma Yohannes town	18/04/2010	He is a head of a church in Mätäma town

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declared that this dissertation entitled "State and Society on Ethiopia's Northwestern Borderlands: Chilga *Awraja*, 1935-1991" is my work. All information in this study has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. This study has not been submitted for award of any degree program in any institution and that all the sources for the dissertation have been duly acknowledged.

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Date of Submission: July 2020