

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE THEME OF ITALIAN OCCUPATION IN  
MAJOR AMHARIC NOVELS AND PLAYS

ZELEALEM BANTI

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Abstract

The Italian occupation of Ethiopia holds a significant place in the history of the country. Both Ethiopian and foreign historians have written extensively on the subject. The theme of Italian occupation has also inspired Ethiopian novelists and playwrights. Their novels and plays try to show the causes of the war, the conduct of the war, its political, social, economic and cultural effects, and the patriotic resistance. Some of these literary works also deal with the prevalent situation immediately after the liberation of the country.

After identifying the major preoccupations of the works dealing with the theme of Italian occupation this study also attempts to show the differences in the authors' interpretations of some of the issues and events of the war. All the authors cite avenging the defeat at the battle of Adowa as one of the causes of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Ar'aya underlines Italian economic interest as the major reason for the aggression; Endäwättäčč qärräčč gives Italy's colonial ambition as the main reason. Särä-Kolonyalist mentions the Fascist Party's policy as an immediate cause of the war. In the treatment of the conduct of the war the majority of the works concentrate on the battle of Mayčäw. Bašša Qeṭaw and Ar'aya portray the conduct of the war at the battle of Šire, Tembien and Amba'radom

as well. Almothum beyye Alwašem treats the conduct of the war at the Eastern Front. Yamayčaw Qusläñña, Ag'azi and Endäwättäčč qärräčč minimise the losses suffered by the Ethiopians while exaggerating that of the enemy. They also magnify the role of the Emperor. The majority of the works attribute the defeat of the Ethiopian army to lack of modern ammunition, training and organisation. Endäwättäčč qärräčč and Ar'aya cite the complacent attitude of the older generation as one of the causes of the defeat.

The Emperor's flight to Europe is mentioned as one of the immediate political effects of the Italian occupation. Novels such as Yamayčaw Qusläñña and Ag'azi hail the Emperor's fleeing the country as a wise political decision. Ar'aya suggests that the decision was wrong. Addabay and Bašša Qeṭaw condemn the move and consider it as betrayal. These novels also cite the occupation's international effects as well. The social, economic and cultural effects are reflected in the disintegration of family, hardship of the life of the people, the widespread habit of alcoholism, the flourishing of bars and hotels and the widespread practices of prostitution. Novels such as Addabay, Bašša Qeṭaw and Näṣannät and plays such as Särä-Koloniyalist deal with the issues in greater length. Yamayčaw Qusläñña and Ag'azi try to subordinate

the patriotic resistance to the political struggle of the Emperor. On the other hand, Ar'aya, Bašša Qeṭaw, Addabay, Naṣannāt, Ennat Alām Tānnu, Balča Abba Nāfso, Sārā-Koloniyalist and Yālemžat consider the patriotic movement as a force that played a crucial role in the liberation of the country. Similarly, the latter group of works see the period that immediately followed the liberation with pessimism or even with disapproval. Ag'azi, Yāmayčāw Quslāñña and Almothum beyye Alwašem express their contentment with situation prevalent after independence is restored.

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Pronunciation Symbols		English	Amharic
a	as in	arts	aläqa
" a	as in	third	šara
e	as in	case	lebo-Sahle
i	as in	fill	Koloniya <u>l</u> ist

The following unique Amharic sounds have been transcribed as follows:

q	as in	qärräčč
ñ	as in	arbännöčč
ṭ	as in	Petros
č	as in	Čaru
č	as in	Mayčaw
p	as in	Petros
š	as in	šara

I. THE THEME OF ITALIAN OCCUPATION  
IN MAJOR AMHARIC NOVELS AND PLAYS

INTRODUCTION

Amharic novelists and playwrights portray in their works significant historical events of their country. They lay special emphasis on major battles such as Adowa, Dogali and Metemma as a means of perpetuating the patriotic tradition and freedom loving spirit of their people. This feature is well noted by other commentators such as Thomas Kane, who says that

the theme of historical writing is fairly popular because of the association history has with national pride, and the fact that history has often been used to awaken patriotism and national unity.<sup>1</sup>

Patriotism is thus one of the most recurring themes in Amharic literature. In the words of Reidulf Knut Molvaer "Ethiopian writers are all patriotic and nationalistic and want a strong independent country"<sup>2</sup> The Italian occupation, in particular, is a significant landmark in Ethiopian history. It affected the entire social milieu, political apparatus and economic and cultural foundation of the society. The occupation affected

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas, L. Kane, Ethiopian Literature in Amharic. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Reidulf, K. Molvaer, Tradition and Change in Ethiopia. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), p. 237.

the lives of the entire population. It made thousands of people homeless; thousands fled to the mountains and took part in the patriotic resistance while others contributed to the anti-Fascist struggle by acting as undercover agents of the patriots; still there were others who collaborated with the enemy. A considerable portion of the population was forced to live in exile in neighbouring countries. The rest lived under subjugation and underwent untold miseries. When independence was attained many had something to say from their own first-hand experiences.

Amharic playwrights had inspired the population for the anti-fascist struggle long before and on the eve of the occupation. In the post-occupation period they and the novelists have also been creatively portraying the experiences of the people subjugated by the Fascists. Their works deal with themes such as the causes of the war, the conduct of the war and its political, social, economic and cultural effects, the patriotic resistance, liberation and its aftermath. In relation to this Albert Gerard notes that "colonial experiences further provided imaginative talents with a new fund of themes and motifs."<sup>3</sup> Partly it is the

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<sup>3</sup>Albert L. Gerard, Four African Literatures.  
(London: University of California Press Ltd, 1971),  
p. 299.

strong desire to preserve the events in literary records that contributed to the flourishing of historical novels and plays treating the theme of Italian occupation.

This study surveys major novels and plays which deal with the Italian occupation. In it an attempt is made to identify some of the issues the works raise, and to examine divergences in the authors's points of view in the treatment of the Italian occupation. The major works selected for discussion in this study are the following:

Novels

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
<u>Almothum beyye Alwašem</u>	Mäkannen Indalkaččaw
<u>Yamayčaw Qusläñña</u>	Mäkonnen Zäwde
<u>Ar'aya</u>	Germaččaw Täklä-Hawaryat
<u>Ag'azi</u>	Wäldä-giyorgis Wäldä-yohannes
<u>Endäwattacc qarračč</u>	Asäffa Gäbrä-maryam
<u>Addabay</u>	Telahn Tasaw
<u>Bašša Qeṭaw</u>	Sahlä-selase Berhana- maryam
<u>Näšannät</u>	Zenanäh Mäkonnen
<u>Yälemžat</u>	Haidis Alämayyāhu

Plays

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
<u>Yādām Dems</u>	Mākonnen Endalkaččāw
<u>Ennat Alām Tānnu</u>	Fāggaye Gābrā-mādhēn
<u>Šarā Koloniyalist</u>	Māngestu Lāmma
<u>Balča Abba Nāfso</u>	Berhanu Zārhun

Almothum beyye Alwasem is one of the novels included in Mākonnen Endalkaččāw's collection of works entitled Arremuññ. The story is based on the experience of the Italo-Ethiopian war in the Eastern Front, in Ogaden. The author was then a commander of one of the army units and wrote the novel from his own first-hand experience. Immediately after the war, he went with the Emperor on exile and was among the people who accompanied him during his return to Ethiopia. Mākonnen Endalkaččāw is a prolific writer and in the opinion of Thomas L. Kane he "bridges the gap created by the Italian invasion in the intellectual life of Ethiopia."<sup>4</sup>

Yādām Dems is one of the plays of Mākonnen Endalkaccāw which will be discussed in this study. The play is based on the martyrdom of Abunā Petros, a bishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox church. The play blends ardent patriotism and religious devotion.

<sup>4</sup>

Thomas, L. Kane, Ethiopian Literature in Amharic, p. 13.

Ar'aya is one of the major novels treating the theme of Italian occupation. This work discusses the period with unusual frankness and tone of criticality. Thomas L. Kane reinforces this fact and declares that "Ar'aya remains the most interesting treatment of this period yet to be found in Amharic literature."<sup>5</sup>

Endawäṭṭačč qärräčč is another major novel dealing with the theme of Italian occupation. The whole book is not devoted to the treatment of this theme, however, the book gives a realistic portrayal of the period and its critical attitude towards the elder generation is unusual in Amharic literature dealing with the Italian occupation, except Ar'aya.

Ag'azi is basically concerned with the glorification of the deeds and personality of the Emperor in the struggle waged against the Fascists. The author, Wäldä-giyorgis Wäldä-yohannes, wrote Yäwänd Leğ Kurat selä hağär mämot, (1927) and Ğagna säw t'agaday läṭalatu-almot bay (1928). Both poems were written with the objective of arousing the population for an-anti-Fascist struggle.

Addabay's author claims that the work is based on factual data acquired through field research and

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 160

the study of historical records. The novel focuses on the experiences of the patriotic resistance against Fascist occupation.

Bašša Qeṭaw is a historical novel entirely devoted to the treatment of the theme of Italian occupation. The work tries to make a sociological survey of life under the Italian occupation.

Nāsannät examines the anti-Fascist struggle of the Ethiopian people and some of the effects of the Italian occupation. Like Addabay and Bašša Qeṭaw, the novel focuses on the role of an ordinary man in the patriotic struggle.

Yälemžat devotes relatively few but more interesting pages to the treatment of the Italian occupation and its aftermath. The novel is unique in that it creates a legendary hero from among the ranks of what it calls 'Yarada Leḡočč' (city boys). It also concentrates on major social effects of the occupation - prostitution, and the increasing disillusionment of the people in the aftermath of liberation.

Särä Koloniyalist is a serious play celebrating the complex struggle of 'Yäwust arbännočč' (undercover patriotic agents), against Fascist occupation.

Balča Abba Nāfso (an unpublished play staged in 1974) focuses on the exemplary deeds of Değğaç Balča, the veteran patriot of Adowa.

Ennat Alām Tannu is selected for its critical attitude towards the condition of Ethiopia during the time that immediately followed the liberation.

This study is solely based on the textual analysis of the works under consideration. To familiarise the reader, with the main facts of the war, a brief historical sketch of the subject has been presented separately. This paper is divided into six chapters. The First chapter deals with the causes of the Italo-Ethiopian war. The Second deals with the portrayal of the conduct of the war and the causes for the defeat of the Ethiopian army. The Third chapter analyses the political effects of the occupation while the Fourth chapter traces the social, cultural and economic effects of the occupation. The Fifth chapter is devoted to the patriotic resistance and the Sixth one is concerned with the liberation and its aftermath. Finally, the discussion is wound up with a summary of my conclusions and observations.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE ITALO-ETHIOPIAN

WAR OF 1935-1941

Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia on October 3, 1935. The war resulted in Italy's occupation of the country for five years. Historians who have taken up the topic have analysed the causes, the conduct of the war, the political, social, economic and cultural effects of the occupation and the restoration of independence and its aftermath.

Italy's economic interest in Ethiopia was one of the major causes of the war. As an industrialised nation Italy needed " a new outlet for her shrinking export trade."<sup>6</sup> Italy considered Ethiopia as a dependable market and promising source of raw materials. One reason for this "was to give land to Italian farmers and a secure place to the immigrants."<sup>7</sup> This plan was initiated in the hope that it would give Italy a partial relief from her acute unemployment problem at the time.

The Fascist party unleashed the war with an immediate political objective in view as well. Mussolini and

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<sup>6</sup>Angelo Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, 1935-1941, Trans. by P.D. Cummins, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Alberto Sbacchi, Italian colonialism in Ethiopia 1936-1940 (Chicago: Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Illinois University, 1975, p. 360.

his party needed the war "to justify Fascism by success and prove in battle the boasted virility of his regime and people."<sup>8</sup> They needed the war as a means of popularising the Fascist party and giving Mussolini an upper-hand over his political opponents. The Fascist also saw Ethiopia as "a centre for the dissemination of Italian and Fascist civilisation in Africa and Asia."<sup>9</sup>

The Italians also considered the avenging of the defeat at Adowa as another immediate political necessity. With the battle-cry of Adowa they appealed to the national sentiments of the people. Thus, "the nationalists mentally unbalanced by the 'Adowa complex' flocked to the Fascist party...<sup>10</sup> and expressed their readiness to participate in the war.

In the Italo-Ethiopian war decisive battles were fought at Amba-radom, Tembien, and Sire and Maycaw. In the battle which took place from February 10-19, 1935 the Italians defeated the army of Ras Mulugeta at Amba-radom. At Tembien they beat the combined forces of Ras Kassa and Ras Seyoum on February 27. In the bitterest of the fightings on March 3 Ras Emeru's army

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<sup>8</sup> Angelo Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, 1935-1941, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Alberto Sbacchi, Italian colonialism in Ethiopia 1936-1940. p. 334.

<sup>10</sup> Angelo Del Boca, The Ethiopian war 1935-1941, p. 12.

was defeated at Šire. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 1936 the army personally commanded by the Emperor was defeated at Mayč'aw. In the South and South-eastern fronts the situation was not different. The Ethiopians put up a considerable degree of resistance, but were finally beaten. The Ethiopian army, in the first place, lacked militarily trained commanders. Angelo Del Boca, referring to the four rases assigned to the Northern front as commanders, asserts that "none of the commanders was an eagle of war. None of them had been to a military academy."<sup>11</sup> The Emperor is said to have selected the four rases "for dynastic reasons, or because they were related to him, or because he knew he could rely on their loalty."<sup>12</sup> The Ethiopians were also mistaken in the strategy and type of warfare they conducted. They unwisely "fought a conventional war of pitched battles with frontal assault, using mostly horse-mounted soldiers armed with a sword or spear reminiscent of medieval war strategy."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, "the Italian army owed its victory to the superior weaponry and the employment for the first time in a colonial war - of aerial bombardment and gas."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>13</sup>Alberto Sbacchi, Ethiopia under Mussolini (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1975), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.,

After the defeat the retreat of the Ethiopian army was disorganised. Italian war planes chased and showered bombs and poison gas on the retreating army. The hostile local population also harrassed the fleeing soldiers all their way. Regarding the war in general, Dr Johon Melly, who raised and led the British ambulance services in Ethiopia, comments the following: "This is not a war - it is not even a slaughter - it is the torture of tens of thousands of defenceless men, women and children with bombs and poison gas."<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after the defeat at the Battle of Mayçaw, on May 2, 1936 Haile Selasie left the country for Europe. The power vaccuum created by his flight resulted in the sacking of Addis Ababa. Marshal Badoglio entered Addis Ababa and with that Italy's five years of occupation began. The Ethiopian patriots scattered throughout the country in opposition ~~against~~ the occupation. On February 19, 1937 two young Ethiopian patriots made an attempt on the life of General Graziani, the then Viceroy of Ethiopia. The Fascists used the opportunity to put thousands of Ethiopians to death. The massacre of February 19, 20 and 21 "was the apogee of Fascist barbarity."<sup>16</sup> In those February days, Dr. Ladislas Sava, a Hungarian physician witnessed the following:

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<sup>15</sup>Sylvia P. Pankhurst, Italys war crimes in Ethiopia, as published in "New Times and Ethiopia News," 1946, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

"The corpses of men, women and children, over which vultures hovered, were lying in all direction. Great flames from the burning houses illuminated the African night.<sup>17</sup> Most of the Ethiopian intellectuals are said to have been eliminated following the attempt on Graziani's life.

The Fascist atrocity aroused thousands of Ethiopians for anti-Fascist struggle. As a result the patriotic front emerged as a formidable force. Throughout the occupation period, the patriots incessantly attacked the enemy forces and discouraged those who sided with the Fascists. The Italians recruited thousands of collaborators from among the Ethiopians, deployed their irregular and regular forces, used their bombs and tanks; and all this could not kill the patriotic spirit of the Ethiopian people.

In Ethiopia, the Fascists were alienated politically for their policy of coercion. The Italians antagonised the church by killing its leaders and by burning churches and monasteries. They had an anti-intellectual stand, mistreated and humiliated the hereditary chiefs. Such a policy prevented "the development of a tool to favourably influence the Ethiopian people on behalf of Italian rule."<sup>18</sup> On pretext that the peasants gave

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 10

<sup>18</sup>Albero Sbacchi, Italian colonialism in Ethiopia 1936-1940, p. 132.

support to the patriots, the Italians burnt thousands of peasant villages to the ground. This made the peasants hostile to the Fascist rule. Besides, Italian colonialism pursued a policy of racial segregation. They prohibited Ethiopians from attending the same theatre or watching cinemas sitting in the same halls. It increasingly alienated itself from the people for "Fascist colonisation was racist, nationalistic, authoritarian, sterile and founded on economic exploitation."<sup>19</sup>

Italian colonialism in Ethiopia tried to exploit national, regional, religious, class ... differences and incite one section of the population **against** the other. Their administrative divisions were, more or less followed the ethnical affiliations of the population. There were six major governorates. (1) The Governorate of Amhara with Gonder as its capital, (2) The Governorate of Galla-Sidamo with its capital in Jimma, (3) The Governorate of Harrar - the capital Harrar, (4) the Governorate of Somalia and lastly, (6) the Governorate of Addis Ababa and its environs - later expanded to the Governorate of Shoa.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Alberto Sbacchi, Ethiopia under Mussolini  
p. 234.

<sup>20</sup> Alberto Sbacchi, Italian colonialism in Ethiopia 1936-1940, p. 127.

Italian colonialism in Ethiopia had its social effects as well. Disorganisation of traditional ways of family and social life, and changes in the class relationship were significant. It "dramatically shook medieval institutions and a traditional way of life."<sup>21</sup> Stable village communities were disturbed and as a result more people flocked to the newly emerging urban centres. These centres usually flourished around military garrisons. In order to meet the needs of Italian and others more hotels and bars appeared. The Italian soldiers who came to Ethiopia without wives needed Ethiopian women for sexual gratification. Prostitution developed tremendously; in the words of Richard Pankhurst, the Italian occupation "inaugurated an era of extensive, highly developed prostitution."<sup>22</sup>

Though the Italian occupation was characterised by corruption and economic exploitation, the occupation period was also a time of energetic construction of roads, hospitals and other infrastructural bases. The occupation has left its imprints on every aspect of life.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 462.

<sup>22</sup>Richard R. Pankhurst, "The History of Prostitution in Ethiopia" in Journal of Ethiopian Studies, vol. XII, No. II (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1974), p. 178.

After five years of intensive struggle Ethiopia regained her independence. The Second World War contributed a lot to the speeding up of the process of decolonisation in Ethiopia. Britain assisted Ethiopia with her global interest and strategy in mind. Officially, Haile Selassie entered Addis Ababa on May 5, 1941, but he was not recognised by the British as a legal ruler of Ethiopia. Ethiopia remained under disguised British military rule from 5 May 1941 to January 1942.

The Italian occupation of Ethiopia is said to have world-wide political effects. It "awakened and intensified in the African elites the desire for self-determination and contributed to the slow growth of national consciousness".<sup>23</sup> The Afro Americans protested against Italy's occupation of Ethiopia and "perceived the attack on Ethiopia as an attack on the black race and felt a new sense of identity with Africa."<sup>24</sup> The Italian occupation of Ethiopia exposed the impotency of the League of Nations to defend the independence of weak member nations. In particular, "the Hoare - Laval Plan precipitated the death of the League of Nations."<sup>25</sup> The Ethiopian crisis had another significance for it was " a perilous slide down the slope leading to the Second world war."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Alberto Sbacchi, Ethiopia under Mussolini, p. 235.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 235-236.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

## CHAPTER ONE

### I. The Portrayal of the Causes of the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-1941.

All the Amharic novels and plays under consideration celebrate the shining victory at the battle of Adowa. They stress that the victory affirmed Ethiopia's existence as a sovereign state, and enhanced her prestige in the eyes of the world. Adowa is mentioned in Amharic novels, such as Bašša Qeṭaw as a glorious chapter in the history of the country, as a source of inspiration and pride for Ethiopians. Abatā Šef'arraw, one of the foreign educated characters in the novel summarises this point as follows:

What was Ethiopia like in the eyes of the Europeans before the battle and victory at Adowa? A country seen with contempt and considered unimportant! It is the victory at Adowa that gave her a proper place in the world's map.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, the defeat was humiliating for the Italians, in particular, and the white race in general. As is indicated in the 'Ligaba's' (master of court ceremonies) speech made on the order for mobilisation,

Italy was ridiculed by the rest of Europe after she had lost the day at Adowa because she was defeated by black men

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<sup>27</sup> Saḥlā - sellase Berhanā-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw (Addis Ababā: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1976), p. 12.

and disgraced the whites. Italy, therefore, had to occupy Adowa in order to regain the respect she had lost. That is why Adowa, which had always been Ethiopia's pride and symbol of victory had fallen into Italy's hands before the other towns of the Marsab frontiers.<sup>28</sup>

Bašša Qetaw stresses that the Italians saw the political significance of bombarding and capturing Adowa when they began their war of conquest. The fall of Adowa was said to have symbolic significance for the Italians. Their actions testify to how much they were eager to erase the memory of Adowa from the minds of the Italians and the international public.

In Ar'aya the theme of the revenge of Adowa is mentioned here and there. On his way home from Europe, the title - character Ar'aya discusses this issue with people like Monseiur Duval. In the dialogue the possibility of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia to avenge her defeat at Adowa is underlined. When he reads about the Wälwäl incident from a newspaper, Ar'aya automatically recalls that discussion and realises that the Italians "haven't stopped hoping to occupy Ethiopia and avenge their defeat."<sup>29</sup>

In Yamayčaw Qusläñña it is stated that the Italians, along with the other motives, had the objective of avenging the humiliating defeat they suffered in the

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<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>29</sup>Germaçcaw Taklä-hawaryat, Ar'aya (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Sälam Printing Press, 1960), p. 226.

hands of the Ethiopians. The hero of the novel, Sergeant Bādelu Tārrāfā, standing alone in the midst of the corpses of his fellow-combatants, praises their deeds for they have fallen fighting against "the enemy that has come to avenge its 40 year-old defeat."<sup>30</sup>

In Endāwattāčč qārrāčč we are told that both ato Ğāmanāh and ato Ambaye were veterans of Adowa. As is epitomised by the condition of the families of these two men, the Ethiopians were then struggling to build a peaceful life and assure the continuity of a stable family. The union in marriage of the two children of ato Ğāmanāh and ato Ambaye was meant to guarantee the perpetuation of normal life in the society. In the meantime "Italy was preparing around Ethiopia a reception (feast) of cannons, bombs, tanks, combat planes and poison gas for the people of Ethiopia."<sup>31</sup> The Italian Fascists disrupted the smooth progress of life. They took revenge on people like ato Ğāmanāh and ato Ambaye, the soldiers of Adowa, by throwing them into concentration camps and killing them.

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<sup>30</sup> Mākonnēn Zāwde, Yamayčāw Quslāñña (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Sālam Printing Press, 1948), p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Asāffa Ğabra-maryam, Endāwattāčč qārrāčč (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Sālam Printing Press, 1946), p. 12.

In plays such as Balča Abba Nafso, Balča remembers and celebrates that glorious victory and the heroes of the day. He states that the enemy was making necessary preparations for the invasion while, to his regret, the contemporary Ethiopian generation failed to keep its eyes on the movement of the enemy.

Italian economic interest in Ethiopia is discussed in Amharic novels and plays as one of the causes of the war. As an industrialised country, Italy needed cheap raw materials for her expanding industries. Italy also believed that the conquest would alleviate her chronic unemployment problem. The Fascist authorities sent their soldiers to Africa convincing them that "rather than letting Rome be cogested with people they can incorporate more territories, develop them and settle there comfortably."<sup>32</sup> The Fascists planned to send thousands of their unemployed workers as soldiers and labourers of diverse profession. Their strategy was to form a permanent colony of settlers in Ethiopia. In relation to this fact Ar'aya notes that the Italians in the long-run "want to exterminate the people and bring their hunger stricken Italians and settle them on our land."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Zenanäh Mäkonnen, Näsannät (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 1980), p. 109

<sup>33</sup>Germaččaw Takla-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 231.

When he first gets the news of the Wälwäl incident, Ar'aya begins asking himself whether it is going to lead to a full-fledged war. "Is it not true that the Italians have been hoping to get rid of their problems and poverty by occupying Ethiopia some day?"<sup>34</sup> he asks himself. Ar'aya is well aware that the hope of overcoming Italy's economic problems through the annexation of Ethiopia will get an extra momentum with the coming of the Fascist party to power. The party cultivated even new hopes in the hearts of the Italian people and mobilised them for the war of conquest. Through Mussolini the collective aspiration of the Italian colonialists get concrete expression. From his knowledge of the development of events in Italy, Ar'aya observes that "the Italians have felt bold under Mussolini... Ethiopia is the apple Mussolini has longed to munch and swallow!"<sup>35</sup>

In Endäwättäčč qärräčč and the majority of the other novels selected for discussion, Ethiopia is portrayed as an extremely beautiful and potentially rich country. This natural beauty attracted the attention of foreign aggressors such as Italy. The authorial narrator in Endäwättäčč qärräčč comments that the country's

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

hospitality is reciprocated with ingratitude, her fresh air, natural resources and wealth counted against her, and Italy. "Condemned her to death claiming that the country's climate, fertility and wealth is just perfect for the reproduction of a foreign race..."<sup>36</sup>

Italy considered the occupation of Ethiopia as her legitimate right. She did not forget that she was denied her due share from the colonial booties by the rest of the European powers. This fact is stated in clear terms in Bašša Qeṭaw. "Italy set her heart on annexing Ethiopia because she had been denied a proper cut of the meat when the other European powers had hunted down Africa like a buffalo and shared its meat among themselves."<sup>37</sup> The Fascist doctrine and colonial policy also provided extra impetus and 'justification' for the war of conquest. In Sārā Koloniyalist an Italian officer, Major Torolli, arrogantly declares that Italy and the Romans in general are people of the super-race and has every right to determine the destiny of nations and peoples of the inferior race. He philosophises that the man from the super-race exists on his own right,

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<sup>36</sup>Asäffa Gäbrä-maryam, Endäwättäčč qärräčč, p.9

<sup>37</sup>Sahlä-selläse Berhanä-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p.4.

but "the inferior race's historical justification for survival on this planet depends only on the amount of necessary service he gives to the God-like super-man."<sup>38</sup> In the same play Major Torolli conceitedly declares that the Fascist super-man shall turn the whole world into his slaves. In Näşannät another Italian officer, Major Kassaloni, reminds the Ethiopian people and warns the patriots that the Fascist party is destined to conquer the whole world. The Romans, in his belief, are entrusted with the task of administering justice on the global scale; and Ethiopia could not be an exception. In his words, "the Roman eagles (may refer both to the Fascist emblem and the aeroplanes) shall hover in the sky, and they shall only rest after they have seen to it that there is justice on the earth."<sup>39</sup>

The Fascists assigned themselves the role of international police. It was such a political belief that gave Mussolini the courage to defy the warnings and resolutions of the League of Nations and the protests of the world public regarding his adventure in Ethiopia. In Almothum beyye Alwašem ato Asčanäqi informs ato Tāmaču that:

When the world powers informed Mussolini that invading Ethiopia was illegal and

<sup>38</sup> Māngestu Lāmma, Sāra-Koloniyalist is Yātāwnet Gubae, (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1975), p. 741.

<sup>39</sup> Zensanäh Mekonnen, Näşannät, p. 83.

contrary to the treaties they had made, he openly declared that no authority could question Italy's plan of broadening its Empire, and that Italy would march forward until it proves to the whole world that the Fascist Empire is on power.<sup>40</sup>

The Italians felt so strong to declare that might is right. The weak, they maintained, has no option but to surrender to the will of the strong one. In Balča Abba Nāfso, Lebo Sahle, a collaborator, tells Balča that Major Torolli said, "the weak is destined to be ruled and the strong shall rule, what more choice does the weak have?"<sup>41</sup>

The Italians also claimed that they invaded Ethiopia on a civilising mission. In Balča Abba Nāfso Major Torolli declares with pride that the Italians are entrusted with the 'noble' task of liberating the blacks from their slavery and 'animal'-like way of life. Balča humorously challenges this argument and asks, "wasn't it their forefathers who are believed to have been reared by a wolf? Isn't it the other way round?"<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Mākonnen Endalkaččaw, Almothum beyye Alwašem in the collection Arremuññ (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Sālam Printing Press, 1947), p. 285.

<sup>41</sup>Berhanu Zārihun, Balča Abba Nāfso, an unpublished play staged in 1974, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

While the above are shown as their real motives for the war, the Fascists were shown in their attempt to use the Wälwäl incident as a pretext for aggression. When he heard the news of the Wälwäl incident, Ar'aya was worried that the dispute "could be one of the traps and evil machinations that had been preplanned by the Italians as a pretext."<sup>43</sup>

Generally, Italy's desire to avenge her defeat at the battle of Adowa, the Fascist party's aggressive colonial policy and its other political and economic interests in Ethiopia can be taken as the major causes of the war that the Amharic novelists and playwrights point out in their works.

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<sup>43</sup>Germačdaw Tāklā-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 223.

## CHAPTER TWO

### II. The Portrayal of the Conduct of the War

In their analysis of the conduct of the war, the majority of the Amharic novelists take up various aspects of the war. Most of them treat the news of the invasion and the reaction of the people, the mobilisation order and the type of the preparations, the parade of the army before the Emperor, the journey to the war front, the condition of the actual battle, the defeat of the Ethiopian army, the reasons for the defeat and their retreat from the fronts. Some writers conclude their narration about the war with the Emperor's flight to Europe and the sacking of Addis Ababa. The novels try to trace and discuss the different but continuous phases of the war at length. The plays, however, do not present the entire course of events in the war. They focus on one central conflict and related issues are mentioned only if they are found to be linked to it and indispensable for the elaboration and sharpening of the central issue around which the story revolves.

Both the novelists and playwrights of the selected works underline that Italy had been a sworn enemy of Ethiopia. In 1935 the memory of the battles of Dogali and Adowa were still alive. Besides, the Wälwäl incident was a clear indication of Italy's aspirations. Despite

these and other clues to suggest the inevitability of war, the news of the Italian invasion seizes the majority of the characters in the novels with a surprise.

The characters in the selected novels come to know about the invasion from different sources. In Almothum beyye Alwašem, Tāmaču is totally uninformed about the war till he gets a detailed account from his friend, at Asčanaqi, who came to tell him about the war from Addis Ababa. The news infuriates Tāmaču and he resolves to go to the war front. Soon after, he sets out for Addis Ababa with his two sons, leaving behind his wife and two other younger children. In Addis Ababa he joins the army drawn from Illubabor and takes part in the military parade watched by the Emperor. There he, along with his comrades and superiors, gets the chance to express his genuine patriotism and devotion both to his country and to the Emperor. The scene is thrilling. The dwellers of Addis Ababa gather in the streets to watch the parading troops. The people are impressed by "the vigilance of the army, the deep-dark uniform, the rhythm of the beat of the war drums, the accompanying war songs and battle-cries."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>"Makennen Endalkaččaw, Almothum beyye Alwašem, p.292.

Sergeant Bädëlu Tàrräfd of Yamayčaw Qusläñña is a regular soldier with modern military training. Some insights into the conduct of the war can be gained from the extensive dialogues between Bädëlu Tàrräfa and the militiaman from Kambata and the wounded soldier from the imperial body guard. In the dialogues more weight is given to the Emperor's 'unforgettable' messages to the fighters than to the actual battle.

In Ar'aya, Ar'aya learns of the Wälwäl incident from a newspaper. As a foreign-educated young man, Ar'aya is well aware of Italy's colonial ambitions towards Ethiopia. The news shocks him and he begins contemplating about what an immediate war can mean to the country. Analysing the situation he concludes that Ethiopia is passing through one of the most trying periods in her history. "We defeated the Italians armed only with our sticks and spears,"<sup>45</sup> boasts ato Alámayyähü; a veteran of Adowa. Ar'aya does not share ato Alámayyähü's optimism. He considers the political situation, the differences in the degree of organisation and preparation on both sides and concludes that the situation is completely different from that of Adowa. In his view, the war planes alone can tilt the balance of power in favour of Italy. Ar'aya is conscious of the psychological impact of the news of the war planes on the mind of the

<sup>45</sup> Germeččaw Taklä-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 226

people. He does not have any illusion about getting aid from the League of Nations or from countries such as Britain and France. " We have to put all our hope in our own strength, the heroism of our soldiers and people, and the shielding power of our mountains and the help of God."<sup>46</sup> In Ar'aya a heroic display of readiness for sacrifice is shown on the occasion of the announcement of the order for mobilisation against the Italian aggressors. The people express their feelings in different ways:

Some of those who have completely lost their temper were foaming with anger. It was both shocking and thrilling to witness people ~~hitting their~~ foreheads and arms with swords and sabres until blood poured out from their body.<sup>47</sup>

Give us arms, Let's die! give us arms - Italy shall never enter our country as long as we are alive! is the incessant cry of the people.

In Endawattačč qarračč the news of the war reaches the ears of the people living in the countryside first in the form of rumours. Like ato Alāmayyāhu in Ar'aya, the elder men ato Ğāmanāh and ato Ambaye see the war within the context of their experience at the battle of Adowa. "They were absolutely definite that there won't be any difference between Adowa and Mayčāw."<sup>48</sup> They,

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 230

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>48</sup>Asaffa Ğabrā-maryam, Endawattačč qarračč, p. 12

therefore, underestimate the material and organisational superiority of the enemy. Zälläqä, like Ar'aya too, is conscious of the major differences between the Italy of Adowa and that of 1935. Zälläqä observes the brutality and immoral deeds of the Fascists and resolves to join the patriotic resistance.

It is the beat of the traditional war drum (the nägarit) that officially announces the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in Bašša Qeṭaw. Even foreign-educated young men like Abatä and Čäru receive the news with a certain degree of surprise. Having heard the incessant beats of the war drum, the population of Addis Ababa flocks to the palace. When the order of mobilisation is read out by the 'Ligaba' (master of court ceremonies), there is a general commotion among the people. An atmosphere of frenzy and hysterical emotion pervades everywhere. The situation is much similar to the one described in Ar'aya. There the people are heard declaring: "Ethiopia shall never surrender an iota of her territory..! We shall fight..! We shall kill..! who is to take whose country..! Heroes! get ready..! Onward..!"<sup>49</sup> The veterans of Adowa show their indomitable will and courage to march to the war front once again.

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<sup>49</sup>Sahlä-sellä, Berhanä-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 6.

In Ag'azi the hero of the novel gets the news of the developments of events in his country from newspapers and other people. There is no detailed treatment of the conduct of the war in this work. In none of the plays do we find a focus on the conduct of the war. In the novels the news of the war and the reaction of the people is followed by a presentation of the mobilisation to the war front and the actual battle.

In Almothum beyye Alwašem Tāmaču and his friends are transported by train to the Eastern Front where, after a lull the central character is shown engaging the enemy in combat.<sup>50</sup> After the brief fighting, the moving scene that depicts Tamaču's wanderings among the dead fighters is presented in details to show us the extent of the Ethiopians' heroism and sacrifice for their country. Tāmaču calls the name of each fallen hero and pays tribute to his selfless sacrifice. The scene which describes Tāmaču's last farewell to his two boys is touching and is an illustration of his personal sacrifices to his country. Gaššaw Bāzza dies on the lap of his father begging for a drop of water. "If a single seed of wheat does not rot when cultivated it does not grow and bear fruit."<sup>51</sup> So, Tāmaču welcomes the death of his son with pride for he believes that his death is a necessary

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<sup>50</sup>Makonnen Endalkaččāw, Almothum beyye Alwašem, p.302.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

sacrifice for the attainment of liberty. With this in his heart, Tāmaču hugs and kisses the dead body of his patriot son, Kende. He bids him farewell with tears pouring down from his eyes. He was satisfied to find the dead body of his son lying above that of his enemy."<sup>52</sup>

In Yamayčaw Quslāñña the description of the actual battle is brief. We are told that Bādelu Tārrāfā challenged his enemy face to face at the battle of Mayčāw fought with exceptional heroism for the whole day but unfortunately got wounded towards the end of the war with a cannon shot.<sup>53</sup> Bādelu Tārrāfā's struggle at the war front is limited to a single day's engagement. Like Tāmaču, Bādelu Tārrāfā envies the heroic death of the Ethiopian soldiers. However, he is satisfied to see the body of fellow combatants lying above that of their enemies. He assures them that "their blood will cry to the Almighty God in unison with the blood of the rest of Ethiopian martyrs who fell at the battle field while defending their independence and religion against aggressors."<sup>54</sup> Bādelu Tārrāfā, too, takes the death of the patriots as a necessary sacrifice to bring about the country's salvation; and the voice of their blood, as in Yādām Dems, will accuse the criminals before the Almighty God. Yamayčaw Quslāñña has a lot of things in common

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 308

<sup>53</sup>Mākonnen Zāwde, Yamayčaw 'Quslāñña, p. 17.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

with Almothum beyye Alwašem. Both novels suggest that the losses suffered by the enemy is larger than that of the Ethiopians. Bādelu Tārrāfā sees the dead body of the Ethiopians scattered here and there "among the piles of enemy corpses lying on the ground like fallen leaves."<sup>55</sup>

In Endāwāttāčč qārrāčč Sergeant Tāgañ, who takes part in the battle of Mayčāw has a similar view: "Though we suffered some losses the enemy's loss was twice that of ours."<sup>56</sup> He, however, thinks that Ethiopia put her faith in God and the League of Nations and therefore, did not have an army with modern weapons and training to match the Italian army.

The treatment of the expedition to the war fronts and the fighting itself are briefly treated in Ar'aya. Ar'aya and his friends accompany the Emperor to Dessie and the journey takes them only two days as they have cars. Ar'aya plays no major role in the battle of Mayčāw except making some observations about the fighting. Ar'aya admits that the enemy had superiority in armament, training, organisation and discipline. In his opinion the continuous aerial bombardment, and the use of poison gas, shattered the Ethiopian soldiers' will to fight. In addition, in the Ethiopian army there were serious

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 22

<sup>56</sup>Asaffa Gābra-maryam, Endāwāttāčč qārrāčč, p. 31.

problems of indiscipline. There were also instances of soldiers selling bullets, robbing or stealing, and disobeying their commanders.<sup>57</sup> Ar'aya also comments on certain strategic errors during the war. He regrets that Ras Mulugeta's abandoning the Alagi gate was a serious mistake; and in his opinion it decided the fate of the battle. Despite these deficiencies, the novel suggests that the Ethiopian army was able to put up a formidable resistance to the enemy's initial offensives. "Like a football player, an animal chaser, the Ethiopian soldiers could harrass the enemy, dogging the bullets pouring out from the mouth of cannons and metreileuses."<sup>58</sup>

In Bašša Qeṭaw, the Hero, Bašša Qeṭaw sets out for the war front with two servants. On the journey, the authorial narrator tells us that,

the campaigners wake up early in the morning, roll up their tents, tie it together and pack it. They travel across the fields, up and down the hills and valleys, carrying the remaining load. They camp once again, stretch their tents, make fire, eat whatever dry ration they have got and get asleep. In the morning they again pack their things and continue with their journey...<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Germaččaw Tākle-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 240.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>59</sup>Sahl-sellase Berhanä-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 75.

It is not difficult to see the composition of the army that marches to the front. It includes elders, the middle-aged, teenagers, masters and servants. For instance, Tāmaču marches to the front with his two sons; Bādelu Tārrāfā, with his servant Kasaye, Bašša Qeṭaw with two servants, Ar'aya with six of his servants. These people are basically without any military training. Bašša Qeṭaw closely examines the balance of power between the two armies. The Italians, in addition to their modern armaments of different qualities, assemble 170 war planes for a single engagement while Ethiopia had none. The ratio of cannons is 28:1 for Italy and Ethiopia respectively. The Italians employ 1000 transport trucks while Ethiopia depends on pack animals for 90% of her transport services. In the war "the spraying of the gas completely broke down the combat power of our soldiers."<sup>60</sup> Besides, there is no coordination of action among the Ethiopian commanders. For instance, when Ras Mulugeta is encircled by the enemy at Amba'radom, the other commanders are ordered to go for his rescue. But commanders like Ras Emeru are not able to get the message in time.<sup>61</sup> Bašša Qeṭaw tries to present the war as objectively as possible. It depicts both the Ethiopian soldiers and the Italians as human beings. The balanced and life-like duel between Bašša Qeṭaw and the Italian judo expert is one illustration of this.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

The description of the battles includes vivid scenes of engagements, encirclements and breaking out of the encirclements, attacks and counter-attacks, advances and retreats killing and dying, charging and repulsing.

The causes of the defeat of the Ethiopian army are attributed to superiority in arms and the enemy's use of poison gas in Yamayčaw Quslañña. In Almothum beyye Alwašem lack of ammunition, poor logistics, inadequate medical and transport services, unnecessary delays and postponement of the time of engagement are some of the causes of the defeat that are cited. The Ethiopian soldiers are also regarded as being ill-fed and poorly dressed. Besides, the changes in the weather conditions are suggested to have exposed the soldiers to different types of diseases. There are misunderstandings in the ranks of the leadership, too. There is, for instance, rivalry between the commanders of the Illubabor army and that of Gamugofa. The conflict concerns simply determining the choice of direction of attack. Makonnen Endalkaččaw raises several weaknesses of the Ethiopian army and its leaders, but none of the reasons, in his view, is as decisive as the lack of moral strength. "Victory is scored not through the quality of armaments but solely through moral and ethical strength."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Makonnen Endalkaččaw, Almothum beyye Alwašem, p. 289.

Apart from the enemy's superiority in armaments, the blunders made at the battle of Mayčaw helped the enemy to score decisive victory. Ar'aya comments that "knowing the enemy's absolute superiority in arms, number and organisation, it was a mistake to wage a conventional war."<sup>63</sup> Ar'aya is also well aware that the enemy has infiltrated our soldiers with its agents, or recruited from among the Ethiopian collaborators who provided it with information on the history, culture, topography, politics and military situation of the country. The enemy has prepared the ground; however, Ar'aya claims that Ethiopia's landscape is suitable for guerrilla warfare and that if the Ethiopians adopted that mode of warfare, they could have counter-balanced the enemy's superiority in aeroplanes and cannons.<sup>64</sup> Ar'aya comments that the Emperor, instead of personally commanding the army at the warfront could and should have gone from place to place and organised a patriotic resistance.<sup>65</sup>

In Endawattäčč qärräčč the defeat of the Ethiopian army is attributed to enemy's employment of "a mustard gas whose use as a weapon of war was prohibited by the League of Nations."<sup>66</sup> The novel manifests a critical attitude towards the older generation. Zälläqä is of the

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<sup>63</sup> ~~Germančew Tekla-hawaryat~~, Ar'aya, p. 284.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

opinion that the generation of his father and forefathers, in one way or another, has contributed to the defeat of the Ethiopian army. He refuses to accept the enemy's superiority in arms and the use of poison gas as the fundamental causes for the defeat. Referring to the complacent attitude of his father and father-in-law, Zälläqä comments:

Both my father and father-in-law were veterans of the battle of Adowa, and won for themselves fame and recognition through their heroic exploits. They used to tell us that fighting against the Italians was as simple as cutting pumpkins into parts.<sup>67</sup>

Zälläqä maintains that the defeat is not only due to enemy's superiority in arms but because of the hollow pride the young generation inherited from its forefathers. The failure to make the necessary preparation is a result of such complacency. He reiterates that the young generation can not also be free from the judgement of history. Zälläqä criticises both the government and the people with bitterness. In his view "a people or government that fails to closely follow and trace the hourly, daily, monthly and yearly plan of his neighbour, let alone that of his enemy, cannot claim to be a nation or a government."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Assäfa Gäbrä-maryam, Endäwättačč qarräčč, p.31.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.33

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

Zälläqä also feels that the Ethiopian emissaries and diplomats stationed abroad should have closely followed up what was being hatched against their country as part of their diplomatic duty. He regrets that they failed to discharge their responsibility. Except in Ar'aya such a critical attitude towards the past generation is not evident in the other works. Endäwättäčč qärräčč differs from the other works in this respect. It also absolves the Emperor from criticism by arguing that he tried his best to make the necessary preparation ahead of time. Perhaps the best counter argument to such a view is Balča's comment on the failures of the leaders. In Balča Abba Näfso, Balča repeatedly stresses that the Ethiopians were seized unawares because of the leaders' shortsightedness. He equates the leaders to a lazy shepherd who leaves the gates of the barns wide open so that the beasts could easily devour the sheep. In the play Balča is seen polishing his old machine gun of Adowa. The gun was effective then but is no match to the sophisticated twentieth century weaponry of the enemy.

In Bašša Qetaw it is the enemy's superiority in arms, lack of organisation and lack of suitable strategy that are cited as the causes for the defeat of the Ethiopian army. It is also suggested that the arms embargo against Italy and Ethiopia served as a blessing for the former. Italy was self-sufficient in the production of armaments while Ethiopia was not in a position to produce

even bullets. As is evident from the parade, the campaigners were not basically different from other ordinary citizens.

Their clothes lacked uniformity, they don't have an appearance of a soldier. There is nothing to differentiate them from the ordinary spectators except the gun they were carrying on their shoulders and the natural aptitude for war read on their faces."<sup>69</sup>

Besides, some members of the nobility went over to the side of the enemy as soon as the invasion started. In this way the enemy was able to control some strategic places easily. Bašša Qeṭaw mentions the governor of Tigray by name and labels him as a traitor.

In Šarā-Koloniyalist the Old Man attributes the defeat to the lack of mutual trust and charismatic leaders, and the prevalence of internal divisions. The play considers lack of modern armament and the like as secondary factors.

In Addabay the use of ~~poison~~ gas and the aerial bombardment of the enemy are cited as the causes of the defeat. Saqote, a female character in the novel, informs her friends that "the poison gas sprayed by the Italians changes a human body into ashes as soon as it comes in

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<sup>69</sup> Sahlā-sellase Berhanā-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 73.

contact with it."<sup>70</sup>

The defeat of the Ethiopian army was immediately followed by the retreat of the soldiers. The majority of the works show that the retreat was disorganised and even more arduous than the actual battle. The retreat further exposed the inherent weaknesses of the army.

The wounded Bādelu Tārrāfā of Yamayčaw Quslāñña had to spend several days and nights of agony before he could reach the village of his relatives. He had to be well nursed and taken care of before he could properly recover. While retreating he comes across lonely suffering soldiers scattered in the bushes, forests, valleys and fields. Some die before his very eyes. Tāmaču of Almothum beyye Alwašem experiences a more or less similar condition before he takes shelter at the home of ato Feqru and convalesces there fully. He is also wounded and disfigured beyond recognition. Tāmaču is a lonely figure running away from death. He throws away his gun after relieving from suffering by shooting dead a fellow combatant who is fatally wounded.

Ar'aya treats the retreat in more detail than the actual battle. In the novel the enemy's incessant bombardment of Ethiopian army with bombs, poison gas and

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<sup>70</sup> Telahun Tasaw, Addabay (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1975), p. 67.

heavy artillery is described vividely. The local population, namely, the Raya and Azabo, harrass the retreating soldiers and ambush hundreds of them. In the army there is no agreement or mutual assistance with one another. Each soldier runs for dear life pell nell giving a deaf ear to the call of fellow combatants..<sup>71</sup>

The Emperor himself is forced to pass through hostile territory and there are times when it is impossible to move ahead. Ag'azi, on the other hand, says " Our lion (the Emperor) returned with dignity." <sup>72</sup>

In Bašša Qeṭaw also the retreat of the Ethiopian army takes place under adverse conditions. In addition to being subjected to constant bombardments, the soldiers have to fight and protect themselves from the attack of the local population. In this novel the hostile inhabitants are described as people "with a slender, erect physical stature, having long hair smeared with excessive butter."<sup>73</sup> The journey is mostly done at night and in Bašša Qeṭaw, Adela, a friend of Bašša, is carried away by an overloaded river and Bašša Qeṭaw loses his servant, Arāru and two pack animals to the enemy's aerial bombardment.

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<sup>71</sup>Germaččaw Tāklā-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 252.

<sup>72</sup>Wāldā-giyorgis Wāldā-yohannes, Ag'azi (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Salam Printing Press, 1945), p. 62.

<sup>73</sup>Sahlā-sellasc Berhanā-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 104

The description of the retreat in Endäwättačč gärräčč is not basically different from most of the other works. Sergeant Tägañ later tells Zälläqä that he has lost an eye and got two wounds at the battle of Mäyčaw. During the retreat he escapes on mule back with the help of two friends. He says that they had to walk for 20 days without sufficient food.<sup>74</sup>

The novels under discussion trace the conduct of the war from the announcement of the invasion right up to the official conclusion of the war and the flight of the Emperor abroad. The flight of the Emperor marks the beginning of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. During the occupation the conduct of the war takes a different form than before.

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<sup>74</sup>Asäffa Gäbrä-maryam, Endäwättačč gärräčč, p. 31.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### III. The Portrayal of the Political Effects of the Italian Occupation of Ethiopia

The Italian occupation of Ethiopia meant the transfer of political power from the Ethiopians into the hands of the Italians. The flight of the Emperor to Europe, therefore, signals the beginning of the Italian occupation. Ethiopian novelists and playwrights interpret this from different angles. Works such as Ag'azi, Yamayčaw Qusläñña, Endawättačč qärräčč, Almothum beyye Alwašem and Yädäm Demş consider the Emperor's flight to Europe as a wise political decision. Other novels such as Başša Qeṭaw and Addabay strongly disapprove of the Emperor's flight to Europe. In Yamayčaw Qusläñña Sergeant Bädälu Tärärafä gives more weight to the Emperor's supposed political struggle than to the actual battle waged in the country. The Emperor's disorganised retreat from the Northern Front is twisted and interpreted positively: "We realise that God is still with us and has not totally abandoned us into the hands of the enemy when we realise that the commander of our army, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, has safely returned home with the remainder of his army."<sup>75</sup> The novel equates the Emperor to Moses who delivered the Israelites from the tyranny of the Pharaohs. Ag'azi also maintains that the life of the Emperor is saved as he is destined to be an instrument of Ethiopia's resurrection. He is

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<sup>75</sup>Makonnen Zäwde, Yamayčaw Qusläñña, p. 35.

the torch of independence so "the dignitaries and bishops got together and begged him not to put off their light; so he went abroad to change his strategy of war"<sup>76</sup> The two novels regard the Emperor's exile as a political victory. They try to make the Emperor the central political figure in Ethiopia even during the time of the occupation.

In Ar'aya, Ar'aya and his two friends receive the news of the Emperor's departure with a cry of disbelief. The narrator tells us that "they stared at each other and returned without a single word being uttered."<sup>77</sup> Ar'aya weeps bitterly; so does ato Wáldá amanuel with whom he has taken shelter. The tone of the narrator is not that of approval. On that day, the narrator observes, "every Ethiopian was dumb-founded and horrified like a prisoner sentenced to death."<sup>78</sup>

In Endäwättáčč qárráčč the Emperor's flight is referred to in retrospect. His exile is claimed to have been in quest of justice. Zálläqä believes that "all those who are in exile are political forces which deny the enemy a peace of mind."<sup>79</sup> He believes that

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<sup>76</sup>Wáldä-giyorgis Wáldä-yohannes, Ag'azi, p. 70.

<sup>77</sup>Germeččäw Täklä-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 262.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Asäffa Gabrä-maryam, Endäwättáčč qárráčč, p. 25.

the exiled group is in constant battle against the enemy.

In Addabay The Emperor's going to Europe is strongly disapproved of. The Emperor's flight is felt to have disarmed the political freedom fighters who were ready to rally around their leader and continue with the struggle. Daññaw of Addabay is one such young patriot whose strong will to fight is stifled due to the Emperor's flight from the country. The authorial narrator states that "the city that had been abandoned by the Emperor was sacked and burnt down."<sup>80</sup> The sacking of Addis Ababa shows the absence of a central government that can maintain law and order. Looting is rampant in the city. Daññaw loses all his property while his sister Kabtamua gets about 1,000 coins. The lack of central authority gives the Italians a welcome opportunity to easily fill in the political vacuum. As soon as they enter Addis Ababa they begin searching the houses of individuals. They declare a state of emergency to put the looting and burning in the city under control.<sup>81</sup> It is thus that Italy's five years of occupation begins.

In Bašša Qeṭaw, Olana, one of the minor characters in the novel, comments that the Emperor fled the country in disguise, under the cover of darkness. The decision

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<sup>80</sup>Telahun Tasaw, Addabay, p. 86.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

was made among a few hand-picked aristocrats. Bašša considers the move as a cowardly act. "It is a unique incident never seen and heard of before. Our history testifies, it is only death that conquers an Ethiopian leader."<sup>82</sup> The Emperor's flight is regarded as being politically dangerous by leaving the Ethiopians leaderless. "Who is then to rule the country in his absence?"<sup>83</sup> is Bašša's immediate question when he hears the news. From now onwards, "it is the Fascists who will herd the people like cattle"<sup>84</sup> is his friend Čáru's response.

Once they occupy the country, the Italians begin taking political measures that will guarantee and symbolise their dominance. The streets of Addis are given new names such as "Mussolini Street," 'Emperor Emmanuele the Third Avenue'..<sup>85</sup> In the towns "one sees everywhere the portraits of their king, princes and princesses. The picture of Mussolini is seen everywhere suspended from or hanged on walls.<sup>86</sup> The portraits are supposed to symbolise Fascist political rule. On the other hand, the Italians are shown shipping to Italy cultural and historical relics which symbolise and remind Ethiopians of their days of freedom. In line

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<sup>82</sup>Sahlá-selassie Berhana-maryam, Bašša Qetaw, p.229.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

with this the statue of Menelik and the obelisque of Axum and the like are taken to Rome.<sup>87</sup> To consolidate their power base the Fascists recruit thousands of collaborators from the native population. They promote those who serve them well and demote those who fail or hesitate to comply. In Yamayčaw Qusläñña the property and hereditary privileges of Sergeant Bädalu Täräfa's father is given to a certain Aläqa Särralen because the former has refused to submit to Fascist political domination. In this relation, Major Mario, an Italian officer, declares that,

One who fails to recognise our government and does not become our tool shall not remain in power and cannot also pass on his post to his children after his death. Those who wholeheartedly serve us shall use this post."<sup>88</sup>

Addabay clearly shows that the Italian occupation has resulted in the disintegration of the political power of the feudal and aristocratic classes in Ethiopia.

The already staggering era of the princes came to an end. Though there were collaborators, regional kings and aristocrats, who were given chances to work with the Italians, they were to serve as appendages of the Italian bourgeois bureaucracy not as independent powers.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Mäkonnen Zäwde, Yamayčaw Qusläñña, p. 70.

<sup>89</sup>Telahun Tä... ..

In the conversation between Abuná Petros and the guards we come to know that the Italians took measures or, at least, have contributed to the weakening of the feudal rule. The guards express their satisfaction with Mussolini's throwing away from their shoulders the kings and their soldiers who have been oppressing them. Abuná Petros tries to defend the feudal system by claiming that it was benevolent in nature, and he reproaches the guards for having exchanged the honour and sovereignty of their country for money.<sup>90</sup> It is clear from the speech of the guards that the Italians were able to win politically certain sections of the population to their side. They use different means to attract the population. To begin with, as is stated in Ar'aya, they bribe the people with "token Maria Theresa thalers that they minted in Italy."<sup>91</sup> The Italians are conscious that the Maria Theresa thalers are very popular in Ethiopia. With this money and propaganda they rally around them a collection of "murderers, robbers and unruly people who have been sentenced to imprisonment by the former government."<sup>92</sup>

Divide and rule is shown as one of the policies the Italians employ to realise their political objectives. They capitalise on the conflicts and differences that

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<sup>90</sup> Mäkonnen Endalkaččāw, Yādām Dems, p. 93.

<sup>91</sup> Germaččāw Taklā... 5: 20:

exist between the different classes, nationalities, aristocratic families and religious grouping within the country. In Nāṣannāt we come across a typical example of divide and rule practised by the Italians. With the objective of getting the support of the Qemant people the Italians pose as if they share similar historical heritages with the Qemants. The two brothers, Remus and Remulus who are claimed to have founded Rome were nursed and brought up by a she-wolf.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, the Italians maintain that it was "klipspringer (sās) that nursed Aynār, the father of the Qemants, at the kārkar desert."<sup>94</sup> The Italians here, twist history and create false parallelism between themselves and the Qemants to attain their political objectives. The same novel underlines that the Italians divided Ethiopians on national basis as Amhara, Tigre, Galla and Šenaša. They show a gesture of friendship to one group with the intention of weakening the other. For instance, "Graziani embraced the muslims and disregarded the Amharas with the objective of misleading and dividing the people."<sup>95</sup> The Italians worked hard to win the support of the dignitaries and influential people by inducing them with material benefits. They recruited some underdogs who worked day and night to prove the humaneness of the Fascist political administration.

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<sup>93</sup> Zenanāh Mākonnēn, Nāṣannāt, p. 25.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ḥawarwat. Ar'ava. p. 296.

Such people went to the extent of declaring that "under the Fascist system prison houses are places of rest, not places of suffering."<sup>96</sup> Sometimes the Fascists succeed in inciting one group of the people against the other with the help of trivial gifts and token prizes. "I have kept those blacks busy fighting against one another with the help of the piece of cloth you see on their elbows,"<sup>97</sup> reminds Major Vendetta to his successor Captain Olandit. In Yādām Dems, a sister ridicules her own brother for having pinned on his chest a medal he won in exchange for his brothers' blood. The brother commits suicide out of a guilty-conscience and later the sister expresses her admiration for his courage.

The Italians' policy of divide and rule was at times successful. Ar'aya observes that during the Italian occupation, "be it out of fear, ignorance, or sheer unscrupulousness, the majority of the people took to espionage and informed against their own country men..."<sup>98</sup> The feudal political system did not create a strong bond among the different nationalities of Ethiopia. Ar'aya observes that "though the Ethiopian people lived under a single state, they still lacked mutual agreement due to cultural variations emanating from tribal and particularly religious differences."<sup>99</sup> Ar'aya fears that the feudal

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<sup>96</sup> Sahlä-sellasse Berhane-maryam, Bašša Qetaw, p. 210.

<sup>97</sup> Asäffa Gabrä-maryam, Endäwättäčč qärräčč, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup> Germaccäw Taklä-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 297.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 300

politics which was based on inequality and exploitation might lead to confrontation between the oppressed and the oppressor. He is worried that "the people who had been ruled by our fathers as serfs and slaves, when they see us confronted with problems might give in to its propaganda and welcome the enemy."<sup>100</sup> The Fascists also tried to win the support of some influential personalities by exploiting certain differences these individuals had had with the former regime. In Balča Abba Nāfso, Major Torolli tries to exploit the conflict between Balča and the Emperor to win the former to his side. The Italians offer Balča the governorship of his hereditary chieftaincy. With the intention of exploiting his Gurage-Galla background Major Torolli confesses to Balča that "the Fascist government likes the Gurages and Gallas."<sup>101</sup>

However, as is shown in Ar'aya and Bašša Qetaw, in particular, the Italians showed their brutality as soon as they entered Addis Ababa. Wholesale arrests, searching of houses and killing of innocent civilians using all sorts of pretexts were the regular practices. In Bašša Qetaw Qāññazmač Šefārraw is shot for having hidden guns in his garden. Čāru, another character in the novel, is savagely tortured for keeping a pistol in

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<sup>100</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>  
Berhanu Zārihun, Balča Abba Nāfso, p. 39.

his house. In the villages their violence manifests itself in the burning of villages as in the case of ato Gāmanah and ato Ambaye in Endāwättäčč qärräčč. They also send hundreds and thousands to concentration camps and prison houses, as in Endāwättäčč qärräčč. The February massacre in Addis Ababa and other towns exposes the inhumanity of the Fascist administration in Ethiopia. All the novels treat this massacre as an example of Fascist acts of genocide. As is narrated to Ar'aya and his men by a certain Daniel who escapes from the genocide, the number of "people who died is perhaps between 20-30 thousand."<sup>102</sup>

Besides, the Italians take strict measures to curb the activity of the population. It is even shown that a person should have a license to undertake any business. As a beggar informs Täsfa (the undercover agent in Endāwättäčč qärräčč) the Italian administrators have made it a requirement for a beggar to have a license.<sup>103</sup> They also put heavy restriction on the movement of the people. A permit is a must for a person to travel from one place to another. "In the past nobody asked you if you travelled from Gondar to distant parts of the country. Today, you cannot move without travel permits,"<sup>104</sup> tells

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<sup>102</sup> Germaččaw Täklä-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 307.

<sup>103</sup> Asäffa Gäbra-maryam, Endāwättäčč qärräčč, p. 43.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

the beggar to Tásfa. He regretfully comments that "in the past this was done to foreigners, today, you too, are a foreigner in your own country."<sup>105</sup> The native citizen is excluded from the political life of the country and becomes a stranger in his own country. This in turn drives more and more people away from the Italians. The more they resort to violence and cruel suppression the more the people become determined to resist the Italians.

The anti-Fascist patriotic resistance emerges as a political force in response to the Italian policy of cruel subjection of the Ethiopians to their rule. Generally, the Italians follow a policy of annihilation towards the patriots. When this fails we see them resorting to a policy of rapprochement. In Nāṣannāt General Nazi tries to persuade patriotic leaders such as Abāggā Bālāw with the following words: "Come on! approach us, everything will be fulfilled for you. If you believe that we have made mistakes, we shall sit together and criticise each other."<sup>106</sup> In Addabay, too, we see the Italian officers trying to strike a reconciliation with patriotic leaders such as Abbābā Arāgay. In this novel we witness the patriotic movement taking political steps such as crowning a king in order to overcome the lack of a centralised leadership.

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Zenanāh Mākonnen, Nāṣannāt, p. 206.

"Mäl'akä Şähay Iyyassu was crowned with a grand military parade; and Mäl'akä Şähay Iyyasu, in turn, gave Balambäras Abbäbä Arägay the title of 'ras.' "<sup>107</sup> Addabay further shows the consolidation of the patriotic movement with the formation of the All-Ethiopian Patriots' Association with a constitution of its own. In the areas under their control the Patriots maintained law and order and conducted various other public affairs.

Besides, their constant harrassment of the Italians demoralised their soldiers and made their administration unstable. It contributed to the development of the Italian soldiers' class consciousness. Some of the soldiers in Näşannät have begun complaining that the rank and file soldiers gain nothing from the war. They declare that the war is to the advantage of the Generals and the Marshals.

The authors feel that Italian invasion has certain international political effects as well. The invasion is assumed to have tested the power and integrity of the League of Nations. The Italian occupation of Ethiopia is regarded as an aggression of one member country against another member, and have deserved to be condemned and deterred. In Başša Qeṭaw the League's failure to discharge its duty is stated by one of the characters. When Bašša asks Abatä as to the possible political

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<sup>107</sup> Ṭelahun Ṭasaw, Addabay, p. 124.

outcome of the Emperor's appeal to the League of Nations, Abatā comments that,

The League of Nations is an impotent and irresponsible organisation. Had it not been impotent and irresponsible Hoare and Laval... with the pretext of calming the conflict, would not have proposed, independently of the organisation, Ethiopia's leasing part of her territory to Italy.<sup>108</sup>

The occupation also exposes the hypocrisy of the policy of collective security. Abatā notes that the prime ministers of Britain and France "Hoare and Laval surrendered Ethiopia to the Roman wolf."<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand, the Italian occupation aroused world-wide protest from different democratic quarters. Africans, Afro-Americans and other democratic forces took certain anti-Fascist steps and expressed their solidarity with Ethiopia. This fact is clearly indicated in the letter Gedāy, a compatriot in exile, writes to Abatā Šefārraw. Geday affirms that,

there is no single African or black person who had not been furious about Ethiopia's falling under Fascist rule for the last four years. Nowadays organisations supporting Ethiopia's struggle are flourishing in every country... It is said that the blacks of New York have boycotted buying Italian ice-cream in support of Ethiopia. Besides, African students

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<sup>108</sup>Sahlā-sellase Berhanā-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 139.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

in London have staged a demonstration condemning the acts of the Fascists and in support of Ethiopia.<sup>110</sup>

The occupation of Ethiopia exposed the real essence of Fascism. The Amharic novelists also show how the occupation of Ethiopia gradually led to the alienation and condemnation of the Fascists all over the world.

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., pp. 214-215.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### IV. Portryal of the Social, Cultural and Economic Effects of the Italian Occupation

The all-round pressure exerted by the Fascist occupation shook the Ethiopian society and challenged the continuity of established patterns of life. To analyse the changes the majority of the Amharic novelists and playwrights start with the examination of the changes at the level of the family and extend their assessment to the types and nature of changes in the society.

In Almothum beyye Alwašem the stable family of Ato Tāmaču gets disintegrated as a result of the war. Kende and Gaššaw Bāzadie at the battle field. Tāmaču returns from the front but finds his wife and house taken over by the enemy. He commits suicide and his wife Segerāda follows suite. The fate of the two younger children is unknown; perhaps, they have joined the ranks of the parentless young beggars we come across in Sārākoloniyalist. Tāmaču's daughter is horrified to imagine how wretched her father's soul would feel if it were to find his home taken over by the enemy, her mother involuntarily married to her foe, his daughter serving the killer of her father and his younger son, Aššāber, learning to sin in a Fascist school by forgetting both his country and people.<sup>111</sup> Tāmaču, once

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<sup>111</sup> Mākonnen Endalkaččaw, Almothum beyye Alwašem, p. 326.

the head of an ideal family, is reduced to a homeless wanderer before his death. The enemy conquers his country as well as his family. The cultural life in the household is changed, it is to the tune of the enemy's music that the people dance, it is wine, not ṭalla (local beer) and ṭägge (mead) that is served. The old family life has disintegrated in every respect.

The story of Endawattačč garráčč opens with the highlight of the life condition of the two families of ato Ambaye and ato Ğamanah. These families exhibit most of the noble qualities that are usually attributed to typical Abyssinian families and their life style. Ato Ambaye and ato Ğamanah are close friends, and as a means of strengthening their friendship, they arrange the marriage of their two children, Zälläqä and Yaši. Within a year's time after the marriage of the young couple, the Fascists invade the country and penetrate deep into the village of ato Ambaye and Ato Ğamanah. Zälläqä joins the patriotic movement leaving his wife, father and father-in-law behind. When the Italians in the area they burn down the houses of Ato Ambaye and Ato Ğamanah along with the houses of the other villagers. The people of the village are taken to concentration camps. Yaši follows her father and father-in-law to the prison houses. The families of Ato Ğamanah and ato Ambaye are thus broken up.

The Italian occupation brings about mutual distrust between members of a family. Zälläqä is unable to find a trustworthy person to accompany him to the mountains. "Henceforth my gun is my only true friend. I cannot find a friend who can accompany me as the time is characterised by treachery and deceit; a time when what is in the hearts of people has become difficult to know."<sup>112</sup>

While Yäsi is in prison, Major Vendetta, the Italian officer of the region becomes interested in her. He flatters her with material gifts and she gradually yields in to his lustful advances. She becomes his mistress and thus defiles the sanctity of family and marital life. It is the beginning of the end of her union with her husband; they are torn apart by an alien force.

In Ar'aya the Italian invasion disrupts all the plans of Ar'aya. He is forced to abandon his grand agricultural project for which he has been making elaborate preparations. The war, in certain other situations, ruins a family till one or two of its members are left without any means of livelihood. The wife and daughter of the lonely Old Man in Şarä -Koloniyalist fall prey to Italian bombardments and as a result the Old Man is left homeless and helpless. In the play he

<sup>112</sup>

Asäffa Gäbrä-maryam, Endawätaččä qärräččä, p. 25.

is seen wearing dirty and tattered clothes; he is physically worn out his eyes roving about; sometimes he talks to himself absent-mindedly.

"Dambäl, a patriot in Ennat Alam Tännu, joins the patriotic front leaving his mother, wife and children behind. Gäbräyyäs, the flogger, mocks at him reminding him that he buried his father at Mayčaw, abandoned his children to the care of his mother and drove his wife to lunacy...<sup>113</sup> Dambäl's family is totally ruined and the members are leading a beggar's life. The grandmother, Ennat Alam Tännu, is reduced to a vagrant wandering around in her worn-out wagon with the rest of her wretched family.

In Yalemžat it is the death of his father at Mayčaw and his mother's death due to typhoid fever, at about the same time, that forces Bäšah to earn his living on the street. In Bašša Qetaw Qännazmač Šefärraw's death becomes a blow to the family. In Näšannät Aččamyälläs is forcibly taken to Gondar for prostitution on the eve of her marriage to Dämmallaš. Their possible union in marriage is disrupted by the interference of an evil force. Denqenäš is forced to live as a prostitute by abandoning her two children back in her home village. In Addabay

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<sup>113</sup> Säggaye Gäbrä-madhen, Ennat Alam Tännu (Addis Ababa: Benhanenna Salam Printing Press, 1967), p. 86.

Läggäsä dies in the fighting leaving behind his wife Askalä.

The disintegration of the family definitely has its own effects which manifest themselves in the social, economic and cultural spheres. Economically, the death of the heads of families results in the destitution of the dependent members of the family as in the case of the children in Šarä-Kloniyalist and Bäšah in Yälemžat. In Šarä-Koloniyalist the wretchedness of the people is shown through the vivid description of the social environment of the people. The condition of the huts is made to express the condition of the dwellers. The huts are as disfigured as the people themselves. "Here and there are seen charcoal stained and mud covered Abyssinian houses with dismantled doors, dislocated windows, partially torn out walls and toppled roofs."<sup>114</sup> The people are not capable of building themselves modest houses, or to maintain the old ones. The physical description of the characters is also used as a technique of conveying the poverty of the people. The children in Šarä-Koloniyalist are parentless and miserable; from the description of their physical condition one can tell that they have already experienced the degrading effects of the Fascist occupation. They have become beggar-children. The Old Man describes them thus:

<sup>114</sup> Mängestu Lamma, Šarä-Koloniyalist, p. 19.

their faces are covered with chileasma, their chins with ring worms, their scalp with fungal disease and their hands are full of scabies. They are bony in figure and pale in colour with an unsteady movement due to chigger (jigger) attack.<sup>115</sup>

The Old Man further traces the origin of these children and their condition at the time. "The white man (the Italians) calls them 'vagabondo' (vagabond) they are beggar children who came from distant part of the country after having lost their parents; so they are begging."<sup>116</sup>

During the Italian occupation, as is indicated in "Sārā-Koloniyaalist", hundreds of children, prostitutes and day-labourers of all kinds flocked to urban centres to subsist on the crumbs of bread they get from the Italians. The process has created a new social group of destitutes. Urban centres swelled with the influx of such people. The Old Man ironically comments that they are the fruit of European civilisation, and the harvest the Ethiopians are to reap guided by the luminous Roman 'light',

Addabay examines the economic policies of the Fascists and their practical effects. The author is of the belief that in Ethiopia Italian colonialism followed a backward policy of crude exploitation. The

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Fascists impoverished both the cities and the rural population. As is shown in the novel the peasantry feel the economic pressure as they are squeezed between the combatants of the patriotic movement and the Fascists. The enemy robs the people of their cattle and other property. In Endawattačč qarračč it is stated that the people "got all their property and cattle confiscated and the entire country was transformed into a desert."<sup>117</sup> The well-to-do peasant families of the past are unable to produce sufficient food for their members during the war. As a result, some join the patriots, others flock to the towns to earn their living as day-labourers. "Some joined forcibly and others joined willingly to earn their daily bread. Whatever the case might be, the daily labour's price was negligible."<sup>118</sup> With their villages burnt down, their farmlands laid waste, their cattle and other farm animals killed or slaughtered, they are left with no alternative but to migrate to towns and serve as daily-labourers.

The life condition of the Ethiopian women needs closer examination when we discuss the social, economic and cultural effects of the Italian occupation. Ethiopian women whose husbands die at the front, those whose husbands join the patriotic movement and others whose husbands are sent to concentration camps or are detained are

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<sup>117</sup>Asaiffa Gabra-maryam, Endawattačč Qarračč, p. 55.

<sup>118</sup>Zenanah Makonnen, Nasannat, p. 163.

left at the mercy of the Italians. Some of these women join the patriotic movement; others are forced to become the Italians' mistresses or concubines. Tāmaču's wife marries Brigadier Mario against her will, Yāši of Endāwattačč gārrāčč becomes Major Vendetta's mistress, Aččamyallās of Nāsannāt is forced to surrender her honour to Major Kassaloni and bear him a child. Berritu, the former house-maid in Ar'aya, is seen playing an active role in supplying women to Italian soldiers. Sergute in Ar'aya, the wives of Bašša and Čāru in Bašša Qeṭaw, however, are able to maintain their honour using different tactics.

The Italian occupation contributed to the development of prostitution on a larger scale. Yalamžat dwells on the problem of prostitution in detail. The novel does not claim that it is with the Italian occupation that prostitution emerged for the first time. It only tries to show the qualitative differences of the problem before and after the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Wayzāro Bafāna, who is herself a famous prostitute during the Italian occupation, underlines the differences as follows:

Though the condition before the enemy invasion was bad, it was not as repulsive as the one during the occupation. In the pre-invasion period there was no practice of offering prostitutes for sale like a commodity whose price is fixed on the basis of beauty. Before, there had been women who opened bars and also had sexual affairs with their customers whenever they wished. The

male customers gave them gifts if they were pleased but there was no fixed price as such for their services.<sup>119</sup>

This quotation shows the differences between the nature of prostitution before and after the occupation. The Italian occupation commercialised prostitution; and the free gift that was meant to express one's gratification is changed to a fixed price. Prostitution flourishes as a business with a license, trade mark and fixed tax on the income. The occupation transforms Ethiopian women into commercial objects of sexual gratification. "During the occupation the women who are recruited and kept as prostitutes are no better than meat animals from whose flesh every hungry male is entitled to share."<sup>120</sup> It is their duty to entertain any person provided he pays the fixed price. Wäyzäro Bafäna comments that the prostitutes do not have the right to complain. They are also entitled only to a small fraction of their income. The rest is divided between the boss and the state.

In Näsannät we witness the Fascists actively contributing to the institutionalization of prostitution. Girls such as Aččamyälläš are kidnapped to serve Italian officers such as Major Kassaloni. Kassaloni keeps Aččamyälläš as a mistress and refuses to recognise the child as his own when she gives birth. The half-caste boy is taken care of by the prostitute mother.

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<sup>119</sup>Haddis Alämayyahu, Yalemžat (Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1980), p. 333.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

The problem of half-caste is thus one of the social effects that resulted from the occupation by the Italians. Aččamyä"alläs leads a bitter life as a prostitute, never reconciles herself to Major Kassaloni; she feels that "his skin is coarse, his voice hoarse, and his language unintelligible to her ..."<sup>121</sup> However, she has to continue with that type of life because "a breath for a short span of time is preferable to death."<sup>122</sup>

The Italian officers and soldiers are all out to seduce Ethiopian women whenever they get the chance. In Addabay the Italian officer in charge of prison houses is portrayed as a nymphomaniac character. He "teaches women deviant or abnormal types of sex with the help of drinks, in the name of civilisation or with the use of sheer force."<sup>123</sup>

Amharic novelists and playwrights considered in this study, deal with the flourishing of bars and hotels, the widespread culture of alcoholism and the expansion of towns as the inevitable social, cultural and economic effects of the Italian occupation.

After the loss of independence Ethiopians find alcoholism an ideal means of escaping from the horrifying

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<sup>121</sup>Zenanah Makonnen, Näşannät, p. 95.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>123</sup>Telahun Tasäw, Addabay, p. 160.

reality they daily witness. It is a deliberate means of self-denial, an attempt to forget oneself. Terror and anxiety necessitate an outlet. As is stated in Addabay,

everyone frequented bars to get partial relief from his thoughts, Those who were humiliated as a result of the loss of freedom and others who got disturbed for having reconciled themselves with the system go to these places and fly away from their conscience. Fearing that their life might be taken away by a bullet from the patriots, some tried to exhaust, within a short time, the pleasure they had meant for a long time. Even aimless people who got terrorised by the situation went to these places to escape from reality.<sup>124</sup>

It is suggested in Endäwättäčč qärräčč that alcoholism sapped the Ethiopians of their will-power and turned them into unproductive citizens. One of the drunkards in this novel comments, "even if our Emperor returns he will find some of us killed by enemy bullets and some others by alcohol. From now onwards, we are good-for-nothings and we cannot serve him as productive citizens"<sup>125</sup> Endäwättäčč qärräčč further discusses the reasons why alcoholism has become common among the Ethiopians. The drunkard in the novel explains the reasons by saying the following:

No one is there to reprimand us for having got drunk and for degrading ourselves. Since we have spiritually

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>125</sup>Asäffa Gäbra-maryam, Endäwättäčč qärräčč, p. 93.

killed ourselves, we don't try to avoid shamelessness. Besides, our confidence is sapped. The family that has a leader will have a noble character and manner; whereas the society without a guardian will be chaotic and disorderly.<sup>126</sup>

In the analysis of the social, economic and cultural effects of the Italian occupation, Bašša Qeṭaw also treats the role of the Italians in the expansion of towns. Addis Ababa, for instance, is thought to have been modernised under the Italians. Abatā "Šefarraw", who is an undercover agent in Addis Ababa informs Bašša, who is a leader of patriots outside the city:

Addis Ababa is no more the village town you knew before. It has emerged as a big town. The Italians have totally transformed it into a city... When you return to Addis, you will feel that you are in an Italian city, not in the old and familiar town founded by Menelik."<sup>127</sup>

Abatā, however, is critical of these achievements. He knows that the Italians do all these things only with an eye on their long-term interests. The change, for example, in the name of the streets, in his view, is part of the process of Italianisation of Ethiopia. The activity going on in Addis Ababa is a process of "reconstructing it after their own image shedding it of its cultural and historical heritage."<sup>128</sup>

Sära"-Koloniyalist exposes that the Fascists did not care for the cultural values and faith of the people.

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>127</sup>Sahlä"-seṭasä Berhan"-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 236.

In this play we come across a certain Italian officer by the name Pojo who uses the bell of the church for signaling to the workers to start their daily work. In the words of the Old Man, he is 'playing with it'. Showing his irreverence for elders, Pojo tries to force the Old Man to salute him in the manner of the Fascists. The actions, ways of life and thoughts of the Italians influenced and changed the life pattern, mode of thought and cultural values of the Ethiopians as well. In the words of the Old Man in Särä - Koloniyalist,

the honest ones turned into traitors,  
friends became enemies, slaves disobeyed  
their masters and went their own way,  
the tenants killed their landlord, the  
hungry one changed his faith to get food,  
spies and enemy agents increased in number,<sup>129</sup>  
and generally people distrusted each other...

From the observation of the Old Man almost everyone and everything undergoes change. Human as well as social relations are transformed and material interest becomes the only goal of life. "The collaborator found a gold ring on a lady's finger; when he found it difficult to remove it from the finger, he cut her finger with his sabre"<sup>130</sup> says the Old Man.

In Yälemžat ato Mandäfro examines the split within the society and tries to rationalise on the possible causes of the change. In his opinion,

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<sup>129</sup>"Mängestu Lamma, Särä-Koloniyalist, p. 19.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

The split among the brotherly children of a single Ethiopia into patriots and collaborators, agents and counter-agents, and their engagement in mutual annihilation and hunting down of one another is a divine calamity, a calamity that has befallen us all as a result of the country's occupation by the enemy and the resultant slavery.<sup>131</sup>

Most of the novels analysed above focus on the negative effects of the occupation in the social, economic and cultural lives of the people. Novels such as Addabay and Bašša Qeṭaw try to show some of the positive outcomes of the occupation as well. Yamayčaw Quslāñña and Ag'azi don't focus on effects such as prostitution, urbanisation and alcoholism. Bašša Qeṭaw, Nāsannät, Addabay and Endāwattačč qärräčč treat such effects in greater length and depth.

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<sup>131</sup> Haddis Alāmayyāhu, Yālemžat, p. 197.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### V. The Portrayal of the Patriotic Resistance

The Amharic novels and plays discussed in this study loud the Ethiopian peoples' anti-Fascist struggle. We witness the resistance movement of the people developing into a solid front under the leadership of patriotic figures such as Zälläqä in Endäwattačč cärräčč, Ar'aya in Ar'aya, Abägga in Näšannät, Bašša in Bašša Qeṭaw, Bäšah in Yälemžat, Daññaw and others in Addabay, Bälča and his followers in Bälča Abba Nafso, Abunä Petros in Yädäm Dems and other characters who contribute their share to the consolidation of the patriotic resistance. There are patriotic undercover agents as in the case of Kasse in Särä-Koloniyalist and Esunaw in Näšannät whose contribution to the movement is immense.

As is indicated in Addabay and Näšannät, the rivalries among the patriotic leaders threaten the unity of the front at the initial phase of the struggle. Addabay, for instance, focuses on the misunderstanding between Ras Abbäbä Arägay and another patriotic leader Käffälaw Wäldä-Şadeq. The armies of the two leaders are on the verge of fighting against one another and the Italians watch the incident with interest to use it to their own advantage. In Näšannät a similar conflict arises between Bällätä and Yefru, two patriot-leaders. Bällätä, who is proud of his family background

wants Yefru to be his subordinate. The conflict is finally resolved with the interference of other patriot-leaders.

The patriots in Addabay seriously feel the danger of the non-existence of a centralised command. To overcome the problem, they crown Mäl'akä-Sähay Iyyasu. However, the new king suddenly dies before the patriots achieve a unified command. Finally, after a series of deliberations among the patriot-leaders, the All Ethiopian Patriots' Association is formed. The association plays a crucial role in coordinating the struggle of the various patriotic groups.

The novels and plays discussed here show that the individual patriots who took part in the resistance movement are drawn from different classes and social strata. Patriots like Abbäbä Arägay, Balča, Gezaččaw Hayle, Haylä'-maryam Mammo, Käffälaw Wäldä-sadeq, Däggazmač Awraris... come from the higher social stratum of the society. During the occupation we see these patriots using their influence to mobilise the people for the patriotic struggle.

The novels and plays also show us that there are militants from among the clergy. In Yamayçaw Qusläñña and Yadam Demş the martyrdom of Abunä Petros gets wider coverage and the exemplary deed of the bishop is praised.

Yadam Dems, is in particular based on the patriotism and religious conviction of Abunä Petros. Abunä Petros who is accused of collaborating with the patriots, is arrested and made to appear before the Italian authorities for trial. The Italian authorities try to convince him to officially renounce his stand and condemn the patriots. They order him to choose between life and death, and Abunä Petros unhesitatingly chooses to die rather than surrender to Fascist rule. He tells them to their face that they are criminals whose inevitable doom is at hand. He gets extra strength from his religious vow. He reminds the Italians that he is quite fortunate "to suffer in the hands of the Romans, the killers of /his/ Lord and happy to follow Him carrying His cross."<sup>132</sup> When collaborators try to persuade him to submit to Fascist rule, Abunä Petros refuses by saying that he cannot have any existence apart from that of his country. He justifies his position by stating that his principled stand is consistent with the dictates of his religion. "A celebrated religious obedience is sacrificing oneself for the honour of one's religion, country and emperor"<sup>133</sup> Accordingly, Abunä Petros is condemned to death and then an angel appears on the scene and encourages him for his heroic deed. With the appearance of the angel, the author reinforces this belief that Abunä Petros's death is in line with the divine will.

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<sup>132</sup>"Makonnen Endalkachaw, Yadam Dems, p. 83.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

The death of Abuna Petros is significant in that it inspires thousands of resistance fighters from every corner of the country. Adafres from Shawa, Kassa of Tigray, Balaw from Gojjam, Tamaču from Bagamder, Waqgera from Galla and the muslim Faṭuma resolve to fight the enemy to the last after they witness Abuna Petros's heroic sacrifice.

In other novels such as Ar'aya māmere Tākla-māryam plays a key role in the organisation of the patriotic resistance. When <sup>he</sup> is shot to death by the Fascists, his final words are "may Ethiopia be your graveyard. Let he who submits to your rule be cursed."<sup>134</sup> In the same novel we also find other priests who systematically disseminate among the people the prophecy of Italy's inevitable defeat within five years. The prophecy is believed to have a psychological impact on the Fascists. We also see Wuhib propagating the same prophecy in Sāra-Kolonyalist.

Alāqa Wubate of Nassannat is a priest of exceptional calibre. He plays a vital role in the coordination and consolidation of the patriotic front. He reconciles and brings together the patriot leaders Abāggā Balaw and Gābre Mākureya. He urges the patriots to avoid conflicts between themselves and work for the creation of a single unified

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<sup>134</sup>Germaččaw Tākla-hawaryat, Ar'aya, p. 329.

anti-Fascist front.

In the name of the ark of St. Michael  
I beg those of you who are not for  
mutual destruction to forgive each other.  
Forget your past grudges and your desire  
for revenge and stand up in unison against  
the forward marching massive force of the  
enemy. If you fail to do so, may the bones of  
your fathers, forefathers and mine stab you;  
may you not have offsprings. Those of you  
who are simply interested in filling your  
bellies, may God give you the scabies and  
deny you the finger.<sup>135</sup>

In the works under consideration, the role of the  
Ethiopian intelligentsia in the patriotic resistance  
is also treated. In Ar'aya the title-character is one  
of the few foreign-educated young people who take part  
in the battle of Mayč'aw and after the occupation he retreats  
to the countryside, organises and leads the patriotic  
struggle against the Fascists. He sheds his blood for  
his country and contributes his share to the restoration  
of the country's independence.

In Addabay the intellectuals who serve in the  
different patriotic groups play a crucial role in  
preserving the unity of the patriotic resistance.  
Intellectuals like Dämesse wäldä-amanuel play a key  
role in the drafting of the constitution of the All-  
Ethiopian patriots Association. The intellectuals  
are also instrumental in bringing the different patriotic  
groups together.

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<sup>135</sup>Zenanäh Mäkonnen, Näsanät, p. 13.

In Bašša Qeṭaw we see several intellectuals fighting against the Fascists. Abatā<sup>"</sup>, a foreign-educated young man, serves as an undercover agent in the city and later joins the patriots, takes part in the actual war and even gets wounded. Gedāy<sup>"</sup>, an educated Ethiopian, relays news of the international political situation to the patriots. Čaru<sup>"</sup>, another intellectual, resists the Italians, is imprisoned and tortured in the hands of the Fascists. He exposes the Fascists with the help of his paintings. The theme of one of his paintings is "the cruelty of barbarians, bloodshed, wounds, worms and parasites."<sup>136</sup> It summarises the characteristics of the Fascists and their day to day activities in the country.

In Yālemžat an educated bar owner, ato Mandāfro<sup>"</sup>, contributes a lot to the struggle of the patriots. His hotel serves as a venue for all anti-Fascist forces, and as a centre where the undercover agents acquire bullets for the freedom fighters. Ato Mandāfro personally shapes the attitude of Bāšah<sup>"</sup> and his friends and channels their energy towards the patriotic struggle. When independence is attained Mandāfro welcomes Bāšah and his friends and provides them with their immediate needs.

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<sup>136</sup> Sahla<sup>"</sup>-sallaso Berhanā-maryam, Bašša Qeṭaw, p. 211.

Kasse of Sāra-Kolonyalist belongs to the educated section of the society. He is a student of the Holetta Military School and speaks French. He courageously fights the enemy in the battle-ground, and he sacrifices himself to keep the patriotic resistance alive.

The works under discussion show that the Ethiopian women are the ones who suffered the most under Italian occupation. Wives lose their husbands, mothers their children, girls their boy-friends or their fiance and sisters their brothers. The novels which treat the contribution of women to the anti-Fascist struggle show them fighting with all the means at their disposal.

In Almothum beyye Alwašem Tāmaču's wife, Segerāda, is depicted as a soft-hearted woman. We see her trying her best to stop her husband from going to the war front. She differs from other female characters treated in the other works in this regard. She is forced by her neighbours and her circumstances to become a mistress of an Italian officer. When she discovers the hanged body of her husband and the message he has left behind, her former softness gives way and she becomes like a wounded tigress. She chops off the head of the Fascist officer she is forced to live with. She goes to the square in the centre of the town and agitates

her countrymen to rise against the enemy. She is shot to death and her death results in thousands joining in the struggle against the enemy.

In Ar'aya, Sergute, a young girl from the countryside, serves the local patriots effectively. She travels twice to Däbrä-berhan to spy on the enemy. She boldly and intelligently accomplishes her mission by escaping the traps of the Italian soldiers. She also fights alongside Ar'aya and his comrades-in arms throughout the occupation period.

Several women patriots are also shown fighting against Italian Fascists in Addabay. Askalä, in particular, holds a special place. She joins the struggle leaving her child behind and after the death of her patriot husband, Läggäsa, she replaces him as a commander of a group of patriots.

In Bašša Qeṭaw, Denqe, Bašša's wife, insists on following her husband to the war front. She is seen successfully resisting Major Barzini's attempt to seduce her. She also withstands the enemy's threats and intimidation and refuses to disclose the whereabouts and activities of her husband. Later she joins the struggle and witnessed her baby killed on her back. She is imprisoned and kept in confinement. Despite the hardships, she remains loyal to her patriot husband and

the cause of her country to the last.

In Nāṣannāt Geṭenāš, the wife of the patriot Abāḡḡā Bālāw, accompanies her husband along with other women and takes part in the struggle. Their duties include cooking food for the patriots and looking after and taking care of the sick and the wounded soldiers.

In Balča Abba Nāfso Wāyzāro Zārfe, the wife of Qāññazmač Laṭebālu, the collaborator, abandons her husband and joins her patriot uncle Dāḡḡač Balča to fight the Fascists.

There are also Ethiopian women who live with Italian soldiers and assist the patriots by providing them with invaluable information. There are others who live as prostitutes but use their access to the Italians to save the lives of the patriots. Denḡenāš of Nāṣannāt pleades with Major Agulini to release a group of detained patriots; Agulini agrees and sets the people free.

When we closely examine the novels and plays under-consideration we realise that the majority of the fighters that inflate the rank of the patriotic resistance are drawn from the peasantry. The works underline that without the participation and cooperation of the peasantry it was impossible to put up any significant resistance.

In Almothum beyye Alwašem Tāmaču is a farmer and his death and that of his wife inspires other patriots for action. Referring to the heroes from the peasantry, Ar'aya suggests that the patriotic resistance has enabled ordinary people to rise to prominence and get recognition. It is in the midst of the peasantry that Ar'aya and his friends live and operate. The peasants, in addition, help the patriots in spying on the movement of the enemy, its strength etc.

In Endāwättäčč qärräčč Zälläqä is from a rich peasant family. The war of resistance provides him with the chance of displaying his valour. In this novel it is observed that "instead of those who had been expected to support the country as pillars, they are the products of the adversary situation, the ordinary men, the 'no ones', who served the country..."<sup>137</sup>

Daññaw, a patriot character in Addabay, is from a peasantry. In Addabay it is stated that "the peasants who were hitherto unknown in Showa have now got the titles of Fetawrari, qaññazmač, grazmač and balambaras"<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Asfifa Gäbrä-maryam, Endāwättäčč qärräčč, p. 37.

<sup>138</sup>Telahun Tasaw, Addabay, p. 241.

The patriotic leaders of Nāsannät such as Abäggä Bälāw, kasse Mašāša and Gäbre Mäkurya are from a peasant origin. The same thing is true with most of the followers of Balča in Balča Abba Nafso.

There are also people drawn from other sections of the society that play a role in the patriotic resistance. In Yamayčaw Qusläňňa Kasaye, servant and friend to Sergeant Bädelu Tärräfa, shares the ups and downs of life with the latter. In Ar'aya three of the six servants of Ar'aya remain faithful to him and fight the enemy to the last. Bašša goes to the war front with Aräru and Tämäsgän. Aräru dies during the retreat and Tämäsgän fights the enemy alongside his master throughout the occupation period.

In Ar'aya and Nāsannät the role of shepherds and local singers is also given some attention. The shepherds compose songs which praise the deeds of certain patriot leaders and condemn the acts of collaborators. The songs and poems of the shepherds boost the morale of the patriots. In Nāsannät we are told about how the songs infuriate the Fascist officials and lead them to confiscating the musical instruments of the singers.

Yalemžat is unique in that it deals with the story of a group of 'city boys' (yarada leğočč) who display a remarkable degree of bravery in the anti-Fascist

armed struggle. The novel shows the gradual development of the boys' patriotic sentiment from a spontaneous struggle against Fascism.

During the resistance war, Bašah distinguishes himself as a gifted leader and talented fighter. In the struggle his group becomes the driving force of the larger group. They conduct the war with such dexterity and ease of mind that they change the battle field into a film screen. The authorial narrator dramatizes their action as follows:

The battle spreads like a prairie fire and its flame chases away even those who are at a distance. If those felons (gangsters) of the 'Wube Bārāha',\* those spirits of the night, throw themselves into the centre of the war, they destroy the enemy and come out safely when they are thought to have been liquidated! Those wasps join the war and put the enemy in utter confusion attacking it from right and left, up and down. Has anyone ever succeeded in shooting down the wasp? Who has ever killed a spirit?<sup>139</sup>

The war of resistance inspires even elderly people to take up arms against the invaders. Balča leads an army of patriots at the age of 81. He heroically dies; with his corpse lying above that of his enemy. His death is significant in that it produces thousands of patriots who are ready to follow his example. The patriotism of the Old Man in Sārā-Koloniyalist is clear from his

'Wude Bārāha' refers to the once central part of Addis Ababa.  
139 Hadis Alāmāyāhu, Yālemžat, p. 202.

comments and the advice he gives to the younger generation. He acts as a bridge between the generation of the past and the present. The patriotic movement also inspires the muslims as much as it does the christians. Ali, the businessman in Nāsannāt dies resisting the enemy, and Faṭura of Yāqām Dems resolves to fight the enemy till her last breath.

The struggle of the undercover patriotic agents known in Amharic as 'yawuṣṭ arbāññöčč' is given tribute. The strategy of the undercover agents as outlined in Särä-Koloniyalist is to live among the wolves and tactfully bridle the mouth of the wolf to stop it from eating the sheep.<sup>140</sup> Kasse, the young undercover agent in Särä-Koloniyalist, constantly changes his name, his identity and his residence to put the enemy on the wrong track. He works as a day labourer, wanders from place to place as a hermit, and an interpreter of Wuhib, the sorcerer. Kasse intelligently uses Wuhib's cover to propagate among the people, the prophecy of Italy's imminent defeat within five years. He utilises the chance to raise a fund for the purchase of ammunition, which is smuggled into the country from Djibouti. The platform also gives him a chance to recruit volunteers for the patriotic resistance. Kasse carries out all these tasks with diligence and strict-self-control. Finally,

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<sup>140</sup> Māngestu Lamma, Särä-Koloniyalist, p. 69.

when his identity is discovered and he is about to be caught he commits suicide in order to preserve the secrets of the patriotic movement. The Italians who promised a bonus of 10,000 lire to any person who can identify Kasse and help them to put him under control get irritated. Kasse frustrates their plan and sacrifices himself but saves the patriotic movement.

In Ar'aya ato Waldä-amanuel serves the patriots as an undercover agent and a liaison officer. He spies on the development of forces, weakness and strength of the enemy; he also reads newspapers and relays the information he thinks to be relevant to the patriots.

In Addabay Taklā-heymanot is an under cover agent operating within the area controlled by the enemy. He feeds the patriots with classified information regarding the situation of the enemy. Similarly, there are several such agents in Bašša Qetaw. Abatā is a foreign-educated young man whose information on the current international issues boost the morale of the patriots. Mammo a waiter at the Etege Hotel is a militant undercover agent. Olana, an old man living in the suburbs of Addis Ababa, contributes his share by sending useful information to the patriots.

In Nasannat, Esunaw serves the patriots while he pretends to be a loyal agent of the Fascists. He

misinforms the Italians and creates a favourable condition for the patriots. He effectively neutralises the schemes of the notorious collaborator, Mälke Logalä. The role of Zälläqä, an undercover agent in Balča Abba Näfso, is much similar to that of Esunäw except that at the first acquaintance one can mistake Zälläqä for a hopeless sycophant. He fakes ignorance to win enemy's confidence. He pretends to be innocent and lavishly praises Fascist power, the Italian Emperor and Mussolini. But he has a sensitive ear to gather information and pass it on to Däggač Balča and his men.

The Amharic novels and plays dealing with the patriotic resistance are full of examples of genuine undercover agents who contribute to the attainment of independence, in no less degree, if not more, than the patriots who fought in the mountains and forests. On the other hand, in the novels and plays treated here we find real and fictional characters who side with the enemy against the interest of their country. Such collaborators range from simple house-maids or servants to regional chiefs. In Yamayčaw Quslañña the maid-servant of Sergeant Bādeḷu Tarrāfā's family betrays the family in which she was born and brought up. In Ar'aya there are several instances of treachery and collaboration with the enemy. There is also a case of a house-maid going over

to the side of the enemy against her own family. Endäwättäčč garräčč states that the cruelty of the collaborators surpasses that of the Fascists. Addabay brings forth serious cases of treachery such as the one done by Wäldä-kiros, the secretary of the patriots' Association. Referring to the acts of **this man** Ras Abbäbä Arägay comments, "Each period is full of cowardly people who prefer slavery to freedom to promote their daily interests."<sup>141</sup> Addabay also treats the fate of people like Mämere Wäldä-hanne, who serves the enemy wholeheartedly. Later this man is disgraced both in the eyes of the Fascists and the Ethiopians. In Näşannät Abuna Abraham advocates the perpetuation of Fascist rule. He urges the Ethiopians to fully submit to the rule of the all-powerful government of Italy in this novel. we also see notorious collaborators like Mälke Bogalä and Qannazmač Egegu. The former is an avowed enemy of the patriots and the latter loses his temper when Major Agulini sets free the patriots who have plotted against his life. In the same novel there are Ethiopian journalists of the "Corriere dell' Empero"\* who try their best to whitewash the barbarity of the Fascists. In an effort to present Fascism in a favourable light, they maintain that under Fascism prison houses are places of rest, they are not places of suffering.

<sup>141</sup> Telahun Tasaw, Addabay, p. 237.

\* Messenger of the Emperor

In Balča Abba Nāfso we find collaborators like Lebo Sahle and Qāññazmač Lāṭebālu, who unreservedly serve the Italians. Both finally fall into the hands of Dāḡḡač Balča; Lebo Sahle is hanged while Lāṭebālu shoots himself. In Šāra-Koloniyalist Fetaw rari Mentasnot is an enemy agent who closely follows the movement of the patriots.

Some of the novels such as Bašša Qeṭaw, Addabay and Nāšannāt portray the patriotic movement as an independent force while novels such as Yamayčaw Quslāñña and Ag'azi present it as an appendage of the Emperor's political struggle. The latter group of novels also overrate the assistance of the British government. Yālemžat, however, questions the genuineness of the assistance.

Ag'azi which clearly glorifies the political personality of the Emperor, recognises the significance of the patriotic resistance. In the words of Ag'azi, Ethiopian "patriots are impenetrable fortresses of God. Her Emperor, in particular, as he is supported by divine arms, is empowered to repulse and defeat any opponent that aggressively marches against her."<sup>142</sup> Ag'azi maintains that the Emperor has waged a struggle on two fronts while on exile; his voice keeps on reaching the patriots and

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<sup>142</sup>Waldā-giyorgis Waldā-yohannes, Ag'azi, pp. 61-62.

guides their actions. On the other hand, his voice continues to be heard at international political forums. This implies that the patriotic resistance was not an autonomous movement. In the opinion of Ag'azi the patriotic resistance has succeeded "because the strategy devised by the exiled Emperor was correct. Of course, the patriots operating in the country also followed his words and continued their armed struggle with vigilance."<sup>143</sup> In Ag'azi the patriotic movement is given credit with the Emperor as a decisive force operating from behind. In this novel the Emperor is depicted as an instrument through which God expresses his divine will. The personality of the Emperor attains a super-natural status.

Yamayčaw Quslänña gives due credit to the patriotic resistance but the final rebirth of the country is said to be made possible by the triumphal return of the Emperor to his country. Endäwättäčč qärräčč and Ar'aya try to strike a balance between the contribution and role of the Emperor and that of the patriotic resistance in the attainment of independence.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

and people during the Italian occupation. "Badelu recalls that after their deliverance from the grip of the Pharaohs, the Israelites used to annoy God; similarly, he fears that Ethiopians, too, might misuse their freedom forgetting those days of suffering. In spite of his fear Sergeant Bädalu Täräfa" regards the triumphal return of the Emperor as an eventful day, the opening of a new era in the history of the country and a period heralding the reconstruction of the new Ethiopia.

The author of Ag'azi describes the restoration of independence as a process of resurrection and the beginning of a New Era. "The founder of modern Ethiopia Haile Selassie I is restored to his throne. He named the period of Ethiopia's resurrection, the New Era and began his administration on new lines."<sup>145</sup> The author invites every Ethiopian to rise up and build his country under the "glorious" leader.

In Ar'aya, immediately after independence, Ar'aya is called upon to return to active service in the government. His mind, however, is not free from certain questions which are related to the future fate of the country. Ar'aya asks himself,

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<sup>145</sup>"Waldä-giyorgis Waldä-yohannes, Ag'azi, p. 95.

Now that Ethiopia has attained her independence, is she going to sleep once again? Has she realised the advantages of unity and the value of freedom during the past five years of suffering? Has she got any worthwhile lesson for the future from the damage the enemy has inflicted upon her? Has she discovered the source of power and civilisation? Has she identified her friends and helpers in the future? Will she remember her selfless children who shed their blood and sacrificed themselves for her? Have her children realised that unity, cooperation, skill and practical action are the guarantee of her freedom?<sup>146</sup>

The questions are basic and related to some of the problems that crop up in the aftermath of independence such as the ones treated in Yälemžat and Ennat Aläm Tännu. Ennat Aläm Tännu deals with the misfortune of the people in the aftermath of independence. According to the play, the interests of the people are systematically negated after liberation and the expectations of the true children of the country frustrated. National heroes like Bälay Zälläqä are humiliated, demoralised, flogged, imprisoned or put to death.

Ennat Aläm Tännu opens with a scene showing Bälay Zälläqä, a reputed leader of the patriotic resistance, being flogged. Ironically, they are people like

<sup>146</sup> Germaččaw Täkla-hawaryat, Ar'aya, pp. 349-350.

instead of freedom, pushed aside her guardians and embraced those who killed her.

Yālemžat underlines that the patriotic resistance is the major force that has made the restoration of freedom possible. Bāšāh acknowledges the British assistance though, in his opinion, their motive is 'not clear'. "It was true that they opposed the Italians though I am not sure whether they meant to help us or themselves," <sup>149</sup> comments Bāšāh. In Bāšāh's opinion the British tried to maintain the Fascist legacies. But Ethiopians who resisted the Fascists deny them the chance to exercise any kind of domination. Yālemžat states that even the shoe-shine boys and vagrants are mobilised to punish the arrogants.

On the other hand, Bāšāh complains that there is no law that gives priority and safeguards the interests of the Ethiopians in the aftermath of the Liberation. He informs azaž Takkaleññ that the foreigners dominate the economy. Patriots like him are forgotten and the fruit of the struggle goes to the former collaborators.

Endāwāttačč qārrāčč maintains that the freedom of Ethiopia is restored as a result of the joint struggle of the Emperor, the patriots and the British. The

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<sup>149</sup>Haddis, Alamayyahu, Yālemžat, p. 183.

proclamation issued in relation to the country's liberation focuses on Ethiopian unity. Everybody seems to be rewarded in proportion to his contribution to the restoration of independence. Zäälläqä, the patriot in the novel, however, modestly declines his appointment as an 'awraggä' (district) governor. He prefers a peaceful countryside life. Whether or not his action is a sign of protest is not clear. Yaši takes him for a fool when he tells her about his decision.

In the aftermath of liberation, as is presented in Addabay, the situation immediately creates division among the patriots. The Emperor deliberately undermines the unity of the patriots and works hard to strengthen his personal power. Addabay shows how Britain immediately began betraying her imperialistic interests. The genuine patriots are gradually pushed aside, alienated and forgotten. The collaborators, enemy agents, absconders and false friends of the country seize all the power. Everywhere imitating the Italians becomes the fashion. People are seen longing for something they fought against. Askalä, one of the female patriots comments with regard to this fact: "In the past we used to consider it was an insult and a humiliation if we were asked to act like an Italian; but now, after having defeated them we are longing to be like them." <sup>150</sup> The novel mentions the political

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<sup>150</sup> Telahun Tasaw, Addabay, p.3.

crises in the aftermath of liberation. The 'wäyyane' uprising in Tigray, the banditry and acts of sabotage in different parts of the country are cited as clear manifestations of dissatisfaction and political unrest in the country.

The government treats the patriots unfairly and treats the collaborators sympathetically. Daññaw, a distinguished patriot in Addabay, is given a post but he fails to fulfill the demands and expectations of his superiors. His refraining from taking bribes, for instance, disappoints all the officials including the Crown Prince. He becomes a misfit and an obstacle to the smooth functioning of the motto of 'eat-and let's - eat.' So he is removed from the scene. He loses not only his post but also his hereditary fief. Through many examples, the novel makes us believe that the patriotic struggle drove away the Fascists but brought to power native tyrants.

## Summary of Conclusions

In the foregoing analysis of the theme of Italian occupation an attempt has been made to identify the major themes and the differences in points of view of the writers in the portrayal of the Italian occupation.

All the novels and plays show that Italy's desire to avenge her defeat at the battle of Adowa is one of the causes for the Italo-Ethiopian war. In Endawattacč qarracč it is stated that Italy considered Ethiopia as her legitimate sphere of influence. As is expressed in Sara-Koloniyalist the expansionist policy of the Fascist Party was also another factor that paved the way for the war. In all the works it is stressed that the Walwal incident was simply a pretext seized upon by the Italians to wage the war.

In the portrayal of the conduct of the war the majority of the writers focus only on the battle of Maycaw. It is only in Bassa Qetaw and Ar'aya that the conduct of the war at Amba'ardom, Tembien and Šire is treated. The conduct of the war in the Eastern Front is treated in Almothum beyye Alwašem. A detailed portrayal of the fighting is given in novels such as Bašša Qetaw, Ar'aya and Almothum beyye Alwašem. All the writers maintain that the Ethiopians fought courageously against their enemy. It was only the enemy's superiority in arms, its use of war planes and its employment of poison gas in the

war that helped it to gain victory. According to Ar'aya and Bašša Qeṭaw the superiority in armament was not the only reason for the defeat of the Ethiopian army. The army lacked training, organisation and discipline. Besides, the leaders are also said to have made certain strategic errors. Endawattáčč qarračč notes that the complacent attitude of the older generation also contributed to the defeat of the Ethiopians. The older generation's unnecessary underestimation of the strength of the enemy hindered the young generation from making timely preparations. The novel asserts that the war planes and poison gas cannot be sufficient reason for the defeat. In Ar'aya, too, the uncritical underestimation of the enemy force is referred to as a collective folly. All the works treated in this study assert that the retreat from the fronts was totally disorganised. The Ethiopian army was harrassed by incessant bombardments by the enemy planes and the continuous attack by the hostile local population. The details of the retreat are given in Ar'aya, Bašša Qeṭaw and Yamayčaw Quslāñña.

The Emperor's flight to Europe was the immediate political effect of the defeat and it meant the absence of a legitimate political power in Ethiopia. Some novels such as Ag'azi and Yamayčaw Quslāñña acclaim the Emperor's flight to Europe as a great political victory. They claim that the fate of Ethiopia was closely tied to his safety.

Novels such as Bašša Qeṭaw and Addabay condemn the flight as a treacherous decision made against the interest of the Ethiopian people. The writers of the latter novels argue that the Emperor's flight demoralised many patriotic Ethiopians who were ready to fight to the last by rallying around him. Ar'aya is convinced that the Emperor could have acted productively if he had waged a guerrilla warfare by moving from place to place within the country. All the writers assert that the Fascist political administration was basically oppressive, though at times it resorted to a policy of rapprochement. As is indicated in Bašša Qeṭaw the Italian occupation of Ethiopia aroused the indignation of democratic forces all over the world. The Black Americans and African intellectuals expressed their solidarity with Ethiopia. The war and occupation also exposed the impotency of the League of Nations in defending the sovereignty of member nations.

As the analysis of the works show, the war disorganised stable families, affected class relationships and changed people's way of life in general. It also gave rise to certain social problems such as alcoholism and prostitution. Economically, the war impoverished the people and left thousands of people homeless.

Children and aged people were left without supporters. Though with their own interests in mind, during the occupation the Italians built many roads, and hospitals as is acknowledged in Addabay and Bašša Qetaw. The Italian occupation also intensified the unurbanisation process in the country.

During the five years of Italian occupation the anti-Fascist patriotic resistance did not subside. As soon as the Italians entered Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian patriots retreated to different parts of the country. People from different classes, nationalities, religious groups and sexes took part in the struggle. The patriots, in the process of their struggle, formed the All Ethiopian Patriots Association, an organ that brought the different patriotic groups under a single umbrella. The resistance movement grew in strength while fighting against the Fascist army and its collaborators. The novels and plays acknowledge the vital contribution of the undercover agents in the successes of the patriotic struggle. Novels such as Ag'azi and Yamayčaw Quslanna give more weight to the political struggle of the exiled Emperor than to the struggle waged by the patriots. Ag'azi, in particular, considers the patriotic struggle as an appendage to the Emperor's struggle. Novels such as Ar'aya, Bašša Qetaw

Addabay and Nāṣannāt try to show the patriotic resistance as a movement which struggled independently of the Emperor. Except Ar'aya the rest of the novels in the latter group are written after the Emperor was ousted from power. Therefore, they are more articulate and outspoken in their criticism of the Emperor.

Liberation is shown to have been attained through the struggle of the Ethiopian people and the assistance of the British government. Ag'azi and Yamayčaw Quslāñña try to present the Emperor as a key person in the liberation of the country. Bašša Qeṭaw, Addabay and Nāṣannāt consider the patriotic movement as the major force that brought liberation. Yālemžat assesses the significance and extent of the British assistance but also exposes their colonialist ambitions towards Ethiopia. Novels such as Yālemžat and Addabay and plays such as Ennat Alām Tānnu extend their stories right to the condition of the country in the aftermath of liberation. They generally underline that all the hopes and expectations of the Ethiopian people were frustrated. The patriots were shown harassed while the collaborators emerged as champions of the liberation of Ethiopia. As is evident in Ennat Alām Tānnu Ethiopia embraced her enemy and killed her guardians, fed the traitors and rejected her sons.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that the Thesis  
is my original work and has not been presented for  
a degree in any other University.

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Place:

Addis Ababa University

Date:

June 4, 1990

