

THE OROMO OF WOLLEGA: A HISTORICAL
SURVEY TO 1910.

School of Graduate Studies

The Oromo of Wollega: A Historical Survey to 1910

A Thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

of the

Addis Ababa University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in History

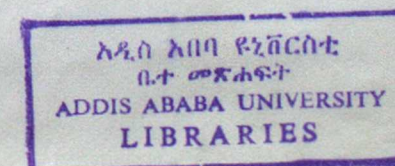
by

Tesema Ta'a

July 1980

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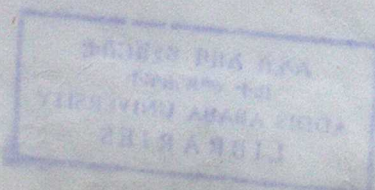
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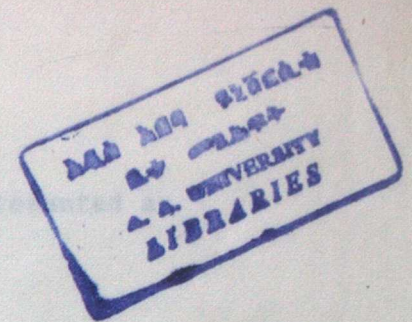
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For the Transliteration Project

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

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies



The Oromo of Wollega: A Historical Survey to 1910

by

Tesema Ta'a

Approved by: _____

Taddesse Tamrat

Advisor

NEGUSSAY AYELE

Examiner

Merid W. Amare

Examiner

Berhanou Abetie

Examiner

A stylized signature of Taddesse Tamrat, written in dark ink.

A signature of Negussay Ayale, written in dark ink.

A signature of Merid W. Amare, written in dark ink.

A signature of Berhanou Abetie, written in dark ink.

Key to the Transliteration System Used.

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

1st.	በ	=	Ba
2nd.	ቡ	=	Bu
3rd.	ቢ	=	Bi
4th.	ባ	=	Ba
5th.	ቤ	=	Be
6th.	ብ	=	Bi
7th.	ቦ	=	Bo

II. Regarding the sixth form in the above list, it must be noted that the "i" will be suffixed to the letter only if the latter is vocalized or stressed. Otherwise it won't be required at all. As a general rule also, the "i" is not required when the sixth form is the last letter of a word.

Examples.

መጦር	=	Memhir
ብድር	=	Biddir

III. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:-

ሸ	=	Sh - Shanqilla
ቸ	=	Ch
ገ	=	n - Naa
ከ	=	Zh - Gezh
ጃ	=	J - Jarso

IV. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:-

ቀ	=	q - Qoro
ጠ	=	t - Tef
ጡ	=	ch - Macha

The seven sounds of the Kpelle alphabet are represented as follows:

pa	=	pa
pe	=	pe
bi	=	bi
bo	=	bo
di	=	di
de	=	de
gi	=	gi
go	=	go

Regarding the sixth form in the above list, it must be noted that the "i" will be omitted in the latter only if the latter is preceded by a stressed syllable. Otherwise it won't be omitted at all. As a general rule also, the "i" is not omitted when the sixth form is the last letter of a word.

Transliterated	Original	Meaning
pa	pa	father
pe	pe	brother
bi	bi	mother
bo	bo	uncle
di	di	grandfather
de	de	grandmother
gi	gi	father-in-law
go	go	mother-in-law

8	=	S
0	=	P
8	=	d
0	=	Hinde

V. Germination should always be indicated by doubling -
eg. Fido Bokkissa

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude for the constant guidance and supervision I received from my Advisor Dr. Taddesse Tamrat.

Dr. Taddesse Tamrat sacrificed his commitments by devoting most of his time to my thesis including week-ends. The effort he put into my thesis is much beyond his role as an advisor for he took a great interest in the work that I had been doing.

My thanks also go to W/O Hanna Mamo who meticulously typed the thesis and completed the work in time. I would also like to thank all those who have helped me in conducting the research whose names are too numerous to be mentioned in such a brief acknowledgement.

Financial support from the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with the Developing Countries (SAREC) obtained through the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission and from the Addis Ababa University which was used to cover the expenses incurred in the research work undertaken and in the preparation of this dissertation is gratefully acknowledged.

P R E F A C E

Most of the material used for this research was collected during a brief study tour of Wollega from the end of July to early October 1979. The field work was done with the financial assistance rendered by the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University. The material consists almost entirely of oral traditions. It has also been supplemented by other available written literature. Although one usually encounters various problems because of the shortcomings entailed in the use of oral tradition, it has proved to be an indispensable tool in the reconstruction of the history of societies where written documents are scarce or non-existent. In this work the necessary efforts have been made to overcome the problems by a careful selection of informants and in cautiously taking detailed notes and interpreting the information transmitted by oral traditions.

Although the main focus of the thesis is on the socio-economic transformations of the Oromo society since the early 19th. century, an attempt has been made to tie up the loose ends of the traditions regarding Oromo expansion and migration particularly in what is today Wollega region.

Much more remains to be done in this area and even a definitive and exhaustive interpretation of the rather contradictory traditional material already collected is bound to take more time. It is our hope that there will be ample opportunities to continue to do this as part of the on-going research activities of the Department of History.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a historical survey of the Oromo of Wollega from the early days of the Oromo ^{expansion} migration which took place in the first half of the sixteenth century, up to the first decade of the twentieth century. Although the period is too wide to be covered fully in such a short work, in the absence of written sources, such a preliminary note on so long a period is useful and invaluable.

The paper deals, among other things with the patterns of settlement, the dynamics of socio-political and economic aspects of the Oromo of Wollega including the changes that were effected over a number of years. Above all, tremendous efforts have been made to reassess the origin, the early socio-political organization, the causes and directions of the Oromo migration at large. Moreover, the paper treats a general discussion on the pre-Oromo societies which include their modes of life, their reactions towards the Oromo expansion and their eventual assimilation. It is hoped that such discussions may throw more light and to some extent fill the historical gap of the pre-Oromo populations of the area in question.

Throughout the paper, attempts have been made to emphasize the internal dynamics of change among the Oromo, the independent socio-political developments and the external influences which have been internalized by the Oromo leading to the emergence of a society with a different socio-economic and political order.

Finally, the paper shows how regionalism gradually gave way to a centralized administration system with all its consequences on the majority of the population concerned.

Chapter I

Origins and Early Expansion of the Oromo: An Overview

The early history of the Oromo¹ is shrouded with mystery because of various reasons. First and foremost is the fact that Oromo is not a written language and that the people were not in a position to record their own history. Secondly, there seems to have been no scholar who made a serious study of Oromo history. Thirdly, the Ethiopian ancien-regime did not encourage serious investigations into the history of the less privileged ethnic groups in the country. Finally, and as a result of all the above factors, most of the written accounts we have on Oromo history are full of distortions and misleading.

Many attempts have been made to disentangle the mystery of the origin of the Oromo since the sixteenth century. However, the problem of the original homeland of the Oromo seems to be far from being settled. Travellers, missionaries and historians have put forward different views on the origins of the Oromo² prior to their great expansion in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, it could be seen that these views are still open to question and have not yet fully resolved the issue.

The Oromo constitute the largest group of the Cushitic speaking peoples of Ethiopia³, with some representatives extending beyond the Ethio-Kenyan frontier⁴.

More recently, H.S. Lewis has critically reexamined the available literature and has come out with what appears to be a more convincing reconstruction⁵ on the origin of the Oromo. Having closely and thoroughly reviewed the existing evidence, he has finally reached the conclusion that the Oromo "originated in the area between and around lakes Shamo

and Stephanie in the area of the Galana Sagan and Galana Dulei, just South of Bahargamo and Mt. Wolabo, in north-west Borana."⁶ Traditions we have collected recently on the issue also seem to support this conclusion. Macha and Tulama informants readily point to Haro Wolabu as the cradle of their people⁷. Arsi traditions say that their original homeland was Baredu Kurkuru⁸ while the Ittu and Humbena of Harargie maintain that their ancestors first came from Tulu Mormor⁹. The area around Tulu Nam-dur which literally means "the mountain of ancient man" is cited by the Borana as the ancient habitat of their forefathers¹⁰; and Haro Girja assume a similar significance for the Guji¹¹. It is most interesting to note, however, that all these places are located south-east of the Rift Valley Lake region and around the headwaters of rivers Dawa and Ganale, in Ethiopia proper. The traditions collected and published by the late Yilma Deressa, indicating that the Haro Wolabu, Lake Abaya and the Hidi Dadi areas were early sites of Oromo settlement¹² similarly reflect the basic unity in Oromo traditions and their almost complete unanimity on the general direction of the earliest habitat of their common ancestors.

Bahrey's History of the Galla¹³ is the earliest written account on the Oromo available in Ethiopian languages. He has been cited by historians, anthropologists, and other students of Oromo history and culture. Bahrey was a simple monk who apparently lived during the reigns of Lebne-Dingil (1508-40), Gelawdewos (1540-59), Minas (1559-63), and Serse-Dingil (1563-97 ?). As a member of the monastery of Birbir Maryam in Gamo Awraja during this part of the sixteenth century, he was a contemporary of the great Oromo migrations of which an account he wrote in Geez¹⁴, sometime around 1593. His book contains a number

of invaluable items of information on sixteenth century Oromo society and their migrations. It must be pointed out, however, that he had all the cultural and religious biases of the 16th. century Ethiopian Christian society and he is clearly apologetic and highly disconcerted about Oromo successes against the Christian state. Although a contemporary of 16th. century events, Bahrey looked at Oromo society from outside and could not have had full access into the internal dynamics of their social, cultural, and economic organization.

According to Bahrey, the Oromo came from the west crossing "the river of their country" called Galana to the frontier of Bali¹⁵. H.S. Lewis says that the word "Galan" means "river" in Oromo and suggests that they might have crossed the Galan, Sagan and Galana Dulei or Dawa or Ganale rivers west of Bali¹⁶. But Bahrey's assertions as well as Lewis' suggestions are open to question. In the first place if we accept that the Oromo have lived in southern Ethiopia for many years and as Bahrey pointed out the Oromo "crossed the river of their country," there might have been continuous crossing and recrossing of the rivers by the Oromo in the past. Moreover, since there were many groups of Oromo tribes by the sixteenth century, one or two tribes might have crossed the Galana who may not represent all of the Oromo tribes in southern Ethiopia. In the case of Lewis' suggestions, the word Galana does not simply mean "river" in Oromo but it means an exceptionally big river which leaves us in some doubts about which one of the rivers mentioned is meant. However, the suggestions and the assertion of both throw some light on the initial direction of the Oromo migration. Bahrey further indicates that some Oromo groups came by way of Kuera and attacked Gamo and Waji, therefore, identifying

the area south of Lake Chamo in the Sagan Dulei region as the probable homeland of the Oromo¹⁷, which is more or less supported by the Oral traditions.

Although attempts have already been made to identify the original homeland of the Oromo, it is neigh impossible at this stage to indicate what the exact extent of their pre-16th century territories were.

Neither is it possible here to indicate whether the Oromo as such had made individual or group contacts with the Christian and Muslim population prior to the beginning of the 16th century. There are, however, some tantalizing references which seem to show that Oromo presence in the area may have already been felt by the major states in the region¹⁸.

Very clearly, the Oromo were a highly mobile people with large herds of cattle constituting the backbone of their socio-economic organization during the great migrations. They exhibit a number of common cultural features with such well-known populations of Eastern Africa as the Massai¹⁹. Nevertheless, it may not be that the Oromo lived exclusively on breeding and herding cattle and sheep. Here, Murdock and Haberland's arguments may give some clues. Murdock supposes that the Oromo first practiced an agricultural economy and used animal husbandry as a supplimentary activity²⁰. Haberland also argues that many elements in the primordial culture of the Oromo indicate that they were at first a primarily agricultural community.²¹ These are, however, beyond the framework of the existing historical sources and it cannot now be asserted one way or the other. But it is interesting to note that the Oromo later became in Ethiopian history a sedentary agricultural people par excellence practicing mixed farming; and it is not certain whether this transformation has been all due to developments after their migrations in the 16th century.

The Oromo used to govern themselves according to an egalitarian socio-political organization known as the gada system²² and were culturally homogeneous with common genealogical ties. The gada system of the Oromo is per se a purely social institution in its early days in which one could find analogies with what Engles calls the "gentile Constitution" of primitive societies:

...(The) gentile constitution is wonderful in all its childlike simplicity. Everything runs smoothly without soldiers, gendarmes or police; without nobles, kings, governors, prefects or judges; without prisons; without trials. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole body of the concerned the gens or the tribe or the individual gentes among themselves... the household is run in common and communistically by a number of families, the land is tribal property, only the small gardens being temporarily assigned to the households - still, not a bit of our extensive and complicated machinery of administration is required. Those concerned decide, and in most cases century-old custom has already regulated everything. There can be no poor and needy - the communistic household and the gens know their obligations towards the aged, the sick and those disabled in war.

A similarly smooth functioning of the "gentile constitution" was manifested in the gada system under which every male member of an Oromo community belonged to one of five groups each of which was called a gada and the five groups were called Missensa.²⁴ Once a man entered a gada he remained in it for the rest of his life. However, for the first forty years of his life-time his role and status in the community had to pass through five different phases or grades with each phase comprising eight years.²⁵

Bahrey's description implies that the gada system was common to all Oromo during the expansion period and it is believed that the system used to be exactly the same for all Ethiopian Oromo, although the names given to each of the five grades may differ from tribe to tribe.²⁶

Under this system which was uniquely democratic, an Abba Boku (father of the scepter) was chosen every eight years from among the fourth grade. The Abba Boku was a law-maker who maintained peace and order and administered justice for the eight years of his period in office. He also supervised the election of the Abba Dula (war leader chosen from the third grade).²⁷ According to d'Abbadie,²⁸ a French scholar who visited the Gudru tribe of Macha, around 1845, the gada system was the innovation of an Oromo named Mako Bili in 1589. It is extremely doubtful if not impossible to suppose that one man could introduce such a complex socio-political organization spontaneously. Rather, according to tradition Mako Bili was an Abba Boku of the Macha branch at Tute Bisil before their expansion towards the west,²⁹ which shall be treated in the next chapter. Moreover, the date given by d'Abbadie is too late for the gada system seems to have been in full operation long before the sixteenth century Oromo ^{expansion} migration.

On the other hand Haberland argues that since Oromo culture is archaic and extremely simple, the complicated nature of the gada system makes it appear a foreign element."³⁰ Actually gada is an ancient Oromo term which means "era", and indicates the system of cyclic change in time through which all the male members of the community have to pass in their life-time. And there is no reason whatsoever why this should have been of a foreign origin. Rather, the system must be seen as a

Rather, the system must be seen as a natural constitutional device evolved by the Oromo in their long socio-economic transformation over the millenia and has what Engles describes as: "the fundamental features of social constitution of primitive times before the introduction of the state."³¹ Seen from the perspective of later class societies, the system obviously had the advantages of avoiding the exploitation of man by man and the concentration of power in the hands of one man or group for a long period of time.

Although, this type of socio-political organization based on age is quite common and widespread in African societies, especially in eastern Africa, some scholars have observed that: "Among the ~~peoples~~ ^{Oromo} of Ethiopia it has reached a most remarkable level of complexity."³²

Bahrey transmits an interesting description of how smoothly the gada system functioned in the sixteenth century.

They have neither kind ³ nor master like other peoples, but they obey the Luba during a period of eight years; at the end of eight years another Luba is made, and the first gives up his office. They do this at fixed times;...

He also makes an effort to underline the basic differences between his own christian feudal society and that of the classless Oromo at the time:

The wise men often discuss these matters and say, 'How is it that the ~~Galla~~ ^{Oromo} defeat us, though we are numerous and well supplied with arms?'... it is because our nation is divided into ten classes, nine of which take no part in war and make no shame of displaying their fear, only the tenth class makes war and fights to the best of its ability... Among the ~~Galla~~, on the contrary, these nine classes which we have mentioned do not exist; all men, from small to great, are instructed in warfare, and for this reason they ruin and kill us.

The most important question here is not whether Bahrey's class analysis of sixteenth century Ethiopia is scientific; nor whether his reasons for the Oromo superiority over the Christians are valid. What is of particular significance in this context is that he implicitly defines the existence of a classless Oromo society at the time.

It is also apparent from Bahrey's statements that the general Christian notion of the socio-economic organization of the expanding Oromo had been changing since the latter first came into contact with the Christian state. It seems that the original impression the Christians had, was of the Oromo migrating as one single unit, in a great undifferentiated flood. Gradually, however, they apparently started to have a more meaningful appreciation of the internal dynamics of Oromo society and their subdivision into a number of tribal communities. This is quite clear from the following comment made by Bahrey in his History of the

"Originally their custom was to set out together to war; but after a long period of time they quarrelled among themselves and separated, as did Abraham and Lot,...³⁵

The underlying factors and causes for the expansion of the Oromo have been a subject of considerable controversy among students of Oromo society. Reference has already been made to the view that the pressure of the Somali provided a major impetus for the Oromo migration into the Ethiopian highlands.³⁶ However, neither Bahrey's contemporary testimony nor later traditions mention the Somali or any other people pressing upon the Oromo and driving them out of their homeland. However, it is irrational to hold that the Oromo who later

had the power to conquer vast territories from the well-organized Christian and Muslim states "should have been so weak as to be driven away by the Somali, who were culturally their equals."³⁷ On the contrary, indications of later Oromo occupancy of large territories in what is today Northern Somaliland³⁸ clearly show that the Oromo actually had the upper hand in their relations with the Somali.

The same pattern seems to have obtained in Oromo relations with the Somali in eastern Africa where Oromo presence is established since the 16th. and 17th. centuries. Here again, it is apparent that the Somali were the weaker of the two as Christopher Ehret attempts to show:

At their height the Galla were arbiters of north eastern Kenya along both sides of the Tana River and raided as far as the Kenya Coast and the north border of Tanzania... since the early nineteenth century a resurgence of Somali power has eclipsed that of the Galla in large parts of the region.

According to traditions collected by Yilma Deressa,⁴⁰ the geographical conditions of the areas in which the Oromo used to live, especially the land around Haro Wolabu, (Tulu Mormor, Tulu Nam-Dur and Haro Girja) before the first half of the sixteenth century were extremely fertile and conducive for grain cultivation and animal husbandry in particular. There was enough rain for vegetation and enough water for the people and their cattle. Above all, there was plenty of pasture for the numerous herds and flocks that the Oromo used to raise; and the period is traditionally considered as the "Golden Age" of Oromo history. Therefore, it seems that in due course of time the number of people and cattle increased to such a great extent that the

Oromo faced the problem of shortage of grazing land and the problem of over population which were both ecological and demographic problems.⁴¹

This seems to have been only a natural development where the growth of production resulted in the growth of population and other productive forces thus generating the motive forces for the famous sixteenth century migration of the Oromo.

The tremendous increase in population probably resulted in the split of the Oromo into various tribal groups, clans and families⁴² and at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Oromo spread out in all directions which could be considered as a turning point in their history. Of the two main tribes mentioned by Bahrey the Borana were the group who generally took the Western direction while the Bartuma migrated, broadly speaking, in the eastern direction.⁴³

During the migration of the Oromo it would be wrong to think that all of the tribes who lived in a certain area completely evacuated their original homeland or the land they occupied in the process of their expansion. This is underlined by Bahrey who says that; "When the Boran quit their country, they do not all go, but those who wish to leave do so, for they have no ruler who can enforce his order, and each man does what seems best to him."⁴⁴ This quite clearly indicates that there always remained tribes, clans or families of the Oromo in their previous areas as permanent settlers, thus leaving behind chains of Oromo settlements along the major routes of their migrations.

The Bartuma tribes moved north and north-east and settled in what are today the Bali, Arsi, Hararghe and Wollo administrative regions. The Borana, on the other hand moved towards the north and north-west leaving the Omo and Gibe river basins to the left. They were divided

into Tulama and Macha. Tulama settled on the Shoan plateau separated from Macha by the Awash river on the west. Yet another branch of the Borana still occupies regions of Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya.⁴⁵

The Oromo first raided Bali, between 1522-1530 which coincided with the Muslim - Christian war in Ethiopia which lasted from 1527-1543.⁴⁶ The Oromo, who were neither Christians nor Muslims were actually fighting against both.

The initial expansion of the Oromo cannot be considered as a migration en masse. It was rather a more gradual movement with the Oromo, like other nomadic invaders, "launching raids and rapidly retreating."⁴⁷ Thus, they advanced continuously every eight years by moving northward into the Ethiopian highlands. Every eight years the Oromo had to change their gada officials who had to invade the lands not conquered by the preceding gada leaders. The first two gada, Melbah and Mudana, conquered Bali; the third, Kilole, invaded Dawaro; and the fourth, Biffole, continued the invasion of Dawaro as well as Fatagar.⁴⁸ The fifth gada, Michile,⁴⁹ established its headquarters in the central highlands of Ethiopia at Oda Nabe as a strategic area, south of present day Addis Ababa, near the small town of Dukam on the way to Debre-Zeit, and launched a more planned attack on both the Muslim and the Christian kingdoms.⁵⁰

In 1559, the Muslims, under their leader Nur, attacked the Christian kingdom to revenge their fallen leader, Ahmed Gran; and the Emperor Galawdwos was killed after a bloody battle.⁵¹ But the Oromo of the Bartuma branch had been watching the war and immediately fell upon the victorious Muslims at Hazalo⁵² and wiped them out.⁵³ Subsequently they overran the Muslim areas which they began to effectively occupy thus establishing the Ittu-Humbena settlement.

See up

each new generation

By the time of their sixth gada, Harmufa, the Oromo began an invasion of Angot, Gan, Amhara and Begemdir (Gondar). During the period of the seventh gada, Robale, they launched an attack on the provinces of the Christian kingdom in three directions, from Wollo in the North into Begemdir (Gondar) and Dambia, from the center into Shoa and into Gojjam in the west. In the period of the eighth gada, Birmaje, they attacked Dambia and Damot. The ninth gada, Mulata 1586-1594,⁵⁴ invaded Tigre in the North, Gojjam and Damot in the West.⁵⁵

In the 17th Century, the Oromo continued their attacks on Gojjam and Dambia but were resisted strenuously by the Christian emperors. The Blue Nile gorges and the inaccessible mountains were also equally responsible for keeping the Oromo from the lands they coveted. By that time the Oromo had already established their settlements in such areas as Bali, Dawaro, Fatagar, Shoa, Damot, Ifat and Hararghe. During the same period the Wollo, Yejju and Raya tribes settled in what is today the Wollo administrative region, stretching up to Lake Ashange in Southern Tigray.⁵⁶

The pattern of expansion of the Oromo as well as the essence of their culture have long been misunderstood and distorted in the works of many modern writers. Thus Astme⁵⁷ has given the analogy of a flooding river for the Oromo expansion to underline his own misguided notion that the migrations were aimless. Ullendorff has also demonstrated his ignorance by saying that:

The ~~Gallas~~ ^{Oromo} had nothing to contribute to the civilization of Ethiopia; they possessed no material or intellectual culture, and their social organization was at a far lower stage of development than that of the population among whom they settled.....⁵⁸

Such points are full of cultural biases and misunderstandings; since one could clearly observe that the gada organization was carefully designed to bring the vast lands of Ethiopia proper under their control within a short period of time. Historians have unanimously agreed upon the fact that the Oromo have clearly appreciated the contemporary political relations of the Christian kingdom and that of the Muslim Sultanate which had weakened each other through endless wars and conflicts, and they took advantage of the situation to fulfil their aims and objectives.

It must be understood that the Oromo migrations were not taking place into an entirely empty land. It involved considerable displacements of other peoples and the Oromo sphere was only extended by dint of continuous war and bloodshed.⁵⁹ As a result the Oromo had overrun various kingdoms and social groups and absorbed new ethnic elements in the process of expansion from the sixteenth century onwards; and they had in turn been influenced by other cultures because encounters of this magnitude are almost always dual in character.⁶⁰

CHAPTER II

Traditions on Oromo Expansion and Settlement in Wollega

Written sources on the pre-Oromo inhabitants of Wollega are scant and their early history has been shrouded in mystery no less than that of the Oromo.

Local Oromo traditions affirm that the area was originally inhabited by peoples of different linguistic affiliations among which the following are specifically mentioned; Agadi, Gabato, Kaza, Mesengo Shiluk, Mao, Damoto, Ganqa and Sinicho.¹ These peoples belong to two different linguistic groupings: The Agadi, Gabato, Kaza, Mesengo, Shiluk and Mao are identified by the traditions as belonging to what are usually called the Shanqilla and their languages constitute part of the Nilo-Saharan language family in that area.² The Damoto, Ganqa, and Sinicho, on the other hand, are remembered as distinct groups with an apparently more developed socio-economic organization of their own and with the people who were fair complexioned being eventually allowed to intermarry with the conquering Oromo.³

The Agadi are believed to have occupied the area east of the Tuga mountain range with present day Amuma as their central habitat. Remembered only in early traditions of Oromo expansion into the area, they are said to have been completely assimilated and do not have modern descendants among the populations of Wollega today.⁴ West of the area formerly occupied by the Agadi lived the Gabato who are said to have been the largest group of the Shanqilla when the Oromo first came there. Their realms extended to the Didessa valley in the west and their modern descendants are still found in the hot, lowland valleys of the Didessa and Anger rivers into which they were eventually pushed by the

dominant Oromo⁵ who now occupy the more fertile and salubrious highland regions. The Kaza who now live in the hot Abbay valley in Limmu, Amuru and Ghida Woredas are also said to have occupied parts of the highland areas of what is today Horro Gudru Awraja as far west as Shambo town from where they were later displaced by the Oromo. Of the pre-Oromo inhabitants mentioned in the traditions, the Shiluk and the Mesengo are most peripheral and their names are only barely mentioned. It is however interesting to note that especially the Mesengo are said to have come from the area of what is today the Sudan, following the Abbay Valley and to have dispersed southwards upon arrival at the confluence with the Didessa which they are believed to have followed in their southward migrations. Today, there are quite a sizeable Mesengo living in Qellem Awraja in the south-west corner of Wollega region.⁶

The overall tradition about the pre-Oromo way of life of the Shanquilla groups indicates that they were then in the earliest stage of socio-economic development. Many are said to have still practised a hunting-gathering economy and lived in caves and other natural shelters. But some others, like the Mao are specifically identified by the local traditions as having reached a higher stage of economic development and are said to have kept flocks of sheep and goats as well as some herds of cattle.⁷

Groups of Mao are today found widely dispersed in different parts of Wollega region. There are thus many Mao living in the hot lowland area of the Didessa valley between Neqemte and Ghimbi; others live in Asossa Awraja further west; and there is a viable Mao community in Qellem Awraja with Anfillo Woreda as their major centre. Although

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they now occupy such widely disconnected areas, the traditions are quite explicit that they inhabited a much wider and continuous region prior to the advent of the Oromo. And the special position given to the Mao in the traditions which remember them as most developed of the Shanqilla is also connected with the apparently longer interaction they seem to have had with one of the more organized Omotic inhabitants of the area who had conquered part of the Mao people over whom they established a ruling dynasty called the Bussase in Anfillo.⁹

The Bussase dynasty of Anfillo is clearly remembered by the early traditions as having put up a tough resistance against oromo expansion in the area.¹⁰ It was a well organized state dominated by people whose origin is said to have been from Kafa¹¹ and who spoke an Omotic language related to Kafficho and Sinicho. It is not absolutely clear from the traditions how extensive the territories of the Bussase were in pre-Oromo days. But they are closely associated only with Anfillo. There they are said to have built defensive trenches against the expanding Oromo and held onto their own until the very end of the nineteenth century as we shall see later on.¹² The wide dispersal of the Mao in Wollega today seems to have misled modern linguists who have come up with two subdivisions, namely Northern Mao and Southern Mao. While the so-called Northern Mao is said to be Nilo-Saharan, Southern Mao is identified as Omotic.¹³ This is most confusing not only because people having the same appellation of Mao are divided into two distinct African language families; but also because the Mao of Asossa might qualify as a Western Mao and which is not taken into consideration by the linguists. The truth of the matter lies, however, in that the so-called South Mao is essentially the language of the dominant Bussase

minority which has also been spoken to some extent by their Mao subjects.¹⁴

It seems to us, then that it would be less confusing to use Bussase in place of South Mao in the linguistic classification.

Closely related linguistically to the Bussase are the Sinicho who now occupy the hot lowland region of the Abbay valley between the Dabus and Didessa rivers and extend further into Wambara Woreda in Gojjam region beyond the Abbay. Traditionally they are believed to have been organized into local chieftaincies of their own which strongly resisted the Oromo expansion.¹⁵ Their resistance is reputed to have been so strong that some informants even indicate that their very name is derived from sinicho which in Oromo means very hot pepper.¹⁶ The traditions also underscore the very close relations they have with that part of the population in Wambara which speaks a related Omotic language and calls itself Shinasha.¹⁷ This important development was also noticed by the Jesuit priest Fernandez who made the journey from Dembia to Enarea in 1613. At one place he tells us that he and his party travelling "through the country of the Gongas, they reached Sinasshe, an important town of the heathen Gongas..."¹⁸ This was north of the Abbay and Fernandez further reported that there were other Gongas south of the Abbay "who live there as subjects of the Gallas."¹⁹ This situation is also graphically represented in Almeida's map of Ethiopia where the so-called Gongas are located on both sides of the Abbay.²⁰ The significance of this point is that already in the early 17th. century groups of Sinicho or Shinasha, who are identified with the Gongas by Fernandez, lived on both sides of the Abbay with the southern section dominated by the Oromo. The Shinasha are today an agricultural people inhabiting the highland zone of Wambara; and

it is almost certain that the Sinicho of the Oromo traditions (called Gonga by Fernandez) were also one of the pre-Oromo peoples living on the western plateau of Wollega region.

Another important pre-Oromo people in the area were the Ganqa who are said to have dominated the whole region between the Dabus and the Didessa rivers and their centre at Tulu Yambel. According to the available oral material, the Ganqa had a very well organized and strong state which long resisted the advance of the Oromo under the leadership of their ruler, Abba Bisqano. Abba Bisqano is reputed to have dug trenches around Tulu Yambel and put up a stiff resistance against the Sibu who were the spear-head of the early Oromo expansion in the area. The degree of sophistication that Bisqano's state is said to have reached in pre-Oromo days is illustrated by a poignant story about how he solved his problems of water supply for his cattle. It is narrated that Abba Bisqano's cattle did not need to be driven to far away locations for Hora (mineral water). Instead, he is said to have used a large number of Shanqilla labourers lined up between his residence and a distant Hora to relay endless pots of mineral water to supply his cattle right at his own stable. Although this may be an exaggeration of later generations, it is still indicative of the considerable internal strength of Bisqano's society. The rather romantic story of the final breakdown of his mountain fortress also points in the same direction. According to this legend, the Oromo are said to have taken him by surprise and besieged him on the occasion of the wedding of his daughter when he was giving a fabulous feast to his followers. The occasion is also internalized in an Oromo saying: "Wara Abba Bisqano gafa chida bade" which means that the family of Abba Bisqano was destroyed on a wedding day.²¹

The traditions about the Ganqa are unanimous in pointing out that they were a leading agricultural people growing different kinds of grains in the rich highland areas under their control. Local informants narrate that the Ganqa had an ancient custom of saving representative measures of every type of grain and other crops harvested every year for a ritual consumption at an annual religious ceremony called Yero.²² It is most interesting to note that Yero is the name of the leading skygod traditionally worshipped by the people of Kafa.²³ Since the traditions on the Ganqa do not tell us anything about their pre-Oromo ethnic and linguistic affiliations, this important ritual connection with Kafa may indeed supply the missing link. It may well be that the Ganqa, like the Bussase and the Sinicho, were of Omotic origin and may also have had historical ties with other Omotic peoples further south.

Today, there are no distinct Ganqa groups as such in Wollega and they are said to have been completely assimilated -- both ethnically and linguistically -- by the conquering Oromo. Nevertheless, a number of genealogical studies have made it possible to trace some prominent families with Ganqa origin in widely separated areas far from Tulu Yambel: in Gori Woreda, Bodji, around Nedjo, Ghimbi, and even at Qaqe near Dembidolo.²⁴

The last major people mentioned by the traditions as having dominated the highland areas in pre-Oromo days are the Damoto. The traditions do not tell us much about them except to say that they first resisted Oromo expansion, many were conquered and assimilated, and the rest fled northwards across the Abbay into Gojjam region where there is today the important Awraja of Qolla-Dega Damot.²⁵ Of those who were assimilated by the Oromo there are still some families identified by the local people as distinctively Damota in Damoto meti in Nedjo Woreda, Bodji and Aira.²⁶ Eventhough the traditions

on these people are rather meagre the significance of Damot in the medieval history of the area was clearly considerable. It is known from both Ethiopian and Arabic sources that there was a well-organized powerful kingdom of Damot which dominated the whole area of central, western and southern Shoa with a much more extensive sphere of influence further west and south. Most probably, the later kingdoms which flourished in this region -- Hadya, Enarea, Janjero, Kafa, and Wolamo -- derived their origins from the medieval kingdom of Damot.²⁷ References to Damot in the sources until the sixteenth century also clearly indicate that it included parts of what is today Wollega. What is more relevant is that throughout the medieval period, Damot was reputed to be a leading source of gold in Ethiopia.²⁸ Even today districts around Nedjo, Aira, Yubdo, Gori and the Dabus river bed are noted for their gold which is traditionally panned by the local people. And as we have seen above, it is precisely in the districts of Nedjo and Aira, among others, that distinctive Damoto families are identified as a submerged group among the Oromo with whom they have been intermarried and by whom they have been completely assimilated. All these points make it almost certain that the reference to Damoto in Wollega traditions is connected with some of the populations of the former kingdom of Damot who must have still constituted an important section of the inhabitants there in pre-Oromo days.

It was against these populations that the Oromo began to expand during the sixteenth century. While the sundry Shanqilla groups were still in their earliest stages of development at the time the Ganqa, Sinicho and Damoto were already well-organized with fairly strong kingdoms and chieftaincies of their own; and the reference in the early European sources and especially in Almeida's Map to the so-called "Kingdom of Bizamo" must certainly be connected with these more effectively organized communities still remembered in the local traditions.

According to tradition, the point of departure for the Macha-Tulama expansion into Shoa and Wollega was the reputed site of Oda Nabe mentioned in the previous chapter.²⁹ Most of the informants also insist that a branch of the Wollo - which is according to Bahrey³⁰ of Bartuma and not of Borana Origin - accompanied the Macha-Tulama as far north as the Entotto mountains. The Macha-Tulama kept common gada centre at Oda Nabe and sent leading representatives there for the regular celebrations long after they had moved out and settled in areas further north and west. While these representatives assembled at Oda Nabe, they received instructions on the basis of Oromo beliefs and folklore; common strategies for further expansion were discussed and decided; and attempts made to arbitrate internal conflicts.³¹ It is very clear that the Oromo had developed traditional mechanisms to regulate the tempo of their expansion, to minimize rival claims on newly occupied territories and to avoid clashes among different clans or tribes, one such mechanism is the system the Oromo call qabiye.³²

Qabiye literally means land holding; but as a system it seems to refer to established rights of precedence in the occupation of newly conquered land. It seems to have been aimed at resolving disputes that could arise within individual clans as well as among different tribes or tribal confederations. Our informants relate that the qabiye system regulated land occupation rights within the same clan by dividing the local community into generational hierarchies. After a community established a new settlement and pressures of population increase as well as land shortages began to be felt, the hobo or elder families had precedence over the Chora or younger families to retain occupation rights on the settlement. Under these circumstances, it was incumbent upon the chora to move ahead, conquer new

lands and establish their settlements. To simplify the implementation of this traditional rule, the chora families often established their residences on the outer fringes of the settlement towards the major direction of their expansion; so that whenever the need arose these families could easily move out into new areas.³³

The gabiye system also had traditional sanctions to regulate land rights among different tribes. Our informants illustrate this by narrating an old story of how the Macha, Tulama, and the Wollo branch that accompanied them decided to demarcate the lands which each of them were to occupy as well as to establish the direction of their eventual expansion. After many years of joint efforts to live and migrate together, we are told, the three Oromo groups decided to separate. To establish where each would set up its initial settlement and in what direction to expand later, they agreed to choose each a ceremonial bull called Korma Kerbicha, harness it with ritual objects to invoke divine blessing, and let it loose to wander freely. Each tribe would then follow its Korma, occupy the land where the bull rested, undertake further expansion in the direction of the bull's movement. This arrangement was made, we are told, when the three Oromo groups were in the environs of what is today Addis Ababa. When the bulls were left loose, Wollo's bull moved north-east towards Quebbena river. Macha's first moved northwards towards Entotto, then shifted westwards and rested near Awash guda (bigger Awash). Tulama's Korma also moved westwards towards Gullele and rested at Ginchi near Awash gallo (smaller Awash). The result was that Wollo moved its own way and separated from the two, while Macha-Tulama claimed gabiye rights on contiguous areas. This led to continuous clashes between the two, clashes which lasted for forty years until they eventually moved their separate ways.³⁴ Such stories are obviously rationalizations of later generations which are apt to simplify

what must have been a much more complex pattern of Oromo expansion in the area since the sixteenth century. Very clearly, claims and counterclaims of the qabiye right to occupy newly conquered territories created endless conflicts among Oromo clans and tribes. The extent to which these fratricidal clashes weakened the Oromo is most graphically described by Alemeida as follows: "If God had not blinded them (the Oromo) and willed that certain families or tribes among them should be at war with one another constantly, there would not have been an inch of land in the (Ethiopian) empire, of which they were not masters".³⁵

The Macha-Tulama confrontation on qabiye rights actually continued long after their traditional separation at the upper waters of the Awash.³⁶ Since this study is however centred on the historical developments in Wollega, our main concern here will be the pattern of expansion of the Macha into this region. Macha traditions tell us that they moved further west after their prolonged conflicts with the Tulama in the area around the present-day town of Ginchi. They are said to have earlier sent reconnaissance squads to assess situations in the organized states of Enarea and the other pre-Oromo people of the region. Encouraged by positive reports from these squads, the Macha are said to have next moved and settled around the hill of Tute Bisil Osole.³⁷ Tute Bisil Osole is located in the upper Gibe basin between Gedo and Billo, well within view from the Addis Ababa - Neqemte road at the small town of Ejaji. Tute Bisil remained the nucleus of the Macha Oromo, we are told, for some five generations and it served them as the point of departure for their further expansion west and southwards. It was with this region as their major centre that the Macha launched their regular attack, on the pre-Oromo states of Enarea and Damot. It was also

here at Tute Bisil that the traditions indicate an increase in the population of the Macha which apparently brought their split into a number of clans and sub-tribes such as Leqa, Sibu, Tume, Amuru, Gudru, Nonno, Jimma, Wollega,³⁸ and Hulle.³⁹ These groups of the Oromo then spread out from Tute Bisil and came to eventually dominate the whole area between the Abbay in the north, the Dabus river and Tulu Welel in the west, and the Gojeb in the south. The southern wave of Macha migration into the rich lands between the Didessa and the Gojeb resulted in the Hulle branch conquering the pre-Oromo populations and eventually establishing the five Gibe kingdoms of Jimma, Gera, Guma and Limmu.⁴⁰ The Tume tribe is said to have moved on westwards to inhabit parts of Ilubabor. The others, Leqa, Sibu, Jimma, Gudru, Amuru and Nonno are said to have gradually conquered what is now Wollega region.⁴¹ Although there are some indications to the contrary, we have not come across any reliable traditions to show that the Oromo had migrated further west than an imaginary line between the Dabus river and Tulu Welel.⁴²

There are some traditional explanations about the motivating factors behind the Macha dispersal from Tute Bisil. An important factor was the continued raids and counter-raids between the Macha and the Tulama. The latter are said to have kept on following the Macha and harassing them in their new settlements even as far west as Tute Bisil itself. The accounts of our informants show that it was only after long and desperate clashes that the traditional Macha-Tulama borderline was finally established at the Guder river basin, with Tulama mostly inhabiting the country on the right hand side of the modern road from Addis Ababa to Neqemte. Another reason for the further expansion of the Macha was the apparent growth in their population and the resultant overcrowding of the farmlands as well as

grazing fields. There are also allusions to outbreaks of serious epidemics in the Tute Bisil area immediately before the Macha dispersal from there.⁴³

Only the Bussase of Anfillo and the famous Ganqa subjects of Abba Bisqano are explicitly identified by our informants as having put up a very serious resistance against the Macha expansion, as indicated earlier in this chapter. The Shanqilla, on the other hand, who are said to have occupied parts of the rich plateau at the time were not equal to the furious advances of the Oromo who were better organized, at a much higher level of socio-economic development, and better armed. While the majority of the pre-Oromo populations, the traditions relate, resisted only with bows and poisoned arrows, the Macha by then had effective cavalry and footmen armed with spears, shields and a special weapon called billa butta.⁴⁴ Our informants also paint a picture of internal conflict among the pre-Oromo populations in general, and this is also said to have contributed to the successes of the Macha. At this stage of their expansion the Macha are said to have been organized into more cohesive groups and they could either reduce their enemies into a dependent status or force them to leave into less favourable areas.⁴⁵

Right from the very beginning of their sixteenth century expansion the Oromo had evolved a meticulous system where by they could assimilate elements of the populations which they reduced into a dependent status. Since they were still a classless society, their primitive communal socio-economic relations were entirely based on ties of kinship. This sort of situation has been outlined by Engles as follows in the case of the Iroquois Indians who, like the Oromo, lived under the framework of what he calls "the gentile constitution".

There is as yet no room for slaves, nor, as a rule, for the subjugation of alien tribes. When the Iroquois conquered the Eries.....about the year 1651, they invited them to join the confederacy as equal members- only when the vanquished refused were they driven out of their territory.

For the adoption of conquered peoples, the Oromo had an ancient mechanism called guidifacha^{46-bis} complete with its own meticulous ceremonies and symbolic rituals. During the ceremony of guidifacha local drinks were served, two or more bulls were slaughtered and a fabulous feast was given to the people. As a symbol of the newly established unity of the two groups, the representative of the adopting clan placed meditcha,⁴⁷ freshly cut off from the limbs of the sacrificial bulls, on the wrists of the representative of the adopted clan. Then the two representatives make cuts on their respective thighs,⁴⁸ take drops of the issuing blood, and mix the blood of the one with that of the other. A new name is given to the adopted group who have now become fully incorporated with the clan of the adopting Oromo. The adopted were given exactly the same privileges as the Oromo and were completely integrated in the Oromo gada system, becoming free and equal to the "Borana"⁴⁹ Oromo. After a few generations it was almost impossible to make any distinction between the Oromo and the adopted group.⁵⁰

This ancient mechanism of guidifacha gave the Oromo an inexhaustible capacity for incorporating large numbers of non-Oromo communities; and this partly explains the rapidity as well as the dynamism of their expansion throughout the length and breadth of the Ethiopian plateau within a matter of decades.

Naturally, those pre-Oromo elements who refused to submit were either eliminated altogether or had to escape to other areas inaccessible to the Oromo at the time. It is in this way that many groups - both Shanquilla

and Omotic are said to have moved either into inhospitable lowlands of the river valleys or crossed the Abbay into Gojjam region.⁵¹ The Shinasha the Gaffat, and some of the pre-sixteenth century peoples of Damot are specifically identified among such populations which were displaced northwards across the Abbay.

It has been impossible to get any absolute dating for the early ^{expansion} migrations and settlements of the Oromo in Wollega region. A tentative attempt has however been made to determine the relative chronology of these developments on the basis of generations. As we have already indicated earlier, our informants insist that the Macha lived as a more cohesive group in the region of Tute Bisil for a total of five generations before they were dispersed further to the west and south. The biggest time-depth we could record for Oromo settlements following the dispersal from Tute Bisil is thirteen generations.⁵² This means that the first arrival of the Macha at Tute Bisil took place some eighteen generations ago. Reckoning on the basis of twenty-three years for each generation, this will place the event around 1565 which seems to fit in almost perfectly with available dates in other sources.⁵³ While this traditional date refers to the earliest beginnings of Oromo expansion in the direction of Wollega, the traditions of the various tribes regarding their actual settlement in the region give time-depths between nine generations in the furthest corners in the west and thirteen generations in the eastern and central parts of Wollega.⁵⁴ This gives an approximate dating of 1680 - 1772 for the final occupation and settlement of Wollega by the various Oromo tribes. It must be noted, however, that these approximate dates only refer to the periods after the final Oromo conquest of the earlier populations. And the armed conflict between them seems to have taken at least four generations. It can therefore be said with some degree of certainty that after a prolonged period of warfare with their

predecessors in the area, the Oromo of Wollega had finally established themselves in the region by 1680 at the latest. The tribes that had to move further west were also in control of those areas by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Having spent many generations of expansion and conquest since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Oromo evolved very herioc traditions about pioneers and frontiersmen. The leader of the earliest families to clear and settle a newly conquered area had the honorific title of Dagal Saqi which literally means "the opener of forests". As the leader of the first pioneers he assumed very great responsibilities in the name and on behalf of his community. He was given other symbolic titles like Abba Qabiye (father of the land possession), Abba Lefa (father of the land), and Abba Goffe (father of the hut). Since all the members of his community had equal communal rights to the occupied land, the Dagal Saqi did not enjoy exclusive land rights in an individual sense. Symbolically, his family constituted what was termed balbala guda (big door) while the remaining families of the community were termed balbala tina (small door). However, in the early classless society of the Oromo, this did not give him or his siblings greater rights to the land or other resources. Rather, he was made to officiate as the senior representative of his community and had a decisive say on distribution of land among the group as well as in arbitrations whenever disputes of all kinds arose within his area of influence.⁵⁶ It is also apparent that he originally fulfilled many ritual duties such as slaying ceremonial bulls on such occasions as the traditional rain-making celebrations.⁵⁷ With the exception of these positions of traditional importance given to him, the Dagal Saqi was otherwise an ordinary member of his community.

In the final analysis, distribution of land for use was the task of the chaffe, the public gathering of the local gada, on which, however, the Dagal Saqi had a decisive voice together with the current Abba Boku. During the early period of Oromo expansion, land is said to have been relatively more plentiful and the exercise of communal rights by all the clansmen, regulated by the Dagal Saqi, did not at first create insurmountable problems. Every male member of the community was entitled to his doke which he could cultivate and on which he had the right to keep and raise his herds of cattle and sheep.⁵⁸ Many generations after the initial settlement of an area, however, there was a gradual increase in the local population and new clans are said to have come later and overcrowded the limited land supply. According to the available tradition, this exasperated the situation and local feuds on land use began to be rather common. The new state of affairs is also said to have led to the development of a hierarchy of land rights and an incipient stratification of society into less and more favoured classes.⁵⁹

It is apparent that the first major contradictions that began to develop were between the descendants of the first settlers and those that arrived some generations later. The families of the first pioneers naturally established themselves in the best corners of the available land which they held in abundance. They were so entrenched in their possessions of the land, that the only way new settlers could come in peacefully was by obtaining the initial permission of the Dagal Saqi in whom were embodied the communal rights of the pioneers. This was done through a special procedure called qubsissa which literally meant "allowing to settle". The qubsissa agreement imposed on the qube, the new settler, certain duties which clearly underlined the relegated nature of his status. Thus, the qube was gradually

required to perform labour services to the Dagal Saqi for a specific number of days. At the initial stage the Dagal Saqi used to receive these labour services not as a personal right but symbolically as the sign of seniority of the first pioneers. The services rendered to him were presumed as rendered to the whole community. In time, however, these fine distinctions were gradually eliminated and the Dagal Saqi began to assume greater importance and to appropriate rights to land and to the free labour of the qube in a much more personal sense.⁶⁰

Another factor which also facilitated the formation of social classes was the inherent conflicts between the Oromo and the various populations which they conquered. It has already been said that the Oromo had a traditional system, the gudifacha, whereby they assimilated some of these elements. It is very clear, however, that they assimilated only those elements which were either of Cushitic (like themselves) or of Omotic origin which had fairly well-developed socio-economic systems of their own and which were not very different from the Oromo in their light complexion and in other physical characteristics. It seems that these factors made the process of assimilation much easier for the Oromo during the many generations of expansion in Wollega. There were, however, a number of other populations which were physically, linguistically, and culturally so distinct that it was not possible for the Oromo to assimilate them. These included the very many small groups, speaking different Nilo-Saharan languages, who were of very dark complexion, and who were known as Shangilla since pre-Oromo days. The Oromo furiously fought against these people and displaced those who survived the early confrontations from the rich tablelands into the dry, hot, lowland basins of such rivers as the Dabus, Didessa, Anger or into the hearts of inaccessible forests.⁶¹

Apparently, the points of social contract between the Oromo and the Shanqilla were rather minimal for many generations and they tended to live their separate worlds. Gradually, however, when the highland population grew as a result of both internal growths and the additions of fresh settlers, land began to be a scarce commodity. Land-hungry Oromo families and clans then began to force their ways into the forests and the river valleys not only for occasional hunting but also for the continued exploitation of the available land and other resources. This led to more contacts with the Shanqilla whose villages were continuously raided by the Oromo adventurers who in time began to enslave Shanqilla individuals.⁶² Another category of people who are persistently remembered by the traditions as having suffered a similar dependent status were the submerged groups which included isolated hunter-gatherer, blacksmiths, potters and dressers of skin.⁶³ Most probably, these were inherited by the Oromo from the earlier populations many of whom already had very highly stratified societies prior to the expansion of the Oromo. The traditions state very clearly, however, that the Oromo had later come to relegate these people into the lower echelons of their society both in terms of land rights and social status.⁶⁴

Although it is not yet possible to identify precisely the exact period when these developments began to take place, it seems very clear that many such factors had already led to the breakdown of the egalitarian gada system by the second decade of the nineteenth century. Disputes over land caused armed conflicts among neighbouring Oromo clans and tribes. The Oromo seem to have made distinctions between inter-tribal feuds which they called lola, and wars with non-Oromo peoples referred to as dula. There are persistent Oromo traditions that after the gabiye rights to specific parts

of Wollega region were established among them, Oromo groups involved in a lola did not as a matter of principle disposses one another of their land holdings. Among the Oromo, there was a common recognition that there is some sort of mystical bond between man and land and that it would be impossible to change this through force of arms.⁶⁵ The victorious party collected only booties of cattle and other goods and left its Oromo enemy still in control of the land. In the case of clashes with the non-Oromo, however, we are told that the main target was appropriation of their land as well as other forms of property. If the conquered people were very distinct from the Oromo and could not be assimilated, they were reduced into extreme positions of personal dependence and even enslaved by leading families of the conquering Oromo.⁶⁶

Out of these endless clashes, there emerged in the later generations leading personalities who initially distinguished themselves either as gada officials or as the Dagal Sagi of their communities. Gradually, however, these individuals and their descendants built up over the generations very high positions of influence among their people. They even began to be surrounded by an increasing number of personal followers. They also tended to accumulate large quantities of wealth in cattle and land which their direct offsprings inherited. Popular titles such as nama gudda (big and influential man) were given to them to signify their new elevated status; and their personal prominence started to interfere with the natural course of the gada rules and regulations.⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that this trend of social development among the Wollega Oromo, which we have here reconstructed on the basis of the local traditions, is very reminiscent of Engles' analysis of the slow transformation of primitive communities into clan societies:

...differentiation in wealth affecting in turn the social constitution by creating first rudiments of a hereditary nobility... the degeneration of the old intertribal warfare to systematic raids... for the purpose of capturing cattle, slaves, and treasure as a regular means of gaining a livelihood. In short, wealth is praised and respected as the highest treasure, and the old gentile institutions are perverted in order to justify forcible robbery of wealth.

CHAPTER III

The Process of State Formation in Wollega

Ever since the beginning of their expansion in the early sixteenth century and their eventual settlement in extensive parts of the Ethiopian plateau, the Oromo had come into contact with other peoples at varying stages of socio-economic development. This naturally led to dynamic interactions between them, on the one hand, and the pre-Oromo populations, on the other. These interactions as well as the internal dynamics of change within Oromo society itself, brought about the gradual transformation of Oromo culture over the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A clear picture of the various phases through which this transformation had to pass will have to await a much more exhaustive examination of the early traditions of the Oromo throughout the Ethiopian plateau. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made in the last chapter to reconstruct, on the basis of available traditions, some of the major developments leading towards the increasing importance of individual leaders and their families. It is apparent that by the end of the 18th. century and the beginning of the 19th. century this general trend of the breakdown of the gada system in favour of dominant personalities had begun to affect most parts of Wollega region.

Some reference has already been made in the last chapter to the various Oromo tribal groups inhabiting the different parts of Wollega. The Gudru occupied the north-eastern part of the region with Finchaa valley as their focal point. To their immediate west and south west were the two related Jimma groups separately known as Jimma-Geneti and Jimma-Rare. The Horro tribe dominated the remaining part of what is today Horro-Gudru Awraja, thus occupying much of the area between the Abbay and the Anger - Didessa

valleys. Other clans such as the Limmu, Chida and the Amuru also lived there as smaller groups. The area between the Anger, the upper Gibe, the Wama and the Didessa rivers had come under various Lega clans of which the most important from east to west were the Lega Sibū, Lega Billo, Lega Ghida, Lega Qumba, and Lega Neqemte. Further west, between the Didessa and the Dabus rivers lived different clans belonging to the Sibū tribe of which the Jarso Sibū, the Nedjo Sibū, the Bodji Sibū, the Mana Sibū, the Ghimbi Sibū and the Aira Sibū were the most conspicuous. To the south-west of these Sibū clans, between the upper waters of the Dabus and the Baro rivers lived the Sayo group and the other important clan of the Lega tribe, namely the Lega-Qellem.¹ The available traditions indicate that, in each of these communities, dominant personalities and family groups had already emerged by the beginning of the nineteenth century along the lines suggested towards the end of the last chapter. Bahru Zewdie has sketched the broad outlines of this development among the Lega-Qellem² and a similar attempt has been made elsewhere to do the same with the Lega-Neqemte group.³ However, both the local traditions as well as the reports of contemporary travellers in the area clearly show that the same processes were taking place throughout the Wollega area.

Almost invariably, the founders of the ruling families were the descendants of prominent pioneers who had distinguished themselves during the early days of Oromo expansion in the region. The traditions are also persistent that these individuals had either held important elective posts within the gada titles of Abba Boku or Abba Dula.⁴ It is also related by our informants that the attempt to subvert the egalitarian gada system and to capture absolute power was often made by a number of rival families within the same locality and clan.⁵ Thus each of the autocracies which developed later was

a result of prolonged conflict and desperate struggles for power. As a general rule, better military organization, the ability to forge more effective alliances, stronger control of local economic resources and especially dominance over the contemporary trade routes as well as the main market villages were the most decisive factors in the success of an autocrat over all his rivals.⁶ While the traditions are not yet complete for the many communities which were platforms for these crucial developments, an attempt is made below to outline the main features of these processes of state formation on the basis of the traditions of the better known groups in the Wollega region.

By far the most important of the local Oromo autocracies that emerged in the Wollega region were those of Lega-Qellem and Lega-Neqemte of which the former has been briefly described elsewhere.⁷ Of these two groups tradition gives unqualified precedence to Lega-Neqemte. This precedence is connected with the much earlier process of expansion of the Lega-Oromo in the whole region. It will be remembered that during the early migrations, it were the qutisu or younger families who had to move further out to look for more unoccupied land while the hangafa remained in sites which had already been conquered. Thus in their search for rich pasture land, the Lega tribal groups as a whole are believed to have reached present-day Neqemte region between twelve and thirteen generations ago, that is about 275-300 years before present.⁸ There, the hangafa clans remained between the Wama and the Didessa valleys while the qutisu moved on to the west and south-west to found, between nine and eleven generations ago, the communities later known as Lega - Ghimbi and Lega - Qellem, respectively. This hangafa - qutisu relationship between Lega - Neqemte and Lega - Qellem is a constant theme in the common historical recollections of the two groups and has sometimes been cemented by important marriage alliances between them.⁹

The acknowledged founder of the Leqa-Neqemte state was Bekere Godana, a member of the relatively small Na'a lineage group of the much bigger Wayu clan. He was born in Wama Mokofa, a village located on the western edge of the upper Wama valley through which, the local traditions tell us, passed important east-west caravan routes connecting Shoa with the heartlands of Wollega from pre-Oromo days.¹⁰ He was the only child in his family and, having lost his father in early childhood, he was brought up by his mother, Mughe. He spent the early part of his youth under the tender care of his mother at Wama Mokofa. All the traditions about his early life indicate that he was a very sensitive and restless young man who began to demonstrate special talent for personal leadership among his own peers.¹¹ It is actually reported that as soon as he reached the age of adolescence, he began to be surrounded by an increasing number of unruly and admiring young followers who began to harass the neighbouring communities, to create much havoc and acquire a lot of notoriety among the Wayu clan. Bekere and his young followers are said to have started their adventures by invading at night well-known stables, milking the cows and consuming the milk on the spot. This gradually developed to more daring acts of vandalism and they began to steal heads of cattle from local stables, drive them to neighbouring woods and feast on their meat with impunity. They are also said to have waylaid caravans along the major trade routes, confiscated large amounts of merchandise, and disturbed the natural flow of trade into the area.¹² All this shocked the sense of propriety of the local people who naturally resented the disturbance of the traditional law and order sanctioned by the gada system. The elected gada officials made many attempts to bring Bekere's group under control; but this was impossible since the young outlaw were well organized and more mobile. Bekere and his followers also ignored the repeated summons of the gada assemblies

which were traditionally the supreme power over all the local Oromo people.¹³ Thus, individual families and villages who suffered from their unlawful acts had no protection; nor any legal sanctions to resort to. It is under these circumstances that a general sense of fear and insecurity began to engulf the local people in their relation with Bekere's company of bandits. The only way to survive such situations was by creating a modus vivendi with the very banditry commonly denounced by die-hard proponents of the gada system. Thus we begin to get traditions of general respect and admiration the local people felt towards Bekere and his group. An increasing number of other youths also began to join the rank and file of Bekere's entourage. This was particularly true of young men who were prosecuted under gada rules for some traditional offences such as inflicting injury on individuals and adultery.¹⁴ As a result, Bekere's army of young bandits became very large and the news of its terrible exploits spread not only in the immediate neighbourhood, but also in areas beyond the limits of the local lineage groups.

As has already been indicated earlier this period of the first half of the nineteenth century was one of considerable warfare among different clans and tribes mainly because of disputes regarding gabiye rights to land. Each rival group vied with its opponents in creating well-organized and strong fighting forces to defend its own claims and attack those of others. Bekere's paternal uncle, Bararti Amo¹⁵ was involved in one of such desperate conflicts at Komto, a little to the North-West of Bekere's native district of Wama Mokofa. Bararti Amo was the acknowledged hangafa of the Nāa and had earlier served as a noted Abba Boku in his younger days. But now he was an old man, with no sons of his own, and harassed by his enemies in his fight to defend the gabiye rights of his Nāa lineage group as a whole. Thus, having

a notorious nephew was a god-send for him and Bararti formally invited Bekere to form his family as an adopted son.¹⁶

For the young, ambitious Bekere, this was an opportunity he could not afford to miss. A fatherless boy brought up by a poor mother, Bekere was long forced to fend his own ways; and the only outlet for his tremendous personal drive and resourcefulness was the company of young bandits he had organized with so much efficiency at Wama Mokofa. Now, all of a sudden, a new avenue was opened up for him. By becoming Bararti Amo's adopted son, he had the opportunity of becoming a hangafa of his Nāa lineage group which he could easily use as a legitimate base for power. Bararti Amo's main quarrels were with Duqe Miju and Fido Bokkissa whose territories were to the immediate north and west of komto, respectively, and who were much younger and current holders of important gada offices in their own communities. Duqe Miju was an Abba Dula of his lineage group while Fido Bokkissa was the Abba Boku of the Kolobo which was the hangafa lineage group among the Wayu clan of the Wara Lega. Because of his position as a leader of the hangafa lineage group, Fido Bokkissa had considerable traditional influence on the other members of the Wayu clan as a whole. At this point in time, Fido Bokkisse's powers were widely recognized by all the different Wayu lineage groups except that of the Nāa led by Bararti Amo who, although an old man with declining years continued to challenge Fido Bokkissa's position. An invaluable tradition asserts that the reason for this conflict between the Nāa and the Kolobo lineage groups was that both had ancient claims on the lofty position of hangafa of the Wayu clan.¹⁷ The informant goes on to say that the Nāa went on feeling that the Kolobo had usurped the hangafa title and that Fido Bokkissa's powers were illegitimate.¹⁸ Although there were additional bones of contention of minor importance, this basic

factor was clearly the most important.

Bararti Amo's adoption of Bekere as his son introduced a new and vital element in the struggle between the two lineages. At first he ceremoniously sealed the formalities of adoption by slaughtering three bulls of different colours and offering a large feast to his lineage group. He annointed Bekere's forehead with the mixed blood of the three bulls symbolizing their new relationship with the traditional blessing: "Adako Siffa haKannu..." which literally means "May god give you my forehead."¹⁹

Bekere plunged into the interclan conflict almost right away. The renown of his valour and daring exploits as a leader of his young followers at Wama Makofa had already followed him to Komto. He soon began to be respected and admired, especially after he killed four strong warriors of Duqe Miju, one of the arch enemies of Bararti Amo. As a result of all this, he was soon elected to the office of Abba Dula of his local Naa gada assembly.²⁰ He was thus given yet another boost and a much more secure launching pad for greater power in the region.

It was customary among the Oromo to offer a special gift or Kenna to the Abba Dula at the time of his election. The gift often consisted of a Korma or bull according to the age-old custom of the gada system. Out of his unlimited ambitions for his adopted son, Bararti Amo had, however, quite a novel scheme. He advised Bekere to ask the assembly to grant him sole control and monopoly rights over the hot lowland region between the Didessa and Anger rivers called Handeq.²¹

The assembly was flabbergasted at the request. In the first place, neither the Naa lineage group nor other Lega groups did as yet have gabiye rights over Handeq which was still unoccupied by any Oromo community. Secondly, no Abba Dula had ever asked for such a large land grant before. When the request

finally came to a vote, no decision could be made on the spot. A very influential member of the community is said to have argued that the new Abba Dula may have had some sinister motive in asking for the forests; and that decision should be withheld until these are ascertained. The assembly agreed and adjourned for the day. In the ensuing evening, however, we are told that the practical Bararti Amo approached the man who argued against Bekere's request and bribed him with sixty amole. With the dissenting voice silenced, Bekere got his grant of Handeq the following day.²²

It is also apparent that most Naa individuals did not at all realize the full importance of Handeq; and they were quite indifferent to the whole silly request. According to one informant Bekere's unusual request at first evoked much laughter on the assembly. However, in his wisdom and mature years, Bararti Amo seems to have long appreciated the considerable potentials of Handeq forest.²³ It is apparent that at least the leading members of the local Lega communities were already associated with long distance trade to and from the Wollega region. We have already seen above that in his days of banditry in Wama Mokefa, one of Bekere's main exploits was stopping caravans on the way and robbing them of their goods. This was then considered as a destructive act by the local Naa which seems to indicate that they were used to merchants coming and doing business with them. Bararti Amo's dexterity in using amole as a bribe to silence his opponent (as well as the latter's acceptance of an amole bribe) also go to show that trade was not unknown in the area.

It is precisely in this context of trade that the value of Handeq seems to have loomed large in Bararti Amo's views. The other local name for Handeq is actually Ejjuma Arba which literally means "the home of elephants"²⁴ and the importance of these regions for the ivory trade was well known since

pre-Oromo days.²⁵ While requesting that Handeq be granted to him Bekere is said to have known clearly the importance of ivory both locally for the manufacture of sundry ornaments which were precious luxury items; and for external trade with long distance merchants.²⁶ Besides elephants, the Handeq forests teamed with a variety of wild animals such as buffaloes, lions, giraffes and others, the hunting of which was very highly regarded both for the material and social benefits which it brought to successful Oromo warriors.²⁷ Handeq also had a number of other resources of which the exclusive control could make the Bekere family very prosperous. Thus a lot of wild honey was collected from the forest as well as the many caves which abounded in the area. Furthermore, the traditions indicate that a lot of cotton was obtained from the Handeq forest. Both Bararti Amo and Bekere also valued Handeq for a possible strategic use in times of war when their forces could easily retreat to get appropriate cover from a strong enemy.²⁸

Another precious product of the Handeq area were the Shanqilla who had already become an inexhaustible source of free labour for the highland Oromo. The traditions about the period between c. 1800- and the 1870's show that the Oromo of the Wollega plateau had established firm relations with the Shanqilla of the hot lowland regions. We are told that an increasing number of the Shanqilla were brought to the highland villages and made to stay with the families of the Oromo who captured them in the forest to whom they were forced to render labour services both domestically and out in the fields. This process of enslaving the Shanqilla became so well established that by the middle of the nineteenth century such slaves were often found in most well-to-do Oromo families. After being kept for some months in the highlands a few of the more reliable Shanqilla were sent back to their relatives on whom they impressed the benefits of establishing amicable relations

with the Oromo.²⁹ These persuasions often succeeded, largely because a number of other Shanqilla were still held hostage by the highlanders. There gradually developed strong economic ties which were obviously more beneficial to the Oromo. The Shanqilla of the lowland areas started to supply their Oromo masters with local products such as cotton, honey and game of different types. In return for these valuable items they received only minor favours such as being given some food, small pieces of salt bars, and a few beads. In later days, from the early 1880's onwards, local tradition asserts that the slave trade became very important; and the highlanders there got another and more profitable use of the Shanqilla who were hunted by the hundreds and supplied regularly to the many slave markets.³⁰

Such were the rich and valuable resources of Handeq forest over which Bekere sought and succeeded to get exclusive control which was legitimized for him by the decision of the gada assembly. Once he got this popular recognition of his possession of Handeq, he made sure that no body else had access to it without his own permission. Handeq and all its resources were thus jealously guarded and whoever trespassed was punished severely and also earned the enmity of Bekere and his family. The absolute control of access to and exploitation of these forests became the most important bone of contention between Bekere, on the one hand, and his many rivals on the other.³¹ It is interesting to note here that as we shall see later, his zeal for the protection of his monopoly over handeq was a major cause of his death in the last battle he fought at Bekke Buli.³²

Adopted by the respected elder Bararti Amo, elected Abba Dula of his local gada group, and given the blessing and support of his own people for the exploitation of the resources of Handeq, Bekere soon acquired considerable personal power and wealth. He soon began to make his office of Abba

Dula very different from what it traditionally was. He surrounded himself with a large entourage and transformed the gondala³³ fighting force of the gada system into his own personal army. These young men were armed with spears, shields, and axes. The traditions also indicate that he took pains to train them very well with the help and advice of elderly members of his Naa group who gave instructions on tactics and techniques of war to the young followers of Bekere. The latter were made to run on gorati³⁴ bare-footed, acquire good horsemanship, throw spears effectively and defend themselves with the shields as well as to be skillful swimmers. They were kept well with rations of Chocho³⁵ specially during periods of active fighting; and they were given very generous shares of the booties collected. He used these young warriors in many of his daring attacks on neighbouring communities whom he raided driving away all their cattle, looting and burning their villages. Such cruel attacks on the neighbouring populations went beyond the limits sanctioned by the gada system. They became increasingly more personalized and arbitrary, and were mostly aimed at a mere accumulation of personal power and wealth. The targets for Bekere's attacks were not only non-Naa groups. He also harassed people of his own lineage who were either rich in heads of cattle or showed signs of challenging his presumptions.³⁶

Bekere deliberately ignored the basic tenets of customary gada rules and regulations. He refused to share the war booties except with his own loyal followers. He ignored the superior powers of the Abba Boku both of his own local gada as well as those of related communities. He despised the principles of peaceful arbitration on which the gada assembly operated and always resorted to force even against his fellow gada officials who challenged his arbitrary manners.³⁷ There are interesting traditions about

this phase of Bekere's rise to power which indicate that he explicitly tried to weaken the powers of the other gada officials as well as those of the gada assembly. He is said to have told the local elders that they should not interfere in matters of war and relation with neighbouring communities. He asked them to leave these entirely into his hands and to concentrate their own efforts on the semi-religious tasks such as the traditional rain-making ceremonies and other rituals.³⁸

Bekere's personal followers increased in number and the traditions show that they came to join him from many directions, even from clans other than the Wayu of the Wara Lega. These people were attracted by the fame of Bekere and came in search of personal adventure and the promise of enriching themselves with booties under his leadership. It is apparent that all his followers did not have to stay with Bekere all the time. With the exception of his four mounted body guards who accompanied him wherever he went,³⁹ the rest were only called to join him in times of war. This was done in two ways. For people who lived in nearby villages, Bekere's Wame⁴⁰ announced from prominent hill tops that war was impending, and that all able-bodied men should join the leader at a specific site and time. For those who lived far away, secret messengers were sent instructing them to participate in the armed conflict. Following such announcements, his followers joined Bekere in large numbers and helped him win his wars. In return, he generously rewarded them out of the huge spoils they gathered together. At the conclusion of the battle, they all collected their booties and went back to their several villages until they were called back again.⁴¹ The advantages of this arrangement during the early stages of Bekere's powers are very clear. At a time when Bekere was not yet in full control of vast areas, he could not settle his followers in appropriate

locations and the only rewards he could give them were their shares of the war booties. That they all went back to their own villages after every conflict spared Bekere from having to provide them with all their needs in times of relative peace.

All the same, these followers constituted an effective striking force whenever they were called together; and with their help Bekere continued to build up his power and wealth. His ambitions were not fully satisfied by the successful results of his occasional attacks against neighbouring villages. He began to aim at establishing a more formal and legitimate power over not only his fellow Nāa and Wayu clansmen, but over all the Wara Lega between the Wama and the Didesa rivers, and even further west and east.⁴² As a result he started to come into a series of armed confrontations with other leading personalities which abounded in the region at the time. Naturally he started the struggle with Fido Bokkissa who had been harassing his uncle Bararti Amo as indicated earlier.

Fido Bokkissa was the Abba Boku of the Kolobo lineage group which was then widely recognized as the hangafa of all the Wayu clan. As such, he had been trying to consolidate his traditional influences on all the lineage groups of the Wayu, including the Nāa. In so doing he had come into repeated conflicts with the Nāa who, as we saw earlier, also had ancient claims to the position of hangafa. There are also traditional indications that, like Bekere and other contemporary Oromo personalities in the region, Fido Bokkissa was trying to disregard gada customary law and substitute it with his own arbitrary rules. Thus there are reports of Fido destroying the harvests of some of his fellow Kolobo on whose crops he is said to have fed his cattle. This was clearly against the ancient norms of the Oromo among whom the respect for crops was so ritualistic

that even strangers passing by are expected to protect them from cattle or any other pests.⁴³ Although he died before completing his traditional eight-year tenure, there are general indications that Fido Bokkissa would have perhaps continued to rule against the gada customary law.

One of the points stressed in the traditions regarding Fido Bokkissa is that he was leading arbitrary raids on neighbouring populations. Bararti Amo's Nāa lineage had been one of the frequent victims of such raids and lootings. This had created a lot of hostile feelings between the Kolobo led by Fido and the Nāa led by Bararti Amo who was now succeeded by Bekere. The rising power of the latter was a reason for much concern for Fido Bokkissa and his Kolobo followers.⁴⁴ As Bekere's influence grew in the region he is said to have provoked Fido into an open armed confrontation with him. The traditions show that Bekere recruited and planted Kolobo agents from among Fido's followers and began to prepare the way for a final show down. He is said to have made arrangements with his agent to insult him publicly while he was passing by an assembly chaired by Fido Bokkissa. He used such incidents for openly challenging Fido and threatening him with punitive actions in front of his own assembly. Bekere is said to have picked a more intimate quarrel with Fido by seducing his favourite mistresses who were specially set aside for the pleasures of the Kolobo Abba Boku.⁴⁵

It was actually at the residence of one of such mistresses that the first major clash occurred between Bekere and Fido. Fido had spent sometime with his lady friend at Korommi which is about mid-way between Bekere's Nāa district of Komto and Neqemte, the main seat of Fido's power at the time. Bekere attacked the Kolobo at Korommi by surprise and inflicted very heavy casualties on Fido's followers. Fido then fled to

Digga, west of Neqemte which was soon occupied by Bekere who was pursuing the Kolobo leader. Borderline clashes continued between the two sides with Fido sending his troops to raid his own people around Neqemte who were now living under Bekere. Bekere also sent his followers to attack and loot the villages under his rival's control around Digga which finally forced Fido to start abandoning Digga and moving to Bendi, further south-west. Fido is said to have died soon afterwards before reaching Bendi. His son Amecha was elected Abba Dula immediately and asked to lead the people against the ravishes of Bekere's continuing attacks. But Amecha was no match for Bekere's effective and seasoned leadership and was soon forced to run away into hiding in the territory of the neighbouring Lega Qumba who were then led by another emerging Oromo autocrat, Bera Ota.⁴⁶

Bekere had thus eliminated Fido Bokkissa from the scene and set out to bring not only Kolobo territories under him but also the rich, lowland areas extending as far west as the Didessa river and only sparsely populated by the Shanqilla. In so doing, he also succeeded to bring into reality what had been a more mythical control of the Handeq forest as has been described earlier. Moreover, he moved from Komto which was located too far to the east for his purposes, and made Neqemte his official seat of power.⁴⁷

It is particularly from these days onwards that Bekere's rule over his people began to show distinctive characteristics. He was not only a mere Abba Dula of the small Naa lineage group, but had also brought the whole Wayu clan under his domination. It has been said earlier that the Naa had claims on the position of hangafa of the Wayu clan which was then occupied by Fido Bokkissa's Kolobo. However, the nature of Bekere's new control over the Wayu cannot be seen as a mere restitution of Naa hangafuma,⁴⁸ a position which was ceremonial, devoid of any powers, and sought only for

its traditional and almost religious benefits. What Bekere was evolving was a different state of affairs altogether.

He had already completed his eight-year tenure as Abba Dula of the Nāa but had simply continued to assume that position and actively discouraged new gada elections throughout his territories. He had long challenged and disregarded all gada customary rules which he tended to relegate to a mere religious significance. Since his quarrels with Fido Bokkissa, he had come to dominate non-Nāa communities from among whom he succeeded to recruit many loyal followers. Thus, the sources of legitimacy for his position could no longer be drawn from the strictly kinship-based principles of the gada system. The real bases for his power were his military powers and his increasing wealth in cattle, valuable commodities such as ivory and other natural products as well as his increasing control of large tracts of land.

In terms of his control of land, Bekere made use of his successes against Fido Bokkissa in a way which was almost completely alien to Oromo traditions. He started dividing and giving out pieces of land to his followers whom he settled on the areas that had been evacuated by Fido Bokkissa and his followers. To temper the effect that this would have on the people, he is said to have given the most influential individuals in the conquered areas titles such as Abba Lefa⁴⁹ which, as we shall see later, were beginning to be of considerable importance. Thus, his use and distributions of qabiye rights were becoming another major source of power for Bekere. It was said earlier that qabiye rights were quite inalienable in the ancient traditions of the Wollega Oromo as a whole.⁵⁰ With Bekere's emergence to power, however, no Oromo family within his territories between the Wama in the south-east and the Didessa in the west could be assured of

continued occupation and exploitation of its ancestral land. Absolute loyalty to Bekere was the only protection of one's rights in these matters. There are many traditions of land confiscation as well as cruel lootings of personal property suffered by many families in the hands of Bekere and his followers.⁵¹ In any agrarian society like the Oromo, there could be nothing more oppressive than alienating the people from their pieces of land. The following is a very telling poem which was popular among the Leqa Neqemte regarding the increasingly arbitrary rule of Bekere:

"Bekere Godana Fidon Aryate
Malgodi nanjeta sito maryate"⁵²

Paraphrased, this distich romanticizes the pre-Bekere era under Fido Bokkissa, and blames the advent of Bekere's oppressive rule on the cooperation of some elements of the Kolobo who served as his agents.

Bekere was becoming the centre of a fairly strong state structure. He soon assumed the ancient title of Moti⁵³ by which he was henceforth known. He was served by an increasing number of officials both in his court at Neqemte and throughout the area under his control. Besides the military apparatus which he was careful to make more and more effective over the years,⁵⁴ Bekere was now at the head of a well-organized administrative and judicial hierarchy with the help of which he strengthened his control over his subjects.

At the lowest level of the administrative structure were the Abba Lefa who were largely elected by a number of local families belonging to the same lineage. As a general rule they were elected from among the hangafa families. Their role was to act as intermediaries between their local people and higher officials of the Moti.⁵⁵ The title of Abba Lefa was, as we have seen, already assumed by early pioneers during the migration.⁵⁶

State form - State structure was
action began

It now became an important link between local communities and the Moti's court. However, the title was also given directly by the Moti to leading members of his own followers when he settled them in newly conquered areas where they played the same role of representing the local community in its relation with the Moti and his higher officials. The Abba Lefa had a number of responsibilities such as keeping peace and security in his area, collecting tribute due to the Moti from his people. Mobilizing local contingents in times of war, and ensuring in every way the continued loyalty of the people to the Moti.⁵⁷

Immediately above the Abba Lefa was the Abba Qoro⁵⁸ who was also elected by the people from among the many Abba Lefa of a region. A very important quality required from the Abba Qoro, informants say, was personal courage and ability to lead his people militarily. It was also necessary that he be a man of tested loyalty to the Moti who had to approve his assumption of office. The Abba Qoro ruled over a much larger area than the Abba Lefa; and he often has several Abba Lefa under him. His responsibilities were in effect the same as those of the Abba Lefa but at a much higher level. He was specially expected to keep law and order in his region; to keep the highways safe for the caravan traders; and to ensure that tribute due to the Moti were properly collected on time.⁵⁹

The Abba Qoro reported to the Abba Biya⁶⁰ who was directly appointed by the Moti himself. An Abba Biya had a number of Abba Qoro under him and his responsibilities were directly to the Moti. Very often this lofty post was held either by the many sons of the Moti himself, or by his close and loyal relatives. Although they also held court in their respective regions, they spent much of their time with the Moti to whom they were the highest councillors. They were the most important supporters of the Moti.

moti

abba lafa
abba qoro
abba biya

administrative offices

abba lafa & other off. cov.

other bodies or legal matter are

large
shame
sage
highest

courts of justice
sage court, shame court, sage court

led his regional forces during expeditions, acted on his behalf in the areas under their control, and ensured, through the many Abba Qoro and Abba Lefa, that the interests of the Moti were always protected.⁶¹

There was the much more specialized office of the Abba Lega which literally means "the father of the river". The Abba Lega was specially responsible for the protection of the forests and their resources. He ensured that only those with official authorization hunted in the area of his control, and effectively prosecuted all poachers. All the other resources in the forested areas specially Handeq were militarily protected by the Abba Lega who made sure that the Moti got what ever were his dues. Bekere himself appointed the Abba Lega of important forest areas in the valleys of the Wama, Didessa, and Anger rivers; and they reported directly to him. The Abba Biya appointed them for small forests where they played essentially the same role.⁶²

Parallel to these administrative offices there were also three bodies which looked after strictly legal matters at every level of the Moti's realms. It is impossible here to discuss their specific origins, but the traditions are unanimous about their importance in the days of Bekere. These traditional "courts of justice" were known by the number of elders of which they constituted. Thus, on the Selge court sat nine judges; on the Shene, five; and on the Sede, only three. These judges were elected by the local people from among the most highly respected elders in the presence and with the approval of either the Abba Lefa or the Abba Qoro as the case may be. At the central level in Neqemte, the members of these courts were specially picked and appointed by the Moti himself and his councillors.⁶³

Legal cases were brought in the first instance to the Selge which had the midst connection with the rank and file of the people at every level of local administration. Their judgments were often final and highly respected by the people. The connotations of the popular saying, "Selegn ta'ani murto mureni"⁶⁴ transmits the tradition that the decision of the nine elders were generally accepted by the concerned parties. Very few cases may be taken to the Shene. They often reviewed cases brought to them and their rulings had to be used as precedents binding on the decisions of the other courts. It is apparent that this is the basic reason why our informants unanimously consider the Shene as a venerable group of "Sera Tuma", or "Law makers". The highest court of three, or the Sede was the last court of justice and almost all cases ended with its rulings. Only on very few and problematic occasions did the Sede refer disputes to the Abba Lefa, Abba Qoru, Abba Biya, or the Moti. The traditions indicate, however, that all cases involving capital punishment had to be submitted to the Moti himself.⁶⁵

At the head of this fairly complex state apparatus, Moti Bekere continued his aggressive policy of conquest and expansion in the whole region. It is very clear from the traditions that accumulation of wealth was at the very basis of the success of a ruler; and he was notorious in making sure that his subjects provided him with regular tributes. The administrative machinery described above was particularly geared towards a more effective collection of dues at every level of the state system. Tributes were paid in heads of cattle, gold, ivory, honey, cotton, grain crops, and even amole.⁶⁶ All these were collected at the lowest level by the Abba Lefa, transmitted to the Abba Qoro and the Abba Biya, respectively, and then relayed on to the Moti's personal treasury. Another source of

revenue was Bekere's increasing control of trade and the trade route which passed through his territories.⁶⁷

It has already been pointed out that from his early days as an emerging autocrat Bekere had shown keen interest in the caravan trade going on between his area and other regions. It is significant that he started his career as a highwayman attacking caravans. The value of controlling the long-distance merchants must have dawned upon him from those days. We have seen above that the first thing he did as an Abba Dula was to get the blessing of his Naa people to let him be sole proprietor of Handeq with its numerous elephants, the Shanqilla, the wild honey, cotton, and many other natural products. With the further development of his power and his assumption of the title of Moti it was only natural that his zeal for encouraging trade through his lands were tremendously increased.⁶⁸

The most precious item of long distance trade both in earlier times and during his reign was very clearly ivory. This was reflected in Bekere's days by this item becoming the monopoly of the Moti. The traditions are very clear about this, and they relate that it was made illegal for all his subjects to hunt elephants and to handle ivory except through his expressed authorization.⁶⁹ This monopoly covered only the Handeq forests during his earlier days; but it was soon extended to cover all the areas under his control. The terms of the monopoly were such that any one who killed an elephant had to give the tusks to the local officials of the Moti. Offenders of this rule were severely punished and the whole administrative set-up from the Abba Lefa, Abba Qoro, Abba Lega and the Abba Biya made sure that the rule was observed strictly in the respective areas of their control.⁷⁰ Bekere's emphasis on this point was such that for a man who killed elephants and extracted the ivory for his own use, the only alternative was to flee

the Moti's realms and live in asylum in neighbouring areas.⁷¹

(2) Next in importance to ivory was gold which was not, however, locally produced in large quantities. It was mainly obtained from across the Didessa from Leqa Qellem and the Sibü areas. The Moti got gold mainly from the merchants who passed through his territories and who paid their customs dues in the precious metal. Another way through which he collected gold pieces was by imposing payment in gold on some of his own subjects, specially those who settled in the western borderlands.⁷² It is not clear what Bekere did with his gold. Some sources indicate that he just hoarded them in his treasury while others say that he used them in exchange for other goods. In general, however, Bekere is remembered by the traditions as a man who had a fabulous collection of gold.⁷³

Although it seems that little use was made of the Shanqilla in the slave trade during Bekere's days, it is very clear that he had an upper hand in what ever traffic in slaves -- either locally or through the caravans -- took place in the Didessa -- Anger valleys. Other items of less significance were large amount of honey and cotton collected in Bekere's realms, specially in the Handeq forests. The traditions also indicate that heads of cattle, butter, and grains were exchanged.⁷⁴

While these constituted local products, our informants report that various items were in great demand in Leqa Neqemte. These included gold and traditionally worked iron from Qellem and Sibü countries; mules, donkeys, cloths from Gojjam; cloths from Shoa, and particularly coffee from Jimma area.⁷⁵

Neqemte was the most important market in Bekere's territories. As a settlement, it was first founded by Fido Bokkissa who defeated and expelled from this area by Bekere as indicated earlier. There still is an old land

mark called "Qota Fida" which literally means "the trench of Fido", starting outside the limits of the town running west to east, and extending almost to the centre of present day Neqemte. The traditions say that the trench was built by Fido to defend his settlement located on the western edge of the town today. It is most interesting to note also that the market place, Bekke Jema, is located precisely where Fido Bokkissa's settlements are supposed to have been. The traditions insist, however, that it was only from Bekere's days onwards that Neqemte had a market of its own and started to be a focal point for caravan routes coming from various directions.⁷⁶

byra habasha
The most important of these is said to have been the trade route that ran from north to south and connected Gojjam, Neqemte, Jimma, and other Gibe states. The traditions only mention Gojjam in general and do not mention any specific locations there as having been of particular significance during Bekere's days. South of the Abbay, however, a number of important sites are mentioned and associated with this route. Thus, the merchants are said to have passed through Dego, Galila (Limmu) Anger valley, Uke valley, Neqemte, Getema, Arjo, Didessa, Beddele, Agaro and Jimma.⁷⁷

The other major route ran east-west and connected Neqemte with important areas further afield. The Billo - Neqemte route connected Bekere's realms with the major markets both in south - eastern Gojjam and in Shoa. The route from Basso in Gojjam to Asendabo in Gudruland converged at Billo with the route from Shoa through Gedo. The Billo - Neqemte route then continued westwards to Ghimbi where it branched into two major directions: one to Qumbabe in Leqa Qellem and the other to Gore in what is today Illubabor.⁷⁸

The informants affirm that it was over this network of routes that Bekere established firm control from his capital of Neqemte. He is said to have encouraged merchants to come to his land and do business with him. All the Abba Lefas and Abba Qoros at every level of the administrative set-up were specially instructed to keep the highways safe for them. They also had obligations to provide the caravans with appropriate stables for their animals as well as all other requirement for themselves.⁷⁹

All the traditions indicate that Bekere went a long way in cultivating the friendship of the long distance merchants. He is said to have been very careful not to overtax them, and to give them better conditions of trade than any of his neighbours. This attitude of Bekere and his family towards trade is epitomized in a very telling poem composed by merchants in praise of his son and successor, Moroda, who had only continued and strengthened his fathers policy:

Gardi Jillo ya abba sogidda

Genda Bushen ya abba sogidda

Danno Bera ya abba sogidda

Mori Beka ya abbako Jirta.⁸⁰

The literal translation is given below in the footnote. But the spirit of this poem is that while the neighbouring autocrats --- Garbi Jillo of Leqa Billo, Genda Bushen of Leqa Sibbu, Danno Bera of Leqa Qumba --- preferred imposing heavy amole taxes on the traders, the Leqa Neqemte concentrated on gaining personal friendship of the merchants so much so that the merchant-poet referred to Bekere's son as "my father." Although there is no doubt that there can be some exaggeration of this point in what is essentially a Leqa Neqemte tradition, it nevertheless indicates one of the important factors in the growing power of the Bekere family.⁸¹

Another connotation of the poem is that a major reason for inter-tribal rivalry among the emerging autocratic families of the eastern Leqa was their competition for the control of the trade and the trade routes in the region. Despite his unqualified successes against his rivals within the Wayu clan and among all the Leqa Neqemte, Bekere did not manage to bring under control the other neighbouring tribes of the eastern Leqa, namely, the Leqa Billo, the Leqa Sibü and particularly the Leqa Qumba. In each of these areas there had emerged leading personalities whose career developed along more or less the same lines of Bekere's. The eastern most of these and by far the friendliest was Garbi Jillo of Leqa Billo. Not enough traditions have yet been collected regarding the background of his rise to power. But the available material show that he was a very wealthy person with numerous heads of cattle and extensive tract of land under him. However, he derived much of his wealth and power, from his domination of the area of Billo where trade routes from Gojjam, Shoa, Jimma and Neqemte criss-crossed.⁸² He is reputed to have had very good relations with the other Macha and the Tulama tribes occupying the land between Wollega and the Kingdom of Shoa in the east. He is also said to have had peaceful relations with the Oromo peoples through whose territories the important northern trade route to Asendabo and Basso passed. The only people with whom he is said to have fought continuously are said to have been the Nonno tribe who lived immediately to the south of his land. The general picture that emerges about Garbi Jillo is one of a very resourceful leader who facilitated the lines of communication for the merchants that came from all directions. As such he was always interested in keeping peaceful relations with all the powerful elements around him. Thus he avoided conflicts with the rather quarrelsome Leqa Qumba to the south-west

and the Leqa Sibu to the immediate north-west. More important still, he had established marriage alliance with Moti Bekere of Leqa Neqemte for whose commercial agents he could assume security and full access to the eastern markets.⁸³

The worst enemies Bekere had in the area were the Leqa Sibu and Leqa Qumba. The Leqa Sibu⁸⁴ were led by Genda Bushen who started his career by assuming the gada office of Abba Dula which, just like many other Oromo leaders of the period, he used as a launching pad for a permanent exercise of power over his people. Genda Bushen's territories were very limited and the Leqa Sibu are one of the smallest tribes in the area. However, his control of what is today the area around Sire gave him a strategic control over the old trade route connecting Asendabo with Fillo.⁸⁵ Genda Bushen is said to have been a very unruly character who only saw the temporary advantages he could gain from the merchants who passed his territories. He is famous for overtaxing them and sometimes even waylaying the caravans and confiscating their merchandise. He was thus a major factor for the lack of stability and law and order in the whole region. He also led repeated raids into Leqa Neqemte territories and harassed the local subjects of Bekere. When the more organized and powerful forces of Bekere counter-raided the Leqa Sibu, Genda Bushen simply withdrew to the Tuqa range of mountains abandoning his people to the ravishes of Bekere's wrath. Right until the end of his days, Bekere made repeated attempts to bring under his control the Leqa Sibu area together with the profitable trade route passing through Sire. However this was all in vain, and the slippery Genda Bushen long survived the Moti for whose son he continued to be a thorn in the flesh.⁸⁶

By far the most daring challenge to Bekere's rising power came from Danno Bera of Leqa Qumba to the immediate south of the Moti's territories. The rivalry between the two had a greater time depth than the Leqa Sibuleqa Neqemte conflict. It started immediately after Bekere's takeover of Fido Bokkissa's territories. After an unsuccessful attempt to repel Bekere, Fido's son Amecha, fled to the south-west and was given asylum by Bera Ota who was then Abba Boku of Leqa Qumba. From there Amecha is said to have continued raiding the territories of Bekere who strongly suspected Bera Ota's collusion with these attempts. In those early days of continuous warfare among the tribes, the frictions between Bera and Bekere were further worsened by increasing numbers of other refugees leaving Leqa Neqemte and being given asylum by the Qumba. Although Bekere also tried to attract Qumba refugees in return, a much larger number left Leqa Neqemte than the other way round. The raids and counter-raids between the two continued right down to the last days of Bekere and even until the Shoan intervention.⁸⁷

The Leqa Qumba are reported to have been very courageous fighters with the strongest cavalry in the whole region. With a strong sense of importance of themselves, they refused to accept Bekere's presumptions and provided him with the most effective challenge in the area. When Bera Ota became too old, the Qumba chose his warlike son, Danno, as the Abba Dula which office naturally served him as a stepping-stone towards absolute power over his people. Danno had exactly the same ambitions as Bekere to establish a strong state of his own and to conquer neighbouring regions. He continued the long-standing conflict with Bekere while at the same time expanding his territories beyond the Didessa as far as the Birbir river in

the south-west. His control of the strategic areas of Arjo increased his influence considerably. Arjo was the point of convergence of trade routes coming from Billo in proceeding to Jimma in the south. Arjo was even then an important market for the distribution of coffee from Jimma. Another old route also connected Arjo with Gimbi, across the Didessa and via Supe Boro. The other important Qumba market-village at the time was Getema which is traditionally known for the most skillful manufacture of horn cups and other utensils of horn which were in great demand both in Wollega region and as far as Gojjam, Shoa, and Jimma.⁸⁸

All these advantages tended to bolster Danno's influence and naturally increased his diffidence towards the Moti of Lega Neqemte. There are even some indications that he had started to use the title of "the king of the Galla."⁸⁹ Like his father before him he continued to welcome Lega Neqemte rebels against Bekere's power and allowed his land to be a basis for anti-Bekere opposition moves. The traditions relate that Bekere actually lost his life in the hands of one of such rebels who had joined Danno Bera. The rebel, Serba Golja, is said to have suffered greatly under the Moti in Sasiga to the west of Neqemte where his land and cattle were confiscated, his house burnt, and his family destroyed. The reason for this is said to have been Serba Golja's unauthorized killing of an elephant in the Handeq forests. This was a serious breach of the monopoly the Moti had established over ivory throughout his realms. In retaliation, Serba Golja fled to Lega Qumba, joined Danno's army and personally killed Moti Bekere in one of the regular conflicts between the two Lega groups. His death took place in 1868.⁹⁰

Thus, the long-standing enmity with Lega Qumba cost the Moti his life. And his death - bed instructions to his son and successor, Moroda, signi-

ificantly identify the most serious challenges he had to face throughout his region. He is said to have told Moroda: "Take care of my enemies Genda Rushan and Danno Bera, lest they take away the vast inheritance I am leaving behind for you."⁹¹

CHAPTER IV

The Shoan Conquest

Moroda took his father's last warnings very seriously. He kept himself and his army always alert on his frontiers with the two Oromo leaders, and the old raids and counter-raids continued unabated. Like his father before him, he was almost always victorious when it came to direct armed conflicts with either Danno Bera or Genda Bushan. Moroda even attempted what his great father had failed to accomplish. He started to expand his territories beyond the Didessa, in the country of the Sibü Oromo.¹

Morado used the relatively small Leqa community in Ghimbi as a Trojan Horse for his expansion westwards. According to the Oral traditions this Leqa group had begun to settle in Ghimbi some nine generations ago, that is, towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century.² Once they had moved across the Didessa and established their own qabiye right in Ghimbi, they seem to have had no meaningful contact with the Leqa Neqemte or the other eastern Leqa. As a minority group in what was otherwise predominantly Sibü country, they were continually harassed from all directions. However, they had always kept their own and managed to survive for over a hundred years. By the first half of the nineteenth century, the same process of the decline of Gada institutions in form of more personal and arbitrary rules had naturally taken place also among the Leqa Ghimbi. The traditions remember a rather venerated Abba Boku, Donjo Gawo, who was an elderly contemporary of Bekere. He seems to have been the last transitional gada official before the emergence of a local autocracy. The man who, according to the traditions, succeeded Donjo Gawo into prominence was one of his close relatives Sori Dembi.³

Sori Dembi inherited the hostilities with the neighbouring Sibu and other peoples in the area. He was particularly harassed by the Haru and Nolle who occupied the area immediately to the south of Ghimbi. The traditions are firm that they were neither Leqa nor Sibu and that they were led by Geda Dule and Jorgo Degewo, respectively, and Sori Dembi could not stand their attacks on his own. Thus he crossed the Didessa, met Moroda and appealed for the assistance of his fellow Leqa.⁴

This was a god-send for Moroda who had always nourished strong ambitions for dominating the rich Sibu areas in the west. Although he was busy fighting against Danno Bera and Genda Bushen at the time, he still managed to send a small contingent of horsemen led by his own brothers Amente and Dide Bekere. The Neqemte reinforcement was most effective. The strong forces of Geda Dule and Jorgo Degewo who had surrounded the Leqa Ghimbi were successfully repelled and eventually brought under control.⁵ Sori Dembi thought that this was all done to help him and his people against their enemies. Moroda had, however, his own special schemes. He soon sent to Ghimbi a man who is renowned to have been a most effective negotiator, Abba Dawe, asking both Sori Dembi and his conquered rivals to recognize his overlordship and pay tributes to him. Under the circumstances, Sori Dembi had no alternative and opted for getting the best possible treatment as a Leqa. The Haru and Nolle also accepted the tributary status grudgingly.⁶

To cement his newly acquired suzerainty over these areas, Moroda formally appointed his brothers as administrators of the area: Amente was made viceroy in Haru, and Chibsa in Ghimbi. The new state of affairs created a general sense of crisis in the whole Sibu country. The threat of Leqa Neqemte aggression disturbed the whole area between the Dabus river

and Ulla Lemena,⁷ the traditional boundary between the Leqa and the Sibu. As a result an inter-tribal alliance, called Kaka, was formed specially among the Sibu of Nedjo, Bodji and Jarso (the latter two located to the south-east and south-west of Nedjo, respectively). The aim of the Kaka was to crush the expanding forces of the Leqa, and the allies agreed to follow the lead of Wacho Debelo of Jarso who was a highly respected warrior and had by far the strongest local army. They agreed to march together and take Ghimbi by surprise.⁸

However, Kono Faro, one of the leaders of Nedjo Sibu betrayed the scheme. He stealthily left for Neqemte, met Moroda, and disclosed the plans of the Sibu Kaka. Thus alerted, Moroda sent strong reinforcements to Ghimbi. Nevertheless, the Sibu forces managed to challenge the Leqa Neqemte army, raided Ghimbi itself, and even forced Chibsa to withdraw for a time. More Leqa reinforcements were sent and in the ensuing hostilities Sibu resistance was broken and Wacho Debelo himself escaped further westwards. Moroda's army pursued him and managed to establish some degree of control over the Bodji, Nedjo and Jarso Sibu as far west as the Jawe river.⁹ Leqa Neqemte had thus gone a long way in establishing a vast patronage throughout the region between Wama in the east and the Jawe river in the west on the eve of the advent of Gojjame and Shoan forces in Wollega.

We have already seen above that early writers like Almeida saw the lack of Oromo unity as an important factor in their relation with the other populations of the Ethiopian plateau ever since the days of the ^{expansion} migrations.¹⁰ The same background of internal warfare and conflict among the numerous Oromo autocracies throughout Wollega in the late nineteenth century was to provide excellent opportunities for the contending forces of the Gojjame's and the Shoans in their attempts to incorporate the region. This is particularly

clear in the traditions of the Horro-Gudru tribes who became the first platform for Gojjamé-Shoan rivalries.¹¹

The major directions of the initial settlement of this area by different Oromo groups has already been given earlier at the beginning of the last chapter.¹² Local traditions relate that all the Oromo groups inhabiting what is today Horro-Gudru were all descendents of Jawe who is believed to have been the first ancestor of the Gudru, Jimma, Harro, Limu, Ghida, and the Amuru. The traditions further give even the names of the first pioneers of the more important of these groups. The pioneers who led their peoples to settle in these areas twelve to thirteen generations ago¹³ were: Himbabo Dede for Gudru, Kotte Gobeyya for Horro, Budo Birbirssso for Jimma, and Gaje Gandayo for Amuru. We are told that Himbabo Dede led his Gudru to occupy the land from Anger river to Hora Dika.¹⁴ Kotte Gobeyya's Horro settled between the Abbay and the upper Gibe river extending to the edge of the Chomen Swamp. Budo Birbirssso established the qabiye rights of his Jimma people between the Abbay and Mount Gorochoan¹⁵ and also bordering on the land of the Leqa Sibru to the south west. The Amuru led by Goje Gandayo are said to have moved further north-west and settled between Tulu Chari¹⁶ and river Garchi.¹⁷

While these were the earlier Oromo settlers who had priority in qabiye rights over these regions, we are told that in later generations distant relatives followed them from the south and south-east, began to settle among them thus creating the need for further expansion some moving to the west and a few of the Gudru even expanding across the Abbay into Gojjam. The overcrowding also created much occasion for endless wars among clans and tribes. Major conflicts of this nature are said to have started five generations after the initial settlement and they continued right down to

the Shoan conquest. Thus, by the nineteenth century the descendants of the four pioneers of Gudru, Jimma, Horro, Amuru, and others had become deadly enemies.¹⁸

The Horro led by Abishe Garba had become the strongest of all the rest by the nineteenth century; and they dominated the whole area between the Anger in the west and the Finchaá river in the east. Led by Gama Muras and, later, by Jibat Busho,¹⁹ the Gudru came next in local importance and the major trade route connecting Gojjam with Asendabo and further south to Jimma was under their control. Budo Birbirisso's Jimma had by the nineteenth century divided into two conflicting and mutually independent groups, namely, the Jimma Rare led by Qadida Wandabe and the Jimma Geneti by Sori Gela. The other tribes in the region were similarly divided among themselves and were at one another's throats.²⁰

In almost all the battles fought among the above mentioned leaders, Abishe Garba of Horro used to emerge victorious. This seems to have compelled his rivals to find ways and means of getting rid of him. Informants argue that the appearance of the Gojjamé leader, Pas Adal Tesema in Northern Wollega, just south of the Abbay, was due to these internal conflicts among the local Oromo. It is apparent that Abishe Garba's continued successes had started to draw some of his rivals into an alliance against him. Thus, we see towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century an alliance developing between the Gudru and the neighbouring Jimma Rare. Jibat Busho of Gudru and Qadida Wanabe of Jimma Rare had established a Kaka which was cemented by a marriage alliance between the two houses. These two figures now wanted to use their long commercial contacts with Gojjam²¹ in an attempt to eliminate their common enemy, Abishe. Our informants say that they crossed over to Gojjam, allied themselves with Adal Tesema, and invited

his military intervention in their local quarrels.²² For the Gojjame leader who had the ambition to expand his domains beyond the Abbay and as far south as the Gibe Kingdoms,²³ this was an opportune moment. He welcomed the two Oromo leaders, it is said, and agreed to help them.²⁴ Since Abishe was a very courageous warrior and had many strong horsemen it was expected that he would put up a stiff resistance against Ras Adal and his Oromo allies. Nevertheless, Ras Adal crossed the Abbay guided by his Gudru and Jimma Rare allies, and camped at Qoqor plain in Horro, not far from Abishe's residence. Instead of directly fighting against Abishe, Adal tactfully sent a message to him through Jibat Busho and Qadida Wanabe promising to make him master of Ghida and Limu besides Horro and to provide him with fire arms for his own use. The unsuspecting Abishe took Adal for his words and went to visit him at Qoqor with a few of his horsemen. As soon as he arrived there, the Gojjame leader ordered his arrest and some of the Horro horsemen were killed when they attempted to protect their leader. Adal then resorted to the old feudal policy of "divide and rule", appointed Abishe's own brother Fandalala Garba as ruler of the Horro, and took Abishe himself to Gojjam.²⁵

Northern Wollega henceforth became the sphere of influence of the Gojjame. The various local leaders who welcomed Adal were confirmed in their original places of local leadership, and he is said to have given the title of Dejazmach to Sori Gela of Jimma Geneti who had apparently impressed the Gojjame ruler with an extravagant reception. The traditions clearly indicate that the advent of the Gojjame was a land mark in the history of the Oromo peoples. A number of new developments are cited as having taken place as a result of the Gudru-Jimma Rare invitations of Adal into northern Wollega. The Gojjame simply proceeded with the establishment of churches and sent

priests to convert the Oromo. Seven such churches are said to have been founded by Adal in Horro-Gudru at the time. What is more important, for the first time in the history of the local Oromo the characteristic feudal institution of Christian Ethiopia began to be superimposed on Oromo traditional way of life. Thus, we are told that as soon as he returned to Gojjam Adal sent a number of soldiers to Horro-Gudru assigning them to specific areas where they were provided with all their needs by the local people. The local villages were divided among these soldiers, according to their ranks, for this purpose.²⁶ Gojjamé influence is said to have extended as far as Gindeberet and part of Liban in the east and Leqa Billo in the south.²⁷ The informants could not remember the exact period of these events but they say that the Gojjamé involvement in the political affairs of northern Wollega was, undoubtedly, some years before the Battle of Himbabo in 1882, and was earlier than the Shoan encroachment on any part of Wollega.²⁸

By about 1880, the most significant areas in Wollega which had not yet been brought under direct influences of the Gojjamé were Moroda's Leqa Neqemte, Genda Bushen's Leqa Sibu, Danno Bera's Leqa Qumba, and the vast areas beyond the Didessa. It has already been pointed out that trade relations existed between the Leqa Neqemte and the people of Gojjam.²⁹ But the coming tide of Gojjame hegemony over the neighbouring Oromo of Horro-Guduru was already assuming threatening proportions. The coming of Leqa Billo under Adal's direct influence was particularly menacing for the interests of Morodas Kingdom. In 1881, Ras Deresu, the outstanding general of Teklehaymanot³⁰ was sent to subdue more Oromo territories across the Abbay and collect tributes.³¹ The renewed advances of the Gojjamé into the Wollega region is said to have caused Moroda (c.1868-1889) much concern. It is apparent,

however, that Moroda had already been thinking how to withstand Gojjame pressures when and if they came. To start with he hoped that they couldn't make it all the way to his area because of the long distances involved. But if they managed that, he thought, there was very little he could do against them except try to join forces with them and make the best possible use of their forces for his own purposes. Our informants have told us that Moroda once exclaimed to his followers: "It is unthinkable that the Amhara will come. But once they come it is impossible to challenge them."³² Moroda gathered his notables and discussed how to deal with Deresu. It was agreed that they would show no hostility but send a delegation with tribute to meet him at Billo.³³ According to one informant, Moroda and his people failed to fight against Ras Deresu because of lack of firearms which the enemy possessed, and the absence of unity among the Oromo leaders who were constantly at war with one another.³⁴ It is also clear that Moroda sought to make an alliance with the new comers to help him tip the local balance of power in his favour.

Moroda sent his brother, Dibaba Bekere, with a delegation and a tribute of gold and pledges of friendship to Deresu.³⁵ This was intended by the Oromo ruler to make the Ras bypass Leqa territories and let him retain his autonomy.³⁶ Deresu accepted the tribute and was later met by Moroda at Digga, west of Neqemte. In this, Moroda had already scored an important success. He had induced the Gojjame forces to leave his own realms at peace and march instead through the territories of his deadly rival, Danno Bera of Leqa Qumba. In return for Moroda's welcome the Ras gave him the title of Dejazmach and left confirming him as an autonomous ruler over Leqa Neqemte.³⁷ The Ras is also said to have him baptized and some of his followers in a tent at Digga. It is also said that the Ras gave them a

tabot and encouraged the building of the Yesus church, the first church in Leqa Neqemte³⁸ and marched over towards the Gabba³⁹ river in the south-west. When Deresu reached the Gabba, he asked what the river's name was. Being told that it was called Gabba, he took it for the Amharic word gebba, thought about it for a moment and said: "Gebba inji watta yellem"?⁴⁰ The significance of this statement is that Deresu feared that he might not be successful if he invaded Illubabor, and that he might not even come out of it alive if he passed the frontier. He is then supposed to have been led by this superstitious belief and returned without attempting to conquer Illubabor.⁴¹

Traditions are unanimous that Deresu and his troops invaded Guma after they had passed over to Gabba through Leqa. When Ras Deresu invaded Guma, its king was Abba Jobbir, a Muslim. He is said to have been very powerful. Although the five Gibe monarchies had a kaka, among themselves, they seem to have yielded to Deresu one by one.⁴² Gera, Guma, Limmu-Enarea and Jimma were very rich in gold and ivory and paid these as tribute to the Ras.⁴³ Moroda is supposed to have sent earlier messages to warn the Gibe princes that it was futile to fight. He advised them that it would be better to pay tribute because the Oromo could not match the Gojjamé rifles which were still almost unknown in the Oromo lands. However, Abba Jobbir ignored this advice and put up a strong resistance. Nonetheless, the Gojjame devastated his country, killed Abba Jobbir and forcibly collecting tribute from his subjects.⁴⁴

These exploits of the Gojjamé had been followed very closely by Minilik of Shoa who had no intention of becoming a passive observer of the unfolding drama. The basis for the legitimacy of expansion of the Gojjamé further south into Wollega as far as Kafa was apparently the title of "King of

Gojjam and Kafa" conferred upon Ras Adal Tesema by Emperor Yohannes IV in 1881.⁴⁵ It seems that the "Carte blanche" given to the King of Gojjam was not recognized by Minilik. He had already started to strengthen his position among the Oromo peoples inhabiting the area between Shoa and Wollega on the one hand and the Gibe region on the other. He had thus brought under his influence most of the intervening Tulama and Macha tribes.⁴⁶

As soon as the news of the Gojjame advances of 1881 reached him, Minilik promptly sent his general, Gobena, to march to Wollega, pursue the Gojjame forces, and check their further successes. Our Leqa informants bring out very clearly the tactics followed by Moroda when he was faced by the impending conflict over Wollega between Gojjam and Shoa. We are told that the report of Gobena's advent to Wollega reached while he was accompanying Deresu on his way to the Gibe Kingdoms. He quietly took leave of the Gojjame general at the Gabba river and is said to have immediately returned to Leqa Neqemte.⁴⁷

Gobena's advances into the heartlands of Wollega were relatively easy. The rather desperate resistance of the Leqa Nonno were broken without much difficulty and the Shoan forces proceeded westwards.⁴⁸ The news of Gobena's victory over the Leqa Nonno, the submission of many of the Shoan Oromo chiefs and the military strength of the Shoans soon reached Moroda. Once again, he sent his brother Dibaba Bekere, with one hundred waqets of gold as tribute to Gobena together with some oxen and food supplies for the Ras and his soldiers. He is also supposed to have sent a message assuring Gobena that his country was peaceful and that he had no plans to resist his advances.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Moroda called a conference of his notables and advisors to discuss how to deal with the Shoan expeditionary force. He opened the discussion by saying that they had let the Gojjame pass peacefully by offering

tribute and that they were now threatened again by the Shoans who seemed to have stronger forces than the Gojjamé. He presented his people with two alternatives: to fight or to submit. Their arms, he reminded them, were inferior and if they fought, their rivals Tucho Danno, son and successor of Danno Bera of Leqa Qumba, Genda Bushen of Leqa Sibü and other hostile chiefs in the newly incorporated areas beyond the Didessa river would rebel or ally themselves with the Shoans against the Leqa Neqemte. He advised them to agree to submit peacefully.⁵⁰ It seems that the main reason why Moroda was highly inclined to take this decision was to defend his strong position in Wollega through an alliance with the Shoan ruling class, to use them against his local rivals or rebels, and thereby create a strong relationship with King Minilik.

When Dibaba Bekere returned from Gobena, he reported that the Ras and his followers were very pleased with the gifts. He also told Moroda that Gobena wanted to see him. Moroda at once sent Dibaba back to guide Gobena from Billo to Hinde in the west, once again leading a hostile army through the territories of his rivals, the Leqa Qumba. Gobena camped at Hinde where the Moti met him.⁵¹ Informants say that Tucho Danno of Leqa Qumba was determined to fight and put up a strong resistance against Gobena and his followers. But Moroda, warned Gobena of Tucho's intentions and Gobena tactfully invited Tucho to come and visit him at Hinde. The messenger told Tucho that Gobena did not come to take over his country but to help him strengthen his position against his rivals and to create friendly relations with him. Tucho trusted these words and rode to Hinde to meet Gobena. He and his horesmen were respectfully welcomed at first and served with food and drinks. In the mean time, at the instigation of Moroda, Gobena ordered his soldiers to cut off the girth of the saddles of Tucho's

horses and those of his followers. Gobena then asked Tucho to submit to the Shoan rule. Tucho refused and angrily walked out of the camp with his horsemen to take immediate action against Gobena and his followers. But Tucho and his horsemen found the girth of their saddles cut off. They now had no alternative but to submit. Tucho was given the title of Kennazmach and Gobena appointed Balambaras Lulseged, one of his followers, as a governor of Arjo leaving some of his soldiers with him to maintain peace and order.⁵² This was quite a landmark in the history of Shoan - Wollega relations, since it constituted the first occasion when an administrator was appointed in any part of the region by the Shoan court. From this time onwards a series of similar appointments were made over many other areas, thus paving the way for the incorporation of the whole region into the Shoan feudal state system.

The traditions relate that there was a lot of discussion and negotiation between Moroda and Gobena at the Shoan camp of Hinde. Gobena argued that it would be to the interest of Moroda and his people to side with Shoa rather than with Gojjam. He informed him that all Tulama and Macha Chiefs between Shoa and Wollega including Yanfa Gudeta of Gedo on the frontier between the two regions had already submitted to Minilik and joined forces with the Shoan army.⁵³ On his side, Moroda told Gobena that the Gojjame forces had preceded Shoa in the region, come to his area, given him the title of Dejazmach, founded churches and even converted him and some of his people to Christianity. Thus a strong bond had been established between him and Gojjam and he needed very strong and convincing reasons to break off these relations. He argued that he did not want either money or land from the Shoans or the Gojjame since he already had these in plenty himself.

What he needed was to be left alone with his people in peace and tranquility. If he were to side with the Shoans, he wanted to be assured of a strong and lasting bond of genuine friendship between himself and Minilik. The ties he would have with Minilik should be direct and personal, and not through the intermediary of administrative officials.⁵⁴

Gobena gave Moroda his solemn words that no administrator would be appointed on his territories and that he will be directly responsible to Minilik himself under whose overlordship he will remain an autonomous ruler of the land of his forefathers. The traditions insist that Moroda's new alliance with Shoa was sealed with a formal kaka (oath) between him and Ras Gobena on behalf of Minilik. In return for these solemn assurances Moroda promised that he would dissuade all other Oromo peoples in the area, and particularly in Horro - Gudru, from actively siding with Deresu.⁵⁵ This was of considerable advantage to the Shoans since Teklehaymanot's forces were almost entirely dependent on Horro-Gudru cavalry. Thus either their active support to Gobena or at least their neutrality in the Shoa-Gojjame showdown would help Shoa tremendously. True to the words he gave Gobena, Moroda advised the Oromo in the region to keep aloof and not involve themselves in the matters of the Gojjame and the Shoans. He also urged them privately to pay tribute to whichever side won, rather than gamble by actively helping one or the other.⁵⁶ All this decisively tipped the balance of power south of Abbay against Teklehaymanot and in favour of Minilik. These traditions shed a new light on the results of the Shoa - Gojjame rivalry in the area; and it should no longer be in Minilik's own superior arms alone that we should seek his successes at Himbabo but rather in the amicable relations he could forge with important sectors of the local Oromo leadership.

Gobena continued his march to the south-west following the same route that Deresu had taken to the Gibe region. Both Leqa and local Gibe traditions relate that the two forces actually met in the small Kingdom of Gumma and that there were no clashes between them. Rather Deresu is said to have offered to withdraw without a fight, leaving behind all the tributes and war booties he had collected for his King, Teklehaymanot.⁵⁷ In effect what this meant was that Deresu was now abandoning all the advantages which Gojjam had accumulated in Wollega south of the Abbay, ever since Adal Tesema first led his forces into Horro-Gudru in the late 1870's. This infamous action of his general infuriated King Teklehaymanot of Gojjam who immediately sent Deresu back into Wollega reinforced by additional troops led by his own son Ras Bezabeh.⁵⁸ Gojjam and Shoa soon entered into a direct military confrontation which culminated in the Shoan victory at the Battle of Himbabo, June 6, 1882, when Teklehaymanot himself was taken prisoner. The story of this conflict has already been told in a number of earlier accounts.⁵⁹ It suffices here to point out that the traditions emphasize the role played by Minilik's local Oromo allies in his successes at Embabo.⁵⁹ Thus, we are told that the notorious Qadida Wanabe of Jimma Rare effectively fought on the Shoan side while other important local leaders — with the exception of Gudru chiefs — resisted from helping the Gojjame. An important factor cited by the traditions as a reason for local oromo reluctance to help the Gojjame is that they had been too oppressive during the few years of their overlordship and that they had openly despised Oromo culture and other ways of life.⁶⁰ In contrast, the Shoans had long lived with sundry Tulama and Macha peoples and had established mechanisms of co-existence with Oromo socio-cultural traditions. Moreover, a significant number of the Shoan troops including Gobena himself, were Oromo or of Oromo origin.

Moroda congratulated himself on the victory of the Shoans at Himbabo, and it was clear to him now that he had indeed made the right choice. Although he had clearly avoided making the Gojjame angry with him, his role in the Shoan success was quite invaluable. His advice to the local leaders to keep neutral was quite decisive. ⁴ His peaceful submission also served as a positive example for the other major Leqa power in the region, that of Leqa Qellem of Jote Tulu.⁶¹ Jote was given the title of Dejazmach which was also confirmed for Moroda. These two rulers were now left to administer their respective territories under the direct overlordship of Minilik, while in all other Oromo areas in the region new Shoan administrators were appointed. Clear mutual advantages accrued from this arrangement for Jote and Moroda on the one hand, and Minilik on the other. While their peaceful submission eased the pressure for the Shoan forces in their early campaign in Wollega, Moroda and Jote could also use their alliances with Minilik to eliminate effectively the last remnants of local opposition to their respective rules within Leqa Neqemte and Leqa Qellem. Thus, Moroda succeeded not only in destroying the traditional influential positions which the Leqa, Qumba and Leqa Sibru rulers had prior to the Shoan advent; but he also managed to bring the whole of Sibru country as far west as the Dabus river under his direct rule. ^{Jote's submission to Minilik} For Jote, his alliance with Minilik finally enabled him to break the centuries - old resistance of the pre-Oromo inhabitants of the Anfillo forest led by the notorious Bussase as well as local rivals.⁶²

However, the Shoan hegemony among the Leqa was not entirely undisputed. Ethiopian Chronicles and European travellers have glossed over a number of vital developments in the area. According to tradition, Garbi Jillo of Leqa Billo, Tucho Danno of Leqa Qumba and Gend Bushen of Leqa Sibru allied to

resist the Shoans. Ligdi Bekere asked his brother, Moroda, to side with the Oromo leaders against the Shoans, but Moroda refused. Ligdi quarrelled with his brother and therefore, prepared a little army of his own agreeing to fight with Tucho, Garbi and Genda against the invaders. Hence, Ligdi is remembered as a brave warrior and is praised in songs.⁶³ Gobena had to make two expeditions against the Leqa. These devastated the country without forcing the inhabitants to acknowledge Shoan supremacy. Nevertheless, Gobena was victorious over the majority of the Leqa Oromo before he returned to Shoa owing to his firearms.⁶⁴

Some time after Gobena returned to Shoa, the newly conquered Oromo again organized themselves to fight against the Shoans. Turi Gagan, the chief of Nonno Rogie, Merdasa Konce, the chief of Nonno Migra, the three Leqa tribes (Leqa Billo, Leqa Sibbu and Leqa Qumba), Limmu and Gudaya formed a league against their enemy. Ligdi Bekere again joined the allies who scored a short-lived military success against Gobena whom they are said to have forced to withdraw as far back as the Guder river.⁶⁵ Moroda remained loyal to Minilik because of his rivalry with Genda Bushen of Leqa Sibbu and Tucho Danno of Leqa Qumba⁶⁶ and to preserve his position in general. Informants blame Moroda for not joining the League because they reason that if Moroda had not collaborated with the Shoans the Oromo of Wollega would have defeated the Shoans.⁶⁷

Some pieces of evidence indicate that Gobena made two successful expeditions in Western Wollega after 1885. One of these expeditions was in 1886 when he led a campaign against some Mahdist bands whom he managed to persuade not to invade the regions which are effectively ruled by the Negouss, or that are occupied by his troops.⁶⁸ It is possible that there was a side expedition to Qellem and Anfillo. However, Gobena is said to have gone to Anfillo after convincing the Mahdists to withdraw. In

either case Gobena is supposed to have been successful. He returned to Shoa in October 1886.⁶⁹

According to traditions in Leqa the first expedition of Gobena to western most Wollega occurred about four years after the Battle of Himbabo. These local sources claim that the appearance of Gobena in Western Wollega was the result of a call for help by Moroda Bekere and Jote Tulu who were threatened by a Mahdist invasion. From the time of Moroda's victory in the Sibu country beyond the Didessa river, strong leaders like Wacho Debello of Jarso, Waqbulcho Kussa of Mendi and Gonde Tuffa of Aira were not in favour of Moroda's rule. They used to look forward for an opportune moment to rebel. Therefore, it happened that the Mahdists (Dervishes) were advancing from the west getting help from the chiefs in Asossa such as Bambasi Abba Moti, into the interior part of Wollega. It is said that the above mentioned leaders who were dissatisfied with Moroda's rule allied themselves with the Mahdists (Dervishes) and supported the Ansar invading force against both Moroda and Jote. They expelled Moroda's appointees like Chibsa Bekere and others and successfully controlled western Wollega up to the Didessa river including Qellem, Jote's country. The Ansars and their allies made their centre at Gute Dilli in Nedjo and are said to have stayed for about a year. They forced the people to drop their traditional beliefs and accept Islam. They prevented them from drinking hydromel and tella. Above all the Ansars raped the wives and daughters of the people and brought about a considerable destruction to the economy and culture of the society. The oppressive and exploitative activities of the Ansars in western Wollega provoked much hatred, discontent and hostility among the public against the Ansars and there was a continuous struggle against the enemy and their allies.⁷⁰

Traditions also say that when the Ansars occupied Qellem, Jote escaped and came to Neqemte. He asked Moroda to go with him to Shoa and get help from Minilik. Moroda informed him that he had already sent messengers to Minilik and was waiting for a reply. Then Jote is said to have continued his journey to Shoa. But on his way he met Gobena and his army at Gado who were sent by Minilik. Hence, he joined the Shoan army and returned to Wollega to fight against the Mahdist troops.⁷¹

The combined army of Gobena and the two Leqa leaders fought and defeated the Mahdists and their allies who consolidated their forces at Gute Diji (Naijoo) 1888 and tried to challenge. Many of the Ansars were killed and others were harassed back to the Sudan. One of the allies of the Ansars, Waqbulcho Kussa was slaughtered and his head was made to float in the Dabus river. But Wacho Debllo, escaped with a few Ansars. Thus the Mahdists had to withdraw from Qellem and Nedjo.⁷² This victory favoured the two Leqa rulers (Moroda and Jote) in centralizing local power in their hands. Because it gave them a chance to make internal administrative arrangements by stopping the Mahdist incursions which used to create favourable conditions for the internal rebels.

After the victory over the Mahdists in Western Wollega, Gobena is said to have appointed his son, Dejazmach Wodajo, in Leqa to collect tribute and customs from the Kellas (customs gates) which was handled by Moroda before. This disappointed Moroda because Gobena was breaking his promise that the Leqa ruler was to be directly under Minilik. Moroda did not at all like Wodajo as an overlord in Leqa. The situation was further aggravated when Wodajo detained twelve slaves who had been sent by Moroda with food supplies (dirgo). In order to appeal Moroda came to Shoa. Gobena welcomed him, heard the case and wrote a letter to his son repudiating him. Gobena is also supposed to have taken Moroda to Minilik and thus restore the direct overlordship of Minilik.⁷³

In the 1880's a direct relationship had been created between the rulers of Leqa Neqemte and Minilik's government. This was to exist for a long time. According to an agreement between Minilik and Moroda, no armies or commanders (neftegnnoch) were to be settled in Moroda's lands but Moroda was to pay an annual tribute in gold of five hundred waqets and hundred feregula of ivory. He had also to render military support to Minilik to whom he entrusted the guardianship of his son Kumsa, soon baptized Gebre-Egziabher with Minilik as his god-father.⁷⁴

A strong vassalage had been created by Minilik in Leqa. However, Minilik's rule was only indirect and the internal affairs of Leqa Neqemte were entirely in the hands of Moroda and his officials. Taxes and tributes were collected by the balabats of each district and were paid directly to Moroda who paid a fixed annual tribute to Minilik. The local land holding system was untouched at first. The annual tribute may not have been a burden in the eyes of the local rulers for gold and ivory were in abundance in those days it is said.⁷⁵ The growth of Moroda's power and influence in Leqa Neqemte and that of Jote in Leqa Qellem helped Minilik in his systematic annexation of almost all parts of Wollega. At the same time it also initially spared the people of Leqa Neqemte and Leqa Qellem of the direct settlement and feudal exploitation by the Shoan Neftegnnoch. In contrast the people of Horro-Gudru, Leqa Qumba, Leqa Sibbu, Leqa Billo and other hostile tribes were exposed to direct Shoan oppressive measures right from the beginning.⁷⁶

CHAPTER V

Wollega Within the Empire (1882-1910)

The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the consolidation and strengthening of the Ethiopian Empire under the Emperor Minilik II. It also revealed the total shift of political power from northern Ethiopia to south central Ethiopia. This shift of political centre of gravity to the south and the increasing centralization of power had a lasting effect upon the newly annexed territories of the south and west. The administrative set up, the land holding systems, the cultural and social life of the peoples in the newly incorporated regions were gradually relegated to the needs and interests of the ruling class of the Empire and their collaborators among the local elites.

Apparently, right after its incorporation (c. 1880-1890) Wollega was divided into three administrative regions with the exception of Asossa which did not come under Minilik's rule until 1898.¹ The three administrative regions were Lega Negemte and its dependencies under the Bekere family, Lega Qellem under the Jote family, Arjo and Horro Gudru administered by officials directly appointed by the central government. These divisions were made simply for the conveniences of the central government in Shoa and did not at all consider the administrative and economic needs of the local people. This comes out very clearly from the use of Arjo as the capital of the representative of Shoa who, theoretically was only the administrator of Arjo and Horro Gudru. Located at the southern edge of the whole region Arjo was clearly ill-suited as a centre of administration for areas extending as far north-west as Limmu and north-east as Gudru.² The lines of communication Arjo had with its northern dependencies also passed through the territories of Lega Negemte.

It is apparent that precisely this point provided the best rationale for the selection of Arjo as administrative capital for the Shoan officials. The Shoans were killing a number of birds with one stone. By making Arjo as their seat of power they were, first of all, crushing effectively the strongest elements of resistance led by the family of Danno Bera of Leqa Qumba. Secondly, Arjo was used as a convenient point for checking the movements of the ruler of Leqa Neqemte, which had been made autonomous only nominally. Shoan troops continuously marched from Arjo through the territories of Leqa Neqemte ostentatiously to move to the dependent districts in Horro-Gudru. As a matter of fact, however, they always used Leqa Neqemte's hospitality while at the same time collecting all kinds of intelligence regarding Moroda's activities. Finally, Arjo was also used as a checking point for the continued loyalty of the Leqa Qellem who had a common frontier with Arjo at the districts of Nolle Kaba and Lalo Qile³ at both of which the Shoans had established strong garrisons from the very beginning. The garrisons at Nolle Kaba and Lolo Qille which were commanded by the governor at Arjo also outflanked, in a sense, the forces of the ruler of Leqa Neqemte whose power over the Sibbu country was thus highly compromised. Even the local traditions transmit this strong position of the governor of Arjo vis a vis Qellem and Neqemte by giving him the title of "Yebelay Tebaqi" which literally means "superintendent".⁴

In the best traditions of Ethiopian feudalism, each of these local administrative units exercised considerable power internally as if they were self-sufficient entities. For mere administrative purposes both Leqa Qellem and Leqa Neqemte were left alone to manage their local affairs more or less as in

former days. The Shoan governor stationed at Arjo was given very sweeping local powers which he exercised on behalf of the Emperor. He was accompanied by a large number of followers to Arjo and he stationed them at various parts of the districts under him where they were provided with all their needs by the labours of the local people. According to some traditional accounts the followers of Dejazmach Demissew Nesibu, who was the governor of Arjo at the time⁵, were as many as 30,000. Our informants tell us that these soldiers were known as the Gondare by the local people. The exact reasons for this are not very clear as yet, but some elders report that it was because of Shoan troops then consisting of individuals who were predominantly of Gondare origin.¹⁶ They are remembered today as very unruly and oppressive soldiers who despised the local people and considered them as inferior beings in their own country. It is reported that, in comparison with conditions in the areas where the Gondare were stationed, life in Qellem and Neqemte was rather blissful for the local Oromo.⁷

The Governor of Arjo appointed his own administrative officials for the various districts under his control. These officials had the characteristic Ethiopian feudal titles in accordance with the size and importance of the district.⁸ While these Shoan administrators occupied the higher echelons of power, some of the most loyal members of the local Oromo elite were given subsidiary titles in accordance with the levels and types of services they were intended to render to the whole feudal set-up. Thus, we are told that the titles of Mislene, Abegaz, Qoro, and Chiga-Shum were used in this order to denote the local administrative hierarchy under each Shoan Gezi, or governor.⁹ In most cases, however, even these relatively minor positions -- with the exception of those of the Qoro and Chiga-Shum -- were actually given to members of the Shoan community stationed in various

districts. The same model and pattern of local administration was also adopted by the rulers of Leqa Qellem and Leqa Neqemte who could give feudal titles as high as Fitawrari to their own local followers.¹⁰

The exact nature of the feudal relations established as a result of the superimposition of this hierarchy will have to be studied further in much greater detail. For the purposes of this essay, however, the traditions transmitted by our informants from Arjo and Horro-Gudru seem to represent the general picture obtaining throughout the region where Shoan troops were stationed. We are told that the Oromo peasants in these areas had multiple obligations towards the Shoan military colonists. The conditions in Arjo and Horro-Gudru are painted as particularly severe and harsh. As soon as the Shoans had established control over the area, the Oromo villages and hamlets were evenly distributed among the settled troops according to their respective ranks. There was then established the very heavy Shoan land tenure system as applied in Shoa and the other incorporated regions. Firstly, each Oromo family had to pay the equivalent of 5-10 Birr annually to the Shoan warrior with whom he had been attached. This amount is supposed to have been collected on behalf of the central state to which it had to be transmitted. However, our informants are sceptical about this and insist that the Shoans kept much of it for themselves. The family also had to set aside an asrat, that is, one-tenths of his harvests, which he had to transport himself to the nearest granary where similar contributions of grain crops were stored for emergency purposes.¹¹ Further more, the peasants had to share one-fourths of all their produce with his Shoan neftegma who lived entirely on these dues. While these are "legitimate" dues established by the Shoan state machinery, there were a number of other occasional payments imposed arbitrarily by individual neftegnas according to their own personal

whims. We are thus told that the Shoan soldiers could drive away with impunity and for their own private use heads of cattle, sheep and goats or pack animals belonging to their peasants. Members of the peasant family were also expected to render sundry labour services to the neftegnna. These included, among others, looking after the mules and horses¹² of the nefetegnna, fetching water and fire wood for him, building houses for him, clearing paths and constructing wooden bridges for his convenience and running errands for him wherever he so desired.¹³ While these stories are related with considerable bitterness by our informants from Arjo and Horro Gudru, Leqa Neqemte traditions recount them with much gratitude for their own relatively better fortune under the Bekere family who were careful to avoid the most distasteful aspects of the Shoan hierarchy which they otherwise tried to emulate.¹⁴ However, even in Neqemte and Qellem the Shoan presence was being felt more and more increasingly as years went by. This general process in which the Shoan central court began to be more directly involved in the local affairs of these two autonomous units and the consequent tug of war between the local rulers and Addis Ababa has been discussed elsewhere.¹⁵ The sense of self-confidence felt by the Shoan court after the victory of Adwa in 1896 was reflected in its increasing interaction in the local administration and the consolidation of imperial power vis-a-vis the newly incorporated areas.

One of the most dramatic results of this consolidation of power which affected the lives of the agricultural peoples of Wollega — except those of Qellem and Asossa¹⁶ — was the proclamation of 1909/10 requiring the measurement of all land and its redistribution. As attempt has been made in earlier pages to describe the pattern of land rights that the Oromo peoples established following their migration and settlement in the highlands of

what is today Wollega.¹⁷ This pattern was kept intact throughout the centuries until it was partially disturbed by the emergence of a series of autocracies in which there was a tendency to disregard the strict traditional qabiye rights in favour of the arbitrary dispositions of the local tyrants.¹⁸ With the advent of the Gojjamé and the Shoans, however, new elements of feudal relations were introduced. In the first phase the Gojjamé and the Shoan settlers were simply superimposed on the local peasantry without in any way affecting the traditional qabiye rights the local people had on the land. Still keeping their possession and use of the land as in earlier centuries, the Oromo peasants were required to provide first the Gojjamé and then the Shoans with different kinds of dues as well as labour services as indicated earlier.¹⁹ While this applied to the areas in which the Shoans were directly settled, in the "autonomous" regions like Leqa Neqemte and Leqa Qellem the local rulers agreed to pay annual tributes to Minilik, very often in precious objects such as gold and ivory. As shown earlier Moroda was first required to pay 500 wegets²⁰ of gold and 100 feresula²¹ of ivory. This was later increased to 1000 wegets of gold. As contribution towards this tribute paid to Minilik, Moroda and Kumsa could levy as much as one Thaler on each of the households within their realms which could not pay in gold or ivory.²² The land measurement proclamation of 1909/1910 introduced the second decisive phase in the relations between the Oromo peasantry and their new landlords.

The background of the land measurement proclamation was, very clearly, the slow but steady transformation that the Ethiopian society was beginning to undergo during the last part of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century. With the defeat of the Italians at Adwa Minilik's Kingdom was coming into closer and more meaningful contacts with the major European powers. The pressures for opening up the country to international capital, the attempts at some degree of modernization, and the consequent need for a more intensive exploitation of the resources of the land were felt very keenly during that crucial period.²³ The economic base for Minilik's rather heavy investment in firearms and the increasingly extravagant court

style at Addis Ababa was very fragile indeed, and the handful of European advisors must have prevailed upon the Emperor to create new sources of revenue. Since land was certainly the most plentiful commodity at his disposal, the possibility of measuring land throughout his newly conquered domains, limiting the size of land to be owned and used by the local people, and simply confiscating the rest of the land for sale or distribution by the state was one of the clearest options that seems to have come to Minilik and his advisors. These needs which Minilik had at the time were accurately perceived by the people and the traditions transmitted to us give a similar picture. Our informants report that the Emperor passed the proclamation, in the first place, to earn a lot of cash for the purchase of firearms with the proceeds of the confiscated land.²⁴ They also indicate that the central and local administrative machinery had grown tremendously and that a large number of civil, military, and religious functionaries had to be maintained for which Minilik had to confiscate land from the indigenous people.²⁵

Prior to the Land Measurement Proclamation of 1909/1910, there were three concrete claims on the products of the land in Arjo, Horro Gudru, Lega Neqemte and its dependencies.²⁶ In the first place, there were the Oromo peasantry who had gabiye rights on extensive stretches of still unmeasured land which they cultivated and which they also used to raise large herds of cattle, sheep and goats. Secondly, there were the increasingly more numerous Shoan administrators in Arjo and Horro-Gudru who had been granted the full services of the local Oromo families. Finally, the official policy of converting the Oromo into Orthodox Christianity had also created the need for some land to be set aside for the support of the clergy who were to staff the new churches established throughout Wollega. Although Lega Neqemte was administered by members of the Be'ere family and the other

elite, a feudal hierarchy similar to the areas directly ruled by the Shoans was already developing there too; and the process of class differentiation had been considerably hastened by the Shoan conquest.²⁷ The need for church land was also felt in Lega Neqemte territories.

Thus, it is very clear that the Land Measurement Proclamation set out to identify and put legal limits on these three separate claims on land at the time --- namely, those of the local peasantry, the predominantly alien feudal hierarchy, and the incipient organization of the Orthodox Church in Wollega. Prior to the actual measurement of the land, local elders still remember distinctively that they were told that "... the land will be measured and the Sisso, or the third portion, shall be given to you".²⁸ This reference to the term Sisso has been the cause of considerable misunderstanding and bitterness. It had apparently misled the local people into believing that the land would be divided into three equal portions only, and that they would be left to use the Sisso, or one-third of the land.²⁹ In the government's lingua, however, the term Sisso was apparently used simply to indicate that, together with the Church and the feudal hierarchy superimposed on them, the local people using their unmeasured qabiye land constituted one of the three elements with claims on the land and on which the land measurement was to set specific limits. It seems very clear that the government did not have the intention of dividing the land into three equal portions and giving the third portion to the local people. Actually, the government had a very important fourth factor in mind. A very important objective of the Land Measurement Proclamation was to set aside vast tracts of land to be confiscated from the people and to be declared Yemengist Meret, or state land and which could be offered for sale to any one with ready cash. Starting from the premise that the traditional use of land was rather wasteful, Minilik's government had

decided to put limits to it and, in addition, to generate a large source of revenue from the sale of the "superfluous" land. Their final discovery that this fourth factor was also involved created considerable bitterness among the local people. Our elderly informants have told us that they were deceived by the government which at first promised them a Sisso, or a third portion, but actually left them only the irub, or one-fourth of their ancestral land, confiscating the remaining three-fourth.³⁰ A variety of contradictory traditions are transmitted regarding this and they have made the task of interpreting them very difficult indeed.³¹

The standard land measure used was a rope 67 meters long.³² A rectangle 8 ropes wide and 11 ropes long constituted a gelad or gasha which was approximately equivalent to 395032 square meters. Thus, for the first time in the history of the Oromo of Wollega, they had to count land in terms of units of gasha or gelad. When the officials sent out to measure the land arrived at a locality accompanied by the district governor, the local people were asked to identify the extent of the land on which they claimed gabiye rights. The area was then rope-measured into units of gasha or gelad. A certain number of gashas, depending on the settlement patterns of the people, were declared to constitute the gabye land on which the local Oromo could continue to exercise their ancient communal rights. This did not necessarily constitute a Sisso or one-third of the area. It was rather arbitrarily delimited on the basis of what the officials on the spot felt would satisfy the immediate needs of the local people. Some gashas, or portions of one gasha were then demarcated and distributed among the Shoon soldiery settled in the area as maderia,³³ the size depending on their rank and place in the feudal hierarchy. Some land was also set aside for church use regardless of whether there were churches in the locality or not.³⁴ Finally, the extent of the super

fluuous" land was ascertained, it was measured in gasha, carefully demar-
 cated³⁵ and declared state land, also called rizh meret, or land for sale

For the government, it was apparently irrelevant whether this so-called state land was already occupied by the local Oromo peasantry. In fact it would be more valuable if it were so occupied, since the factor of settlement was an important element in the assessment of the value of the land. Our informants reported that the state land offered for sale was divided into three categories. A gasha of land was considered to be lem, or fertile, if it was settled by and supported comfortably a large number of peasant families. Such a gasha was the most expensive to buy and cost between 40 and 50 Thalers. On the other hand, a gasha which was only sparsely settled was classified lem-tef, or semi-fertile, and cost only 25 Thalers. Finally, a gasha which was completely unoccupied was simply declared tef, or non-fertile, and cost only 10 Thalers. That this classification was based on settlement and not on the intrinsic values of the land is often commented upon by our informants. They relate that the unoccupied lands were very often the richest in natural resources. We are told that some of the most valuable natural products such as honey, ivory, musk and gold were generally obtained from such areas. Coffee plantations also thrived later, predominantly, on these so-called "non fertile" areas.³⁶

The living conditions of the majority of the Oromo peasantry were already affected by the disastrous consequences of the Land Measurement Proclamation. In the first place, the feudal officials sent out to measure the land were clearly unsympathetic towards the poor peasant. In the delimitation of the so-called Sisso for communal use, these officials often located these in areas unfit for agriculture.³⁷ Sometimes, they even cheated on the size of the rope used for the measurement. Naturally, this created a lot of conflicts,

with some of the most courageous and resourceful peasants travelling all the way to Minilik's court to appeal their cases on more than one occasion.³⁸ The results were, nevertheless, generally unfavourable.

Secondly, the peasants who lived on the maderia meret given to the members of the local feudal hierarchy or to the church had no longer any claims on the land. They could continue to live there and work the land only on the sufferance of the owner of the maderia or semon meret. Impossible conditions could be imposed on them by him, or he could even evict them altogether. The same was true of the peasants who had long settled and lived upon lands which were now classified as gizh neret, or land for sale. They automatically lost all titles on the land which they had inherited from their ancestors. They either had the option to buy it from the state which the majority simply could not afford or live as the tenants of the person who would buy it.³⁹ Lega Neqemte traditions indicate that, unlike in Arjo and Horro-Gudru, Kumsa gave his own people a grace period of about ten years during which they could complete payments for the land.⁴⁰ Even there, however, it was mainly Kumsa's officials or relatives who could in the end afford to buy tracts of land. In Arjo and Horro-Gudru land could be bought to a very large extent, only by people of non-Oromo origins from Shoa.

The other important objective of Land Measurement Proclamation was to systematize taxation in the country and to ensure that taxes were paid by all peoples of all walks of life.⁴¹ Thus, with the exception of semon meret, or church land, taxes were levied on all other types of land. Even the peasantry who continued to scrape a communal existence on the so-called sisso land were not spared. For the purpose of taxation the Sisso land was registered in the name of a senior member of the local lineage who collected

contributions from his fellow peasants and paid the annual dues on their communal land. Those who were given maderia meret as well as the individuals who bought gizh meret were also liable to pay the annual tax to the state.

Our informants are unanimous on the rate of taxation imposed on the various categories of land. On every gasha of lem, a fertile land, a tax of 15 Thalers was paid annually; on lem tef, or semi-fertile land 10 Thalers; and on tef, or non-fertile land only 7 Thalers.⁴² For the majority of the Oromo peasantry who had to live on the Sisso qabiye land, this rate of taxation proved too heavy. This is repeatedly cited by our informants who say that many of the peasants actually went to the local administrators and declared their inability to pay. The taxes were so high for them that they were forced to abandon claims on the land. In such cases the land was readily taken over by the local administrator or his relatives who were prepared to pay the tax arrears with the land being automatically registered under their names.⁴³ The Oromo peasant then lost all titles to the land and he became a tenant of the new owner.

Thus, in one big swoop, the Land Measurement Proclamation of 1909/1910 introduced basic transformations in the socio-economic relations of the people of Wollega. The greatest beneficiary of the situation was the central government which had acquired vast tracts of land confiscated as "surplus" from the local people and offered as land for sale. At the same time, Minilik's court ensured that the rank and file of the Oromo people throughout Wollega paid their share for the maintenance of the huge and oppressive feudal machinery which he had lately imposed upon them. The other sector of society which benefited from the whole scheme was the incipient local feudal hierarchy that was emerging in the "autonomous" areas such as Leqa-Neqemte. Moroda

and Kumsa were very good students of Minilik on whose feudal models they fully collaborated to restructure their own society. With themselves at the head of the whole structure, their relatives, loyal friends and servants came to constitute an ever-increasingly heavy burden on the majority of the Oromo peasants who had now been dispossessed of their qabiye rights and had been effectively reduced to a tributary status. Despite the misleading facade of Kith and Kin the general situation developing in Leqa Neqemte and Qellem, just as in Arjo and Horro-Gudru, had the same seeds of social differentiation germinating over the years into full-fledged contradictions.

In other sectors of economic activity Wollega within the empire has been the object of many explorations, surveys, voyage relations and reports. Besides the the capitalist exploitation system had reached Wollega in 1899-1901 when "La Societe de mines" or du Wallaga" was established.⁴⁴

CHAPTER I

Notes:

1. In almost all the written records the name 'Galla' had been used instead of the name 'Oromo' by which the group refers to itself. The etymology of the word 'Galla' is uncertain but is undoubtedly the name given to the Oromo by other people. Oromo pertains both to the race and to language. Afan Oromo. In this paper the name Oromo will be used instead of the erroneous term Galla, which is pejorative, derogatory and misleading, unless otherwise put under quotation. See Gustav Aren, Evangelical Pioneers In Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (Stockholm: Offsetcenter ab, Uppsala, 1978), p. 29. Also Almeida, Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646, ed. by C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), p. 111.
2. W. Budge, A history of Ethiopia : Nubia and Abyssinia Vol. II (London: Methuen & Co. LTD, 1928), p. 341. Almeida, Op. cit., pp. 133-134. G.P. Nurdock, Africa - Its People and Their Culture History (New York; Toronto, London, 1959), p. 319. Tekletsadik Mekuria, Ye Ethiopia Tarik: Ke Atse Libne Dingil Iske Atse Tewodros (Addis Ababa, Sept., 1953 E.C.), p. 226. Aleqa Taye, Ye Ethiopia Hizb Tarik, 6th. edition (Addis Ababa, 1958 E.C.) p. 38. Yilma Deressa, Ye Ethiopia Tarik Be Asra Sidistegnaw Kifle-Zemen (Addis Ababa, Hidar 1959 E.C.), p. 213. I.M. Lewis, Peoples of the Horn Africa Somali, Afar and Saho (London Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1976), p. 8. Aleqa Atsme, Ye Galla Tarik, Part I, n.d., p. 29. Tesfa Sellassie, Ye Galla Tarik, Part I, n.d., p. 1.
3. M.L. Bender (ed.), Language in Ethiopia (London: Oxfor University Press, 1976), p. 5 see also G.W.B. Huntingford, The Galla of Ethiopia: The Kingdoms of Kafa and Janjero (London, 1969), p. 19. Gustav Aren, Op.cit., p. 30.
4. Asmarom Legesse, Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society (New York: The Free Press, 1973), pp. 6-7.
5. H.S. Lewis, "The Origins of the Galla and Somali," Journal of African History VII, 1, (1966), p. 27.
6. Ibid., p. 41.
7. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, Grazmach Waltaji Dagago, Bodji (interviewed by me in 1979); Ato Yaie Shone, Ato Tola Waya, Shoa (interviewed by Ato Tasew Merga in 1976).
8. Interview: Haji Kawo Worji, Assela, Arsi, Badaso Ogato, Dodola, Bale (interviewed by Ato Tasew Merga in 1976).
9. Interview: Hussen Musa, Dire-Dawa, Mohammed Hammed, Habro, Abdulahi Ali, Gelmsa (interviewed by Ato Tasew Merga in 1976).
10. Interview: Ada Borana, Nigele, Gelgelu Haro, Nigele (interviewed by Ato Tasew Merga in 1976).

11. Interview: Wako Roba, Guyo Boko, Wadera. Jemjem, Edema Genale, Ware Aga, Adolla (interviewed by Ato Tasew Merga in 1976). I am indebted to Ato Tasew Merga (LL.B A.A. University) who made the interviews and enabled me read the manuscript of his interviews.
12. Yilma Deressa, Op.Cit., p. 215
13. Bahrey's History of the is an invaluable and indispensable primary source on the 16th. century Oromo Society. However, it should be subject to scientific and critical analysis in the reconstruction of Oromo History. The text has various short comings including cultural and religious biases the writer had, against the Oromo because of their successes in wars with the Christian state of Ethiopia. Originally, the document was written in Geez and was translated into Amharic by Blatta Mersie Hazan Woldekirkos in 1959 E.C. It has also been translated and edited by C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford in Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646 (1954).
14. Blatta Mersie Hazan Wolde Kirkos, Zenahu Le Abba Bahrey Zetsehafo Belissane Geez (Addis Ababa: Amharic trans., 1959 E.C.), p. 9
15. C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, Loc. cit.: H.S. Lewis, Op.cit., p. 32.
16. H.S. Lewis Loc. cit.
17. Ibid, p. 33.
18. F. Alvarez, Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia During the years 1520-1527 (trans. and ed. by Lord Stanley, London, n.d.), p. 52; mentions certain individuals with what appear to be Oromo names Dori and Bulla who held the lofty post of Barnagais one after the other by the orders of Prester John who was also related to them. Aleq Taye, Op. cit., p. 38; claims that some Oromo from the Macha tribe took an asylum with King Amde Seyon (1312-1344) and were settled between Lake Tana and Damot. Tekletsadik Makuria, Op. cit., p. 226; argues against the view that the Oromo came during the reign Lebne-Dingil when Ahmed Gran conquered the Kingdom of Ethiopia. He says that Tulu one of the prominent generals of Lebne-Dingil was an Oromo who fought against Ahmed Gran. He also wrote that the King, Lebne-Dingil himself used to practice some of the Oromo customs like smoking tobacco and anointing the forehead of his horses with blood.
19. V.E. Haberland, Sud - Athiopiens (Stuthgart, W. Kohlhammer, 1963), p. 771.
20. G.P. Murdock, Op.cit., p. 319.
21. V.E. Haberland, Op.cit., p. 772. See also Donald Levine, Greater Ethiopia: The Evalution of a Multiethnic Society (Chicago, London: 1974), p. 78

22. H.S. Lewis, "A Reconsideration of the Socio-Political Organization of the Western Galla," Journal of Semetic Studies, 1, 1 (1964), p. 39.
23. F. Engles, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State." In K. Marx and F. Engles, Selected Works in three Vols. Vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), p. 266.
24. Karl E. Knutsson, Authority and Change: A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia (Gothenburg: Ethnografiska Musset, 1967), p. 163.
25. G.W.B. Huntingford, Op. cit., p. 41; Asmarom Legesse, Op. cit., p. 8.
26. Almeida, Op. cit., p. 115.
27. K.E. Knutsson, Op. cit., pp. 172-173; citing Tulama Traditions.
28. G.W.B. Huntingford, Op. cit., p. 43. citing A. d'Abbadie, "Surles Oromo, grande nation Africane" Ann. Soc. Scient. de Bruxelles, IV, pp. 167-92.
29. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Sept. 2, 1979, Neqemte; Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Ausust 25, 1979; Graz. Tamru Guta, Sept. 4, 1979.
30. V.E. Haberland, Op.cit., p. 777.
31. F. Engles, Op.cit., p. 256.
32. J.S. Trimmingham, Op.cit., p. 50. See also A.H.J. Prins, East African Age-Class Systems: An Inquiry Into the Social Order of Galla, Kipsigis and Kikuyu (Djakarta: J.B. Wolters- Groningen, 1953), p.v.
33. Almeida, Loc.cit
34. Ibid., pp. 125-6.
35. Ibid., p. 112.
36. G. W.B. Huntingford, Op.cit., p. 19; G.P. Murdock, Op.cit., p. 324 I.M. Lewis, Op.cit., p. 46.
37. V.E. Haberland, Op.cit., p. 773
38. I.M. Lewis, Op.cit., pp. 46-47.
39. C. Ehret, Ethiopians and East Africans: The Problems of Contacts (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974), p. 34.
40. Yilma Deressa, Op.cit., pp. 214-215.
41. V.E. Haberland, Op.cit., p. 772.
42. Blatta Mersie Hazen Wolde Kirkos, Op.cit., pp. 33-34.

43. H.S.Lewis, Op.cit., p. 33 ; G.W.B. Huntingford, Op.cit., p. 11
44. Almeida, Op.cit., pp. 113-114.
45. J.S.Trimingham, Op.cit., p. 9; cf. Baissa Lemmu, "The Democratic Political System of the Galla of Ethiopia and the Possibility of its use in the Nation Building," (George Washington University: U.S.A., 1971), p. 10.
46. J.S.Trimingham, Op.cit., p.86.
47. Ibid., p. 93.
48. Blatta Mersie Hazen W. Kirkos, Op.cit., pp. 37-38.
49. Bahrey calls it Mesle, probably a corruption of Michile, the traditional name of the gada which is popularly used among the Oromo.
50. Baissa Lemmu, Op.cit., p. 5 citing Oral informants, Ragassa Begna and Blatta Deressa Amante in 1962.
51. William El. Conzelman, Chronique de Galawdewos Roi d'Ethiopie (Paris: Librairie Emile Bouillon, Editeur, 1895), pp. XXX-XXXI; C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, Op.cit., p.117.
52. The exact location of this place is not known, but according to Yilma Deressa (Op.cit., pp. 231-235) most probably it was on the boundary line of Harar and the Christian Kingdom or the 16th. century not far from the town of Harar.
53. Blatta Mersie Hazen W. Kirkos, Loc. cit.
54. The dates for all the gada mentioned in the text is given in Almeida, Appendix I, Op.cit., pp. 209-210.
55. Almeida, Op.cit., pp. 118-122; Blatta Mersie Hazen W. Kirkos, Op.cit., pp.40-42
56. Baissa Lemmu, Op.cit., p. 6.
57. Atsme, Ye Galla Tarik, Part I, pp. 19-20; See also Mesfin Woldemariam, An Introductory Geography of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 1972), p. 16
58. E. Ullendorff, The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People (London, 1960), p. 76.
59. G.W.B. Huntingford, Op.cit., p. 19; D.N. Levine, Op.cit., p. 83
60. J.S. Trimmingham, Op.cit., p. 8.

CHAPTER II

Notes

1. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Ato Negari Jammo, Chimbi, Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Bodji, Graz. Deressa Galla, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, July and August 1979.
2. M.L. Bender, Op.cit., pp. 54-55.
3. Interview: Ques Jalleta Wasse, Bodji, Ato Negari Jammo, Chimbi, August 1979.
4. Interview: Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Bodji, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, August 1979.
5. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Ato Wolde Georgis Beke, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
6. Interview: Graz. Negussa Kanaie, Shambo, Oct. 1979, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Ato Negari Jammo, Chibi, August 1979.
7. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Bodji, August 1979.
8. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ato Jalleta Wasse, Bodji, August 1979.
9. Interview: Ato Emeru Gebre, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979. See also Ernesta Cerulli, Peoples of the South West Ethiopia and its Borderland (London, 1956), p. 17. Bieber, Kaffa II, Microfilm, IES, A.A.U., p. 103 Girma Mengistu, "The Busase of Anfillo, Qellem, Wallaga (A Historical Study)" (Addis Ababa, May 1973), pp. 1-3.
10. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Ato Negari Jammo, Chimbi, August 1979.
11. There are some indications that Bussase was actually the name of one of the clans in Kafa. Cf. V.L. Grottanelli, I Mao, Vol. 1 (Roma, Reale Accademia D'Italia, 1940) pp. 52-56.
12. See p.77.
13. L.M. Bender, Op. cit., 47 & 56.
14. V.L. Grottanelli, Loc. Cit.
15. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Ato Guda Merga, Nedjo, August, 1979.
16. Interview: Ato Buli Anke, Ques Matewos Chibssa, Mendi, August, 1979.
17. Taye Retta "Gojam Governorate General," Ethiopian Geographical Journal, Vol. 1 No. 1 (1963) p. 26.

18. Almeida Op.cit., p. 145
19. Ibid., p. 146.
20. See Almeida's Map. of Ethiopia (S.O.A.S. MS. 11966).
21. Interview: Ato Negari Jammo, Ghimbi, Ato Waqo, Ghimbi, Graz. Walteji D gago, Bodji, August 1979.
22. Interview: Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Bodji, Ato Kitila Challa, Nedji, Ques Jalleta Wasse, Bodji, August 1979.
23. Almeida, Op.cit., p. 1 iii: Conti Rossini, Storia d' Ethiopia (Milan, 1928), p. 286.
24. Some of the prominent families who are said to have been of the Ganqa origin include Wara Kenna. Komboshi of Galewo, Wara Graz. Badano Sida of Wayu Gute, Wara Graz. Tumtu Giru of Galewo, Wara Kenna. Dule Ribi of Galewo and Gaga Goba of Sombo Sadan who live in the Sibu country. They are hardly distinguished from the Oromo in all aspects of life. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, Sept. 1979. Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, April 1980.
25. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Kenna, Abdissa Mossa, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ato Jalleta Aba Nama, Shambo, August- October 1979.
26. Interview: Ques Jalleta Wasse, Bodji; August 1979, Atp Kitila Challa, Nedjo, April, 1980.
27. Taddesse Tamrat, Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 120-123. Idem, "Ethiopia, the Red Sea and the Horn," in The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 3 (London, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 103. Conti Rossini, Op.cit., pp. 78-89.
28. Ibid.
29. See Chapter I, p. 11.
30. Almeida, Op.cit., p. 110.
31. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Sept. 1979.
32. Interview: Ato Woldegeorgis Beke, Ato Kabule Mudda, Arjo, Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Sept. 1979.
33. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Ato Gebresellassie Gutta, Kenna Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Sept. 1979.

34. This aspect of Oromo tradition is highly diffused and has been recorded by other writers. See Bahru Zewde, "Dejazmach Jote Tulu (1855-1918)" H.S.I.U. (Addis Ababa, June 1970) p. 1. Yilma Deressa, *Op.cit.*, p. 240. Interview Kenna Abdissa Mossa, Ato Gebre Sellassie Guta, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, August 1979.
35. Almeida, *Op. cit.*, p. 135
36. Interview: Ato Gebresellassie Gutta, Kenna, Abdissa Mossa Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
37. Interview: Ato Gudeta Moroda, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, Sept. 1979. See also Yilma Deressa, *Op.cit.*, p. 213
38. Traditions report that Wollega was one of the sub-tribes of Macha at Tute Bisil. But after crossing of the Gibe river by the Oromo further west, Wollega is mentioned as a persons name among the Sibru tribe and later on it became the name of the whole region. Interview: Ato Imru Gebre, Neqemte, Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Bodji, August & Sept. 1979.
39. Hulle was one of the big Macha tribes which expanded south wards from Tute Bisil into Northern Kafa. Jimma oral traditions also indicate that Hulle was divided into a number of clans and sub-tribes who occupied northern Kafa and it is mentioned by informants in various districts of Kafa in connection with Oda Hulle as their gada centre. See Jimma Oral tradition: Project jointly launched by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the Department of History, AAU., Nov. 20-Dec. 3, 1973; Yilma Deressa, *Loc.cit.*, Interview: Abba Jobir Abba Dula, Jimma, Nov. 21, 1973; Haji Osman Abba Diko, Jimma, Nov. 21, 1973; Abba Gaze Abba Garo, Gera, April 2, 1974.
40. E. Cerulli, "The folk-Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia," *Harvard African Studies*, Vol. III (1922), p. 11. c.f. Yilma Deressa, *Loc.cit.*
41. Jimma and Nonne today live in parts of Kafa region. It seems that a clan of Jimma had moved towards the south and has given its name to the area which is known as Jimma while others had moved towards Wollega. Interview: Kenna, Abdissa Mossa, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, August 1979.
42. Some informants claim that the Macha expanding troops had even reached Roseires Wada Shinina in the Sudan where they are said to have buried a spear, a shield and Billa Rutta facing the Sudan as the demarcation of their qabiye land. Interview Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ato Negari Jammo, Ghimbi, August & Sept. 1979.
43. Traditions report that at Tute Bisil diseases like Malaria, Diarrhoea and Typhus among the people; and cattle disease like renderpest and ticks became frequent which forced the Macha Oromo to disperse. Interview: Ato Buli Anke, Mendi, Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, August and Sept. 1979.

44. A special weapon made of iron, sharpened on both sides with a wooden handle which was used to cut off the enemies head.
45. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, August 1979.
46. F. Engles, Op.cit., p. 266,
- 46.bis. As a particularity we note that gudifatcha is synonymous to Mogassa used in other Oromo areas as social adoption.
47. Pieces of skin with flesh cut from the limbs of the animals slaughtered at the gudifacha ceremony.
48. Thigh is known as gudeda in Oromo and it is usually identified with procreation by the Oromo. Hence, the significance of taking blood from this part of the body is that the adopted group are by no means different from the other Oromo children with blood ties.
49. Among the Oromo of Western Ethiopia the term "Borana" is used to distinguish the Oromo from the survivors of the early inhabitants of the region who were referred to as the "gabaro". See also G.W.B. Huntingford, Loc.cit.
50. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Ato Gebre Selassie Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
51. Interview: Blatta Deressa Amante, Debrezeit, April 3, 1962 (Interviewed and recorded by Ato Baissa Lemmu), Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, August 1979.
52. Leqa Neqemte informants report that they have spent thirteen generations since they have settled in the area while informants of Leqa Qellem say that they have spent nine to eleven generations. The Sibbu traditions say that they lived for about eleven to twelve generations in the Sibbu country. Informants in Jimma, Amuru and Gudru in the northern and north-eastern Wollega relate that twelve to thirteen generations have elapsed since their settlement in that area. According to Oromo custom it is the duty of the fathers to teach their children how to count genealogies up to ten generations or more., Interview; Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Ato Negari Jammo, Ghimbi, Ato Negussa Kanaie, Shambo, August, Sept. & Oct. 1979.
53. The length of a generation has been taken to be 23 years on the basis of calculations made on sample genealogies collected from Nedjo, Ghimbi, and Neqemte. Huntingford has given the date of 1569 for the Macha occupation of the land between the Abbay in the north and the Gojeb in the south. See G.W.R. Huntingford, Op.cit., p. 19. For Chronological estimates based on the gada system see, Almeida, Op. cit., pp. 208-10.
54. See foot-note 52 of this chapter.

55. There is a striking similarity between the respectful Dagal Saqi of the Oromo and the Kilolo - a territorial Chief of the Luba of Angola, cf. Jan Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna (Madson, The University of Winconsin Press, 1966) pp. 70-76.
56. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Sept. 1979.
57. Belonging to the family of balbala guda my own younger brother of sixteen years of age performs such ritual duties within the farmers association in my locality even today. Interview: Ato Geleta Kote, Neqemte, July 1979.
58. Interview: Ato Buli Anke, Mendi, August 1979. Doke is an Oromo term, apparently of an ancient pastoralist origin, which literally means dung. During the Oromo settlement in Wollega, however, it has been used to mean the right to a share of land in the qabiye system. This clearly reflects the transformation of the Oromo from a predominantly pastoralist society into one of sedentary mixed farmers.
59. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo. Ques Mathewos Chibsa, Ato Buli Anke, Mendi, August 1979, cf. Jan Hultin, "Man and Land in Wollega, Ethiopia," Gothenburg University (April 1977), p. 1.
60. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira. Ato Buli Anke, Mendi, August 1979, cf. Jan Hultin, Op.cit., p. 11.
61. Interview: Graz. Deressa ~~Galla~~, Keqemte, Ato Kabule Mudda, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
62. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, August 1979.
63. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, August 1979
64. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Graz. Deressa ~~Galla~~, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
65. There was personification of land among the Oromo - "that land had eyes and ears and could act upon men who usurped the rights of the rightful owners even long after the latter had died or moved elsewhere!" Interview: Kenna, Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, Graz. Waltaji Dagago, Bodji, August & Sept. 1979. See J. Hultin, Op.cit., p. 8.
66. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Neqemte, July 1979.
67. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta Digga, Kenna. Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
68. F. Engles, Op.cit., p. 275.

CHAPTER III

Notes

1. See Map III.
2. Bahru Zewdie, "Dejazmach Jote Tulu (1855-1918)", H.S.I.U. (June 1970).
3. Tesema Ta'a "Administration of Leqa Neqemte Between 1850-1923," Addis Ababa University (August 1976).
4. Interview: Ato Ta'a Negari, Ato Gebresellassie Gutta, Neqemte, July 1979.
5. Interview: Graz. Woltaji Dagago, Bodji, Augus 1979.
6. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncho, Digga, July 1973. See also H.S.Lewis, "A Reconsideration of the Socio-Political System of Western Galla," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. 9, 1 (1964) p. 142.
7. Bahru Zewdie, Loc.cit- Tesema Ta'a Loc.cit.
8. See Chapter II, Notes 33 and 52.
9. Jote Tulu of Qellem got married to Doie, the daughter of Moroda Bekere of Leqa Neqemte. He sent elders and requested Moroda to give his daughter in marriage to him in a respectful manner according to the Oromo custom. The following Peom reveals the relations between the two families.

"Nadiba hanchote naden hori daqa
Nadibam Kan Jote soddan Mori Beka."

The spirit of the poem is that Jote the son-in-law of Moroda was a respected person among the people.
10. Interview: Ato Ta'a Nagari, Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, July 1979.
11. Interview: Kenna Abdissa Mossa, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
12. Interview: Ato Estifanos Tesema, Ato Abdissa Abbay, Ghimbi, April 1980.
13. Interview: Ato Olgira Aba, Digga, in 1973.
14. Interview: Ato Abdissa Abbay, Ghimbi, April 1980.
15. Amio Amio
Barart Godana
Bekere

Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Sept. 1979.
16. Interview: Fit. Mekonnen Kumsa, Neqemte, in 1973.
17. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.

18. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
19. Such blessings by the hangafa is common in Oromo custom. The term "Forehead" symbolizes a bright and successful futurity in the life of the blessed. Interview: Ato Ta'a Woyessa, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, in 1973.
20. Interview: Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
21. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncho, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, in 1973.
22. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
23. Interview: Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Sept. 1979.
24. Interview: Ato Ta'a Woyessa, Ato Ta'a Negari, Neqemte, in 1973.
25. R. Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935 (A.A. H.S.U. Press 1968), pp. 351 & 450; c.f. M. Abir, Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), p. 85.
26. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
27. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, July 1979.
28. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncho, Digga, in 1973.
29. Interview: Ato Abdissa Abbay, Ato Berhanu Gemta, Ghimbi, April 1980.
30. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, Ato Abdissa Abbay, Ghimbi, April 1980.
31. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, in 1973.
32. Bake Buli is a big plain between the territory of Leqa Neqemte and Leqa Qumba where Bekere and Danno Bera used to fight against each other. Interview: Graz. Duguma Onch, Digga, in 1973.
33. Qondala was the warrior class in the Gada cycle which belonged to the third grade in the gada classification.
34. Qorati is literally "thorns" used for the training of soldiers to help them avoid fear of spears.
35. According to Oromo custom chocho was a special feast prepared near a river where people, especially the youth used to eat fresh meat, drink milk and consume other food items for fourteen days continuously.
36. The following songs illustrate that Bekere harassed not only the non-Naa members but also members of his own clan such as Kiti who had many heads of cattle:

"Gugen Wama hindaltu
Bekere dama Godi Amo
Sa'a Kiti futte Kitti Kessa futte
Muge wama hingaltu."

The spirit of the song is that it encouraged Bekere to confiscate Kiti's cattle kill Kiti himself and go home calling his mother Mughe, which Bekere is said to have accomplished. Interview: Ato Edossa Waqjira, Neqemte, Sept. 1979; Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, August 1979.

37. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979; Ato Abdisa Abbay, Ghimbi, April 1980.
38. Interview: Ato Temesgen Berkessa, Ghimbi, April 1980.
39. Tesema Ta'a, Op.cit., p. 6.
40. Wame was the war announcers who issued orders in villages so that the able-bodied men should report to an appointed assembly place with their horses, arms and commanders ready for war.
41. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
42. Interview: Kenna. Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, July 1979.
43. According to Oromo traditions crops are so highly respected that even a horseman is not expected to pass by if he sees cattle or any other pest destroying crops, rather he is expected to dismount from his horse and drive away the cattle from the crops contributing his share towards crop protection. Interview: Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, July and Sept. 1979.
44. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, Sept. 1979.
45. Interview: Ato Abdisa Abbay, Ato Berhanu Gemta, Ghimbi, April 1980.
46. Interview: Kenna. Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga; in 1973.
47. Bekere's settlement in Neqemte is remembered as the foundation of the town itself which later on became the capital of Wollega region. The trench dug by Fido Bokkissa to defend himself known as Qota Fido is still visible. Interview: Ato Gebresellassie Gutta, Neqemte, July 1979.
48. Hangafuma is a position of being hangafa (elder).
49. Interview: Fit. Mekonnen Kumsa, Neqemte, in 1973.
50. See Chapter II, pp. 21 and 32.

51. Traditions indicate that wara Jato, wara Dalo, wara Sasiga and wara Aria smaller Lega clans had suffered from the wars of Bekere. His warriors are said to have killed nine brothers who were the sons of Qejella Dereba of wara Jato by surprise and destroyed their village. Interview: Ato Geleta Kote, Ato Ta'a Woyessa, Ato Edossa Wakjira, Neqemte, in 1973.
52. The poem literally means: Bekere Godana had chased Fido: what do you ask me to do? It is you who deliberated. Interview: Ato Abdisa Abbay, Ghimbi, April 1980.
53. Moti was an ancient title used by the pre-Oromo people like the Kafa, the Ganqa, the Busasse and other Omotic groups of south-western Ethiopia. It was a widely spread title among some of the Medieval Kingdoms, long before the Oromo migrations. The Gibe Kingdoms of the Oromo had assumed this title probably being influenced by the pre-Oromo population. On the other hand, the word Moti has its roots from the Oromo word Moe - meaning governed, dominated or won. Other forms of the word are: Motuma meaning kingship or governorship; Mosissa meaning let him govern; Moti meaning king. It is also interesting to note that the Oromo used the word Moe for a strong Korma in a stable which had won other kormas (bulls) calling it Korma Moe or Korma Mossisa. There are also many tantalizing signs of connections between Bekere's and the northern state system. For instance Bekere ordered the farmers to observe the Sabbath and punished those who did not. He is also said to have given some of his followers a long "royal" dress as distinguished notables. All these were alien to the Oromo. Emperor Tewodros is said to have been informed of Bekere's fame from the merchants of Gondar and is supposed to have sent him a sword and a royal robe plated with gold. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, in 1973. See also Tesema Ta'a, Op.cit., p. 8.
54. See Chapter II, Note 33.
55. Interview: Ato Edossa Wakjira, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
56. See Chapter II, p. 28.
57. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, Sept. 1979.
58. Abba Qora was a new title which is said to have used after Bekere's rise to power. From that time onwards it became a popular hereditary title in Wollega until the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974.
59. Interview: Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Neqemte, July 1979.
60. Abba Biya literally means "father of the country" and it has a wider connotation. It was the title given to the district administrators with a number of Abba Qoro under them. c.f. H.S. Lewis, Op.cit., pp. 139-140.
61. Interview: Fit. Balla Molla, Ghmbi, August 1973.

62. Interview: Fit. Mekonnen Kumsa, Ato Ta'a Negari, Neqemte, in 1973.
63. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
64. "Selgen ta'ani murto murani literary means nine members seated (and) brought in a verdict Interview: Ato Ta'a Woyessa, Neqemte, in 1973.
65. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Ato Gebre Selassie Gutta, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
66. Amole was very precious and was used as a currency in these days not only in Wollega but almost throughout Ethiopia, c.f. M. Abir, Op.cit., pp. 44-72.
67. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
68. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, in 1973.
70. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
71. A man named Serba Golja from Sasiga in the north-west of Neqemte killed an elephant in the Handeq forests without the permission of Moti Bekere and used the ivory for himself. He flee to Danno Bera's country where he took asylum.
72. Interview: Ato Gebre Selassie Guta, Neqemte, July 1979.
73. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncha, Digga, Ato Gebre Selassie Gutta, Neqemte, in 1973
74. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
75. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, August 1979.
76. Interview: Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, SEpt. 1979.
77. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, April 1980.
78. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, July 1979; Ato Kitila Calla, Nedjo, August 1979.
79. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
80. The songs literally mean, "Garbi Jilo, the father of amole;

Genda Bushen, the father of amole: Danno Bera, the father of Amole; (Mori Beka which is an abbreviation of Moroda Bekere) Oh my father you exist.

81. Interview: Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Neqemte, July 1979. This informant does not belong to the Bekere family and was critical on this particular point including many other points.
82. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, August 1979.
83. Interview: Ato Edossa Wakjira, Ato Emru Gebre, Graz. Deressa Galla, = Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
84. Lega Sibü need not be confused with the large Sibü tribe in the Western Wollega. Here Sibü refers to the area in Eastern Wollega where the big Sibü tribe is said to have stayed before their migration further west. Traditions indicate that some clans of the Sibü which gave their name to the area remained behind to live with the Lega group of eastern Wollega- and Lega Sibü refers to this group where the majority are the Lega.
85. See Map II
86. Interview: Ato Edossa Wakjira, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
87. Interview: Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Sept. 1979.
88. According to tradition a horn cup from Getema was exchanged with two mules in Gojjam by the caravan merchants. At Getema a mule was bartered with two horn cups. It is also reported by the informants that Getema was the residence of Wara Danno Bera before they changed their seat to Arjo further south through conquest and expansion. Interview: Ato Wolde Georgis Reke, Arjo, Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte; Sept. 1979.
89. Interview: Memhire Yigezu W/Hana, Memhire Abebe G/Medhin, Arjo, Sept..1979.
90. Bekere is said to have come to power in 1841 and effectively ruled for twenty seven years. Informants say that Bekere died in the same year Emperor Tewodros died (1868). Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Kenna. Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, in 1973.
91. Bekere himself is also said to have sung the following just before his death.

Oromo

Utun yabale ole-
Fardiko tochusuma
Utun aghessa ole
Mirgiko Dorauma
Utun fudale ole

English

even if I mount the whole day
my horse is Tochosé
even if I kill the whole day
Dora² is my right fame
even if I marry the whole day

Nitinko Urgeduma
Utun dashale ole
Iilmiko Moriduma

my legitimate wife is Urge
even if I beget children the whole day
my legitimate child is Moroda.

Interview: Ato Edossa Wakjira, Neqemte, Sept. 1979. Kenna. Abdisa
Mossa, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte in 1973.

91.1. Tochose was the name of Bekere's horse.

91.2. Dora was the first person to be killed by Bekere who was a very
strong warrior against him.

CHAPTER IV

Notes

1. Interview: Kenna. Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, July 1979.
2. See Chapter II, p. 27.
3. Interview: Ato Berhanu Gemta, Ghimbi, April 1980.
4. Interview: Ato Estifanos Tesema, Ato Berhanu Gemta, Ghimbi, April 1980.
5. Interview: Ato Negari Jammo, Ghimbi, August 1979.
6. Moroda is also said to have sent Abba Dawe to Naro Gelet of Daleti and Danno Tumtu of Guliso calling on them to recognize him as a Moti and pay tributes in gold and ivory. He offered to let them rule their own areas and they are said to have accepted his messages. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
7. Ulla Lemmena literally means the "gate at Arundinaria Alpina" the site which marks the qabiye land boundary between the Leqa and the Sibü.
8. Interview: Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, August 1979.
9. Interview: Graz. Wollaji Dagago, Bodji, August 1979.
10. See Chapter II p. 23
11. A long-standing relations between Wollega on the one hand, northern states and Shoa on the other is reported by traditions in Wollega. The Jote family of Qellem claimed to have had a Gojjame origin. This was probably designed by the family to gain acceptance by the local Oromo as legitimate rulers related to the ruling house of Gojjam which had a well-organized state system in northern Wollega. Bekere Godana of Leqa Neqemte is also said to have been sent a sword and a royal robe by Emperor Tewodros through the caravan traders. Moreover, there had been close trade relations between Wollega and Gojjam in general and between the Gudru Oromo and the Gojjame in particular through the Asendabo-Basso route as mentioned by Massaja (1885-6). At the same time there was trade relations between Shoa and Wollega through Billo-Neqemte route. Nevertheless, the question of the early relations between Wollega, the northern states and Shoa needs a separate detailed study in the future.
12. See Chapter III, pp. 34-35.
13. See Chapter II, Note 52.
14. Horo Dika is located north-east of Shambo- west of the confluence of river Fincha'a and the Abbay, in Gudru land.
15. See Map II,
16. Tulu Chari is found in the north- western part of Horro Woreda in Dabisi Qebele.

17. River Garchi has its source in Habe-Dongoro Woreda south east of Shambo. It is the tributary of the Anger river.
18. Interview: Graz. Negussa Kanaie, Shambo, Oct. 1979.
19. Jibat Busho a leading Borana member, one of the descendants was the successor of Gama Muras who came to power in Gudru in the 1870's. See G. Massaja, I Miei Trentacinque Anni di Missione nell' Alta Ethiopia, II (Milan, 1885-6) p. 199.
20. Interview: Ato Baissa Birru, Ato Baissa Gonfa, Shambo, Oct. 1979.
21. See Chapter III. p. 56.
22. Interview: Graz. Negussa Kanaie, Ato Baissa Gonfa, Shambo, Oct. 1979.
23. Terefe Woldetsadik, "Unification of Ethiopia", p. 75
24. Interview: Ato Jaleta Gulti, Ato Jaleta Abba Nama, Shambo, Oct. 1979.
25. Interview: Graz. Negussa Kannaie, Ato Baissa Gonfa, Shambo, Oct. 1979.
26. Interview: Ato Jaleta Gulti, Graz. Negussa Kanaie, Shambo, Keñña Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, Sept. & Oct. 1979; c.f. A. Triulzi, "The Gudru Oromo....", pp. 59-61.
27. A. Cecchi, Da Zeila Frontiere del Caffa, 3 Vols (Rome, 1886-7) Vol. II (1886), pp. 554-5; c.f. A. Triulzi, Conference Paper: "The Background to Ras Gobana's Expeditions to Western Wollega in 1886-88: A Review of the evidence", I.E.S., p. 1.
28. A. Triulzi, "The Gudru Oromo....", pp. 61-62.
29. See Chapter III, p. 56.
30. Ras Adal was crowned Negus Teklehaymanot — as "King of Gojjam and Kafa" on January 20, 1881 by Emperor Yohannes. See Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last Provincial Kings of Ethiopia," IES. Vol. XI, 1 (Janu. 1973), pp. 36-37.
31. Bairu Tafla, Op.cit., p. 37
32. The original statement was: "Amari hindufan soba dufnan hinlolan soba," Interview: Kenna. Abdisa Mossa, Neqemte, in 1973
33. Interview: Fit. Mekonnen Kumsa, Ato Gebre Sellassie Gutta, Neqemte, in 1973.
34. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digfa, Nov. 1972.
35. Interview: Ato Ta'a Woyessa, Neqemte, in 1973; Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, in 1979.
36. A. Triulzi, Op.cit., p. 2.

37. Informants from Leqa Neqemte realize Moroda's new title Dejazmach, given by Ras Beresu was inferior to his status as Moti and they see this as a demotion. But they claim that Moroda accepted the new title without knowing this. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncho, Digga, in 1973; Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, Nov. 1972.
38. Abebe Ambatchew, "Field Trip to Neqemte", Ethnological Society Bulletin, No. 6 (University College of Addis Ababa: 1957), p. 13.
39. Gabba River has its source in the eastern most of Illubabor. Flowing west wards it joins the Birbir river on the boundary of Wollega and Illubabor. Its about 40 k.m. north of Gore the old capital of Illubabor.
40. It literally means, "no outlet except inlet?"
41. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncho, Kenna Abdissa Mossa, Ato Olgira Aba, Ato Leta Kussa, Digga, in 1973; c.f. Berhanu Dibaba, "A historical study of trade in north eastern Illubabor and south western Wollega", unpublished B.A. thesis, History Department. A.A. University (1973), Citing Noggo Sarbo, Haile Shumbure, Oral informants.
42. Interview: Blatta Deressa Amante, Debrezeit, April 8, 1962.
43. Bairu Tafla, Loc.cit.
44. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Ato Emeru Gebre, Neqemte, Sept. 1979; See also Gebre Selassie, Tarik Zemen Ze Dagmawi Minilik Negusse Negest Ze Ethiopia (Addis Ababa: Berhanina Selam Mathemia Bet, 1959 E.C.) p. 101.
45. Bairu Tafla, "Two of the Last provincial Kings...", Loc.cit.; See also Chapter IV, Note 31.
46. Interview: Blatta Deressa Amante, Debrezeit, April 8, 1962 (Gobena was given the title of Ras by Minilik in 1879 and by this period he had already undertaken his diplomatic activities with the Shoan Oromo chiefs infavour of Minilik). Interview: by Baissa Lemu.
47. Interview: Ato Olgira Aba, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Digga, in 1973; c.f. R.A. Caulk, "Territorial Competition and the Battle of Embabo", Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. XIII, 1 (January 1975), p. 78.
48. E. Cerulli, Op.cit., p. 74.
49. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, in 1973.
50. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Neqemte, Nov. 1973; Ato Emru Gebre, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, in 1979; Fit. Balla Molla, Ghimbi, in 1973.
51. Interview: Graz. Duguma Oncho, Nov. 1972.
52. Interview: Ato Bassazine Alemu, Ato Kabule Mudda, Ato Woldegeorgis Beke, Arjo, in 1979.

53. Interview: Graz. Wolteji Dagago, Bodji, Aug. 1979.
54. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Neqemte, in 1973.
55. Terefe Woldetsadik, Loc.cit., c.f. H. Le Roux, Menelik et nous (Paris, 1902), p.308.
56. Interview: Kenna Abdissa Mossa, Ato Kenea Ta'a, June 1973.
57. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Ato Kenea Ta'a Neqemte, in 1973, Informants from Jimma also report that there were no clashes between the Gojjame and the Shoan army at Guma. Interview (by the History Dept. A.A. University, 1974) Graz. Abba Bulgu Tigre, Guma, April, 1974; Abba Digga Abba Jobir, Guma, April 1974; c.f. R. A. Caulk, Loc.cit.; Bairu Tafla, Op.cit. pp. 37-38.
58. Gebre Sellassie, Op.cit., pp. 102-103.
59. Himbabo is a plain in Gudru which was occupied by Himbabo Dede, one of the pioneers in Horro-Gudru as the qabiye of his group. The traditions relate that the plain was named after him. Earlier researchers have used the name "Embabo" instead of Himbabo in connection with the Battle of Embabo which was fought between the Gojjame and the Shoans in 1882. It seems reasonable to use the name Himbabo rather than "Embabo" which is meaningless. Therefore, Himbabo seems the correct name of the place and any thing connected with it. See R.A. Caulk, Op.cit., pp. 12-13. Idem, "Firearms and Princely Power in Ethiopia in the 19th. century", Journal of African History, XIII, 4 (1972), p. 620; Bairu Tafla, Loc.cit.
- 59-bis, See note 59.
60. Interview: Graz. Negussa Kanaie, Ato Baissa Gulti, Shambo, Oct. 1979.
61. Interview: Ato Olgira Aba, August 1973; Ato Negari Jammo, Ghimbi, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, in 1979.
62. Interview: Graz. Woltaji Dagago, Bodji, August 1979.
63.

<u>Oromo</u> Geberen hinqoti Gindin hinbaqassa Eshen kan hinsobdi Ligiditi dabarsa Abba etibaqasa Interview: Ato Kenea Ta'a, Neqemte August 1973.	<u>English</u> The farmer farms and the plough tills. Leave it to Ligdi others are liers (cowards). The great caller and brave. Interview: Ato Kenea Ta'a, Neqemte August 1973.
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64. E. Cerulti, Op.cit., pp. 74-75.
65. Ibid.
66. Interview: Fit. Balla Molla, Ghimbi, July 1973.
67. Interview: Ato Kenea Ta'a Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Graz. Tamru Gutta, in 1973; see also Cerulli, Op. cit., pp. 80-83.

68. Atsme W/Sellassie, Op.cit., p. 94.
69. A. Truilzi, Loc.cit.
70. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Graz. Woltaji Dagago, Bodji, Ques Jaleta Wasse, Bodji, in 1979.
71. Interview: Ato Negari Jammo, Chimbi, Ato Buli Anke, Mendi, Ques Mathewos Chibissa, Mendi, in 1979.
72. Interview: Fit. Blla Molla, Graz. Tamru Gutta, Graz. Duguma Oncho, in 1973.
73. Interview: Graz. Tamru Gutta, Ato Olgira Aba, in 1973.
74. Interview: Fit. Balla Molla, Graz. Duguma Oncho, in 1973; c.f. J.G. Vanderhey, Une Expedition avec le Negous Menelik (Paris, 1896), p. 110.
75. Interview: Keñña. Abdissa Mossa, Graz. Tamru Gutta, in 1973.
76. See Chapter V, pp. 82-83.

CHAPTER V

Notes

1. Atieb Ahmed Daffalla, "Shiek Khojele Al-Hassan and Bela Shangul 1825-1938," unpublished B.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University (1973), p. 50.
2. See Map III,
3. Nolle Kaba and Lalo Gille are the two areas beyond the Didessa river where the Shoan gurrissos were stationed. They are said to have been strategic areas.
4. Interview: Memhire Abebe G/Medhin, Memhire Yigezu W/Hana, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
5. Informants relate that the following people were the governors of Arjo and Horro - Gudru: Ras Luelseged (C. 1884-1887); Fit. Tkile (C. 1888-1896) Rad Demissew (C. 1897-1916 - with an interruption of three years in which Fit. Ibssa was appointed as a governor). Interview: Ato W/Georgis Beke, Ato Kabule Mudda, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
6. Interview: Ato Basazine Alemu, Ato Kabule Mudda, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
7. Interview: Ato Wolde Georgis Beke, Ato Bassazine Alemu, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
8. The governors of Arjo and Horro-Gudru, appointed by the central government, had in turn, the right and freedom of appointing who ever they favoured from among the soldiers, as woreda governors. Therefore, Dejazmach Demissew appointed: Fit. Gebre in Mako Woreda, Fit. Hailemariam in Nole Kaba, Fit. Eshete Bona in Horro, Fit. Afessa in Ghida Ayana, Ft. Shibeshi Aydagne in Dapo Hanna. Betwoded Mekonnen, the son and successor of Demissew also appointed: Dejazmach Haile Tesfaye in Nole Kaba, Dejazmach Debay in Mako, Dejazmach Beyene in Dapo Hanna, Dejazmach Desta Eshete in Jimma Geneti, Fit. Yilma Syoum in Gudru and Fit. Tesfaye in Limmu. Interview: Ato W/Georgis Bke, Arjo, Sept. 1979.
9. A Mislene governed a woreda, an Abegaz governed half of the size of woreda, an Abba Qoro ruled over a number of Chiqa-Shum who themselves represented people living in two or more villeges.
10. Interview: Ato Woldegeorgis Beke, Ato Basazine Alemu, Sept. 1979.
11. Informants report that there had been a net work of granaries established in various areas of the region where grain crops were collected to be used in time of war or famine. It is also said that such crops became highly helpful during the Battle of Adwa in 1896. Interview: Ato Kabule Mudda, Arjo, Graz. Negussa Kanae, Shambo, Sept. & Oct. 1979.
12. Pack animals (horses and mules) of the neftegnna were given to the peasants to be looked after and fed well. It is reported the fatness of each of the animals was measured by a rope before they were given

to the peasants. The peasants were supposed to fatten the animals. Nevertheless, if the animals became very fat the peasants were held responsible for over feeding the animals and at the same time if the animals grew thinner the peasants were again held responsible for underfeeding them. Therefore, it was dangerous for the peasants in both cases. Such were some of the methods used by the neftegnna to squeeze the peasants. Interview: Ato Woldegeorgis Beke, Arjo, Ato Baissa Birru, Shambo, Sept. & Oct. 1979.

13. Interview: Ato W. Geogris Beke, Ato Kabule Mudda, Arjo, Ato Jaleta Gulti, Shambo, Sept. & Oct. 1979.
14. Interview: Kenna. Abdissa Mossa, Ato Gebresellassie Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
15. Tesema Ta'a "Administration of Lega Neqemte....", pp. 27 - 39; c.f. Bahiru Zewde, Dejazmach Jote Tulu..., pp. 40-49. The central administration of Minilik had even ordered labour services to be sent from Lega Neqemte in the construction of road from Addis Alem to Addis Ababa.
16. The Land Proclamation of 1909/1910 did not affect Qellem and Asossa. It is said that Jote of Qellem preferred the earlier land holding system and didn't implement the measurement of land which did not take place in the area until 1936/37 E.C. On the other hand Asossa was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire only 1898 and it was settled predominantly by the Shanqilla who did not practise extensive farming. The government might have found it impractical to implement land redistribution there.
17. See Chapter II, pp. 23-24.
18. See Chapter III, p. 49.
19. See Chapter V, pp. 85-86.
20. Weget is a unit of measurement for gold, silver and other similar precious metals.
21. Feresula is a measurement unit for ivory, honey coffee and hides.
22. Interview: Ques Jaleta Wasse, Bodji, August 1979.
23. Addis Hiwet, Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution (Occasional Publication, No.1, London, 1975), pp. 35-48; J. Markakis, Ethiopia: of A Traditional Polity (Addis Ababa, Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 104-140; H.G. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 198-213.
24. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Aug. and SEpt. 1979.

25. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla Neqemte, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Aug. & Sept. 1979.
26. As mentioned above Asossa and Qellem were not affected by the proclamation. See note 16 of this Chapter.
27. See Chapter V, pp. 84-85.
28. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Aug. 1979.
29. Interview: Ato Gebresellassie Gufta, Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
30. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, Ato Kitila Challa, Nedjo, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Aug. & Sept. 1979.
31. Sisso is an Amharic word which literally means one-third. Informants report that they were promised a Sisso by the government according to Land Proclamation of 1909/10 but when land was measured they were given one-fourth of their former gabiye land and the government took away three-fourth. They also tell us that they were confused by the action of the government. The Sisso did not at all represent what it actually meant but rather remained a misnomer. Hence, the concepts of Siso, one-fourth or three-fourth in relation to the land Proclamation of 1909/10 will have to await further investigation and a more definitive interpretation.
32. In Leqa Neqemte, Fit. Dinsa Shone's "arm" was used as a standard to measure the rope. He is said to have been one of the tallest persons in the area. The rope was 134 "arms" long which is approximately 67 meters. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, July, 1979. c.f. Mahtema Sellassie Wolde Meskel, "Land Seystem in Ethiopia," n.d., (Amharic), pp. 1-3.
33. Maderia was the land granted to government employees in lieu of salary for a term of office or for life. The holder was liable to taxation.
34. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, August 1979.
35. The demarcations which were used to separate one qelad/gasha from the other were usually rivers, brooks, big trees, springs hills mountains and stones. Interview: Graz. Deressa Galla, Neqemte, July 1979.
36. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Ato Negari Jammo, Ghimbi, Graz. Negussa Kanae, Shambo, Aug-Oct. 1979. Most of the areas in the Anger. Didessa and Dabus valleys were considered as non-fertile including other forest lands; but they were very rich in natural products and have become the best coffee areas in the later years.
37. The concept of "Chosen land" was a misnomer because people chose where they had their huts even if it was non-fertile. It is important to note that one should not always equate "chosen land" with rich (fertile) land.

38. Our informants relate that many people from Arjo, Horro-Gudru and Lega Neqemte travelled all the way to Addis Ababa complaining that the land which was given to them was too small (shortage of land). But we are told that they benefited nothing except hatred and abuse from the local governors. Interview: Ato Gudeta Moroda, Digga, Ato Gebresellassie Gutta, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
39. Interview: Ato Kitila Ghalla, Nedjo, Aug. 1979.
40. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Sept. 1979.
41. Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira. 1979.
42. "Ye mar meret" literally it means "honey land." People who lived on this category of land paid their tax in honey for the land produces honey in abundance (naturally). Interview: Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, Aug. 1979.
43. Interview: Ato Emru Gebre, Neqemte, Ques Daffa Jammo, Aira, 1979. It is said that the peasants went over to the government officials and declared their inability to pay the annual tax, rather they preferred to give it up and remain landless just to avoid the pressure of paying tax from year to year.
44. Tesema Ta'a, Op.cit., pp 24-39.

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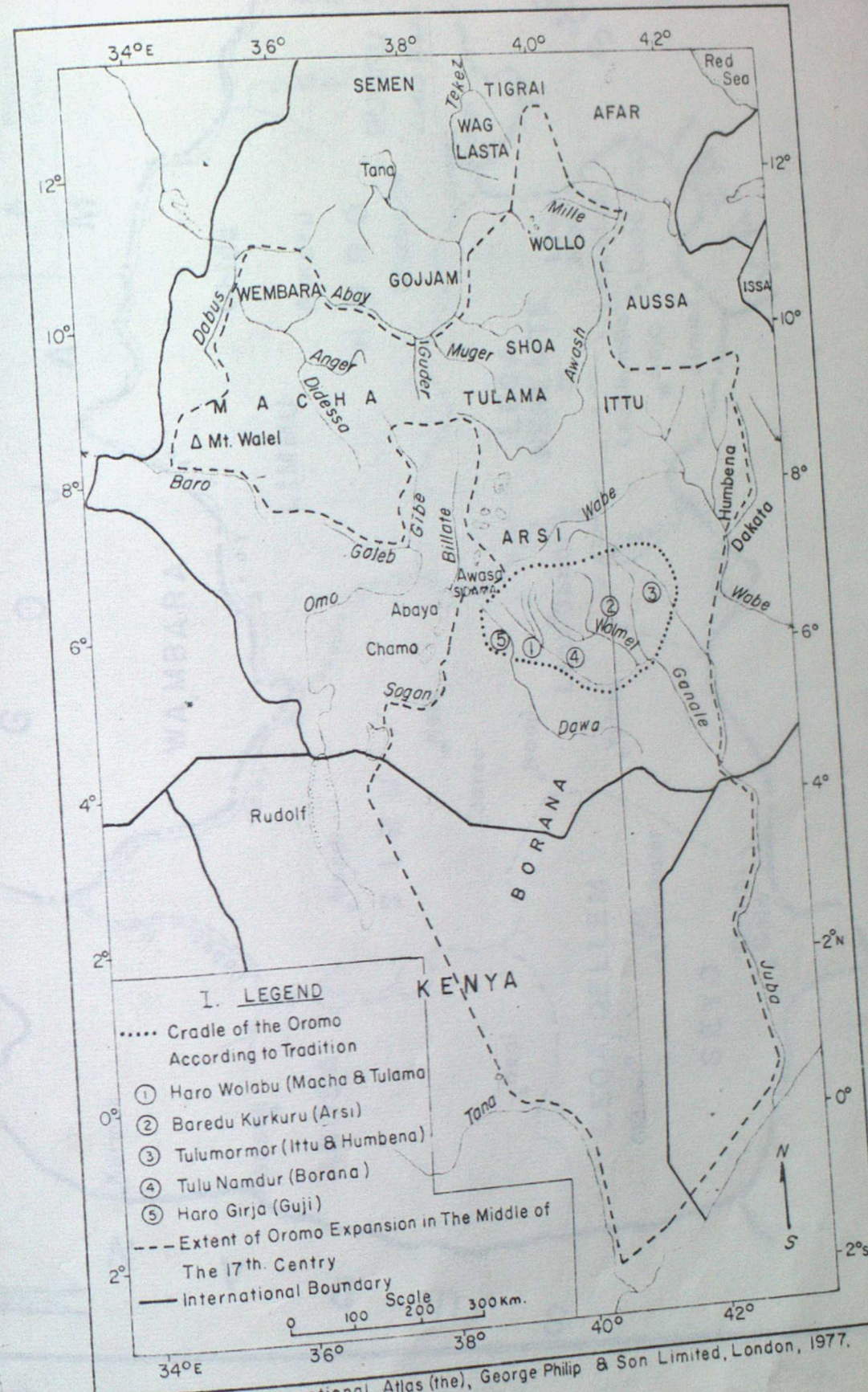
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V. List of Informants

Name	Place	Age	Date of Interview
Abdissa Mossa (Kenña)	Neqemte	66	Sept. 5, 1979
Abebe G. Medhin (Memhire)	Arjo	53	20/9/79
Alfaki Abuhazim (Ato)	Asossa	55	August 13/79
Ali Alfaki (Ato)	Bambasi	67	" "
Al-Khalifa Hamad (Ato)	"	73	" "
Al-Mahdi Abdurahman (Ato)	Ghimbi	34	5/8/79
Ashek-Halis Ahmmmed (Ato)	Asossa	115	August 11/79
Baissa Birru (Ato)	Shambo	80	Oct. 2/1979
Baissa Gonfa (Ato)	"	70	Oct. 4/79
Basazinew Aleme (Ato)	Arjo	75	Sept. 8/79
Buli Anke (Ato)	Mendi	88	August 15/79
Daba Tiki (Ato)	Digga	97	21/9/79
Daffa Jammo (Ques)	Lallo Aira	65	22-23/8/79
Deressa Galla (Graz)	Neqemte	85	27/7/79 & 29/7/79
Edossa Wakjira (Ato)	"	42	26/9/79
Emru Gebre (Ato)	"	56	Sept. 2-3, 1974
Etafa Biyana (Ato)	Ghimbi	80	August 29/79.
Gebresellassie Guta (Ato)	Neqemte	60	26/7/79
Geleta Kote (Ato)	"	83	"
Guda Iimmu (Ato)	Nedjo	72	August 4/79
Gudeta Moroda (Ato)	Digga	87	21/9/79
Hailemariam Argaw (Ato)	Bambasi	48	August 13/79
Jaleta Aba Nama (Ato)	Shambo	73	Oct. 4/79
Jaleta Gulti (Ato)	"	90	Oct. 3/79
Jaleta Wase (Ques)	Bodji	62	August 20/79
Kaba Gobu (Ato)	"	60	"
Kabule Mudda (Ato)	Arjo	80	19/9/79
Kejela Dinka (Ato)	Nedjo	56	August 16, 1979
Kitila Challa (Ato)	"	61	August 10/79
Mathewos Chibsa (Ques)	Mendi	56	August 15/79
Negari Jammo (Ato)	Ghimbi	78	4/8/79
Negussa Kenaie (Graz.)	Shambo	94	Oct. 4/79

MAP I



II SOURCES

1. International Atlas (the), George Philip & Son Limited, London, 1977, PP.134 And 135.
2. Asmarom Legesse, OP Cit. P.7
3. H S Lewis, OP Cit. P.29



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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name TESEMA TAA

Signature [Signature]

Place and date of submission ADDIS

ABABA JULY 1980