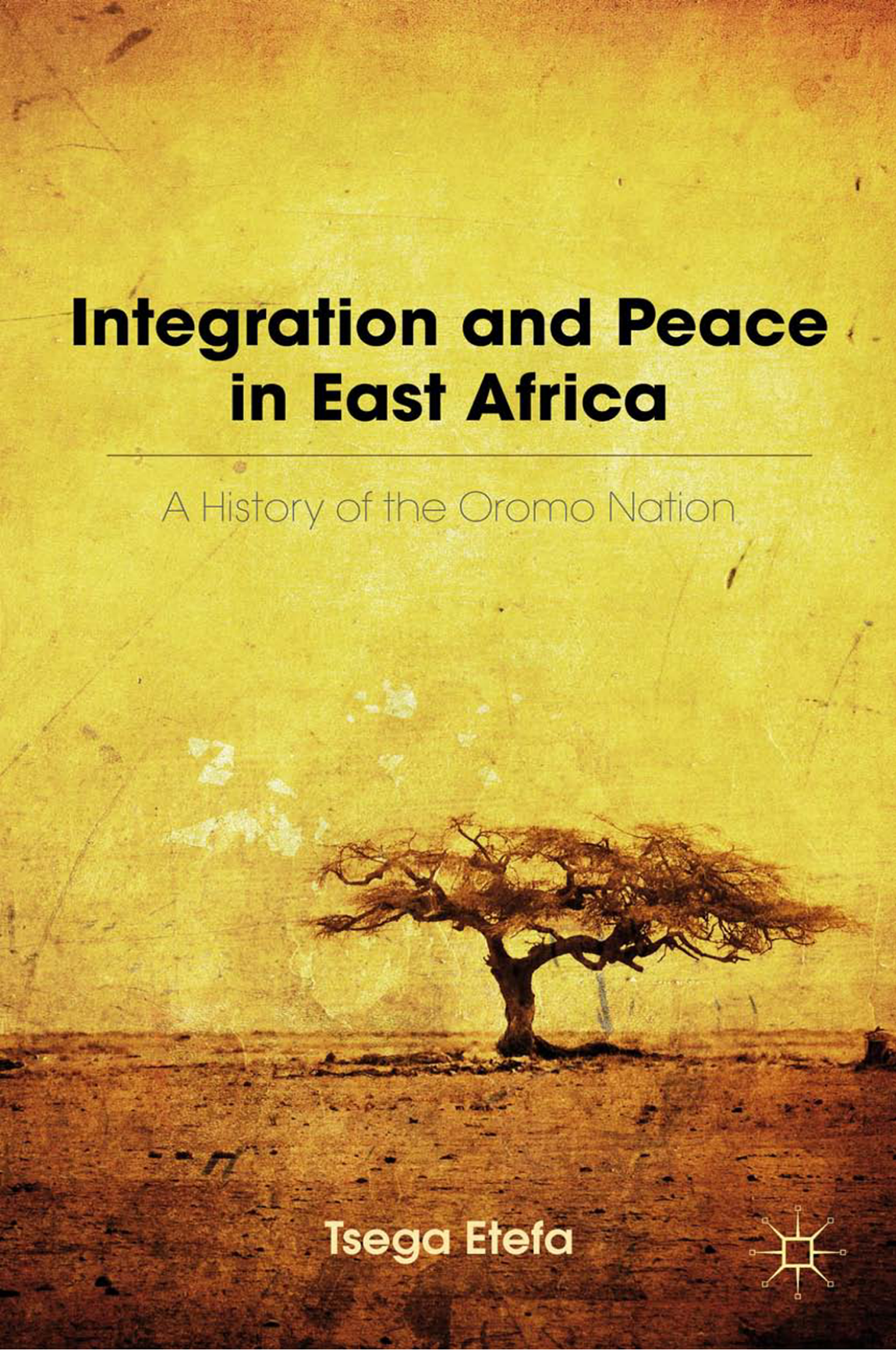
Integration and Peace in East Africa

A History of the Oromo Nation



Tsega Etefa

Integration and Peace in East Africa

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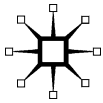

INTEGRATION AND PEACE IN EAST AFRICA

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For Sena

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Preface

It has been erroneously perceived, especially by the West, that ethnic conflicts in Africa are the norm and that Africans are always fighting among themselves. On the contrary, Africans have developed indigenous mechanisms for peaceful coexistence and finding working solutions to their issues. Local institutions were successful in establishing lasting relationships in most areas of the continent. Where there are ethnic conflicts in Africa, most causes are legitimate issues rather than ethnic tendency to engage in fighting. From northern Ethiopia to Kenya's Indian Ocean coast, the considerable role in positive societal relations and peace played by the Oromo people has, so far, been neglected by scholars. Oromo indigenous institutions of peace, commercial relations, and religious practices contributed to ethnic solidarity and peaceful coexistence in the region. More than any other comparable groups, the Oromos' fundamental philosophical system of thought and openness to strangers made significant contributions to ethnic integration and peace. Through their ideals of peace and equality, the Oromo were able to live amicably with non-Oromo groups over centuries. They also intermingled with others, resulting in ethnic dynamism and acculturations in East Africa.

In most parts of northwestern Ethiopia, the Oromo had been assimilated since at least the sixteenth century. In areas such Basso Liiban, Bure-Wemberma, Dambya, Agaw Meder, and Achafer, they were actively operating under their *gadaa* system into the eighteenth century. Some in eastern Gojjam still engaged in Oromo cultural practices during the first half of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, in the far western part of the region, close to the Sudan border, there are still today tens of thousands of Oromo who kept their identity and continue to practice the *gadaa* system, despite strong ethnic assimilation at work. Not only those who were assimilated into other cultures, but also many people including the Oromo themselves are unaware of the existence of Oromo north of the Abbay River (Wanbara) whose

identity, language, *gadaa* government, *qaalluu* institution, and religious practices are still intact.

On both sides of the Abbay River, there have been strong pan-Oromo relations. Indeed, throughout much of the nineteenth century, there were strong pan-Oromo contacts elsewhere. Commercial as well as religious contacts between the various Oromo clans and with non-Oromo groups facilitated mutually positive relationships. With the revival of the Red Sea trade and renewed international interest in Oromia's items of trade, considerable commercial networks developed throughout Oromia. In addition to the major trade routes, lesser market centers played a significant role, not only in commercial transactions, but also in ethnic relations. In the nineteenth century, there were no hotels or hostels for lodging, and traveling traders had to arrange lodging and protection from villagers along their routes. This arrangement required performing traditional rituals, which further solidified ethnic relations and eventual assimilation. Oromo guides, assistants, and interpreters to the traders as well as to the travelers, diplomats, and missionaries also played a crucial role in ethnic relations.

All other groups, including distant caravans, neighboring non-Oromo, and foreigners were welcomed by the Oromo. It is very interesting to note that any non-Oromo newcomer is equally welcomed into an Oromo community with all the privileges accorded to any Oromo. This gesture follows the principle of *qixxee*, equality based on humanity. But this does not mean absence of strife. Conflicts are unavoidable and do occur, but most quarrels within the Oromo and with neighbors are dealt with by the council of elders at a local level. The *gadaa* system abhors wars and always ensures that peace prevails. Indeed, Oromo indigenous institutions played a significant role in dealing with conflicts in the region. The *gadaa* system and even the *qaalluu* institution played significant roles in conflict resolution. What is important is that the Oromo people are willing to abide by the norms of their indigenous culture and the rulings of their elder councils, and are, thereby, ready to settle their differences peacefully. The role of the Oromo in peace within East Africa must be acknowledged, and the subsequent absence of protracted major ethnic wars in the region should not be overlooked.

In African historiography, the history of the Oromo during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been an under-studied subject, notwithstanding their important role in African and, in particular, Ethiopian, history. This is because both expatriate and

Ethiopian scholars were largely preoccupied with the political history of Christian Ethiopia. The few studies that do exist misrepresent the Oromo as warlike people when in fact they are the most welcoming and peace-loving nation of all comparable groups in the region. Therefore, Western fascination with the Ethiopian state (and the state's fascination with itself) led to the nonstate peoples being marginalized. This study establishes that the Oromo, all the way from northern Ethiopia to the Malindi coast in Kenya, were and are a peaceful and welcoming nation that incorporated other peoples, offering equal privileges.

The source materials used in this study include Ethiopian chroniclers' accounts, missionaries' and travelers' records, interviews, senior essays and dissertations, archives, journal articles, and other relevant books. Fieldwork conducted intermittently between 1996 and 2003 produced significant data mainly on the Oromo of Wanbara. The travelers' accounts proved to be useful resources, for they revealed firsthand information about Oromo history, geography, religion, economy, law, politics, and relations with other groups in the nineteenth century. When used with modern available works, these travelers', diplomats', and missionaries' accounts yield a great deal of information about the Oromo in general.

These materials were collected from various institutions including the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Library of Congress, Northwestern University's Herskovits African Studies Library, Colgate University Library, The British Library, School of Oriental and African Studies Library (University of London), The Bodleian Library Rhode House (Oxford University), The National Archives (The Kew, outside London), Lambeth Palace Library (London), Staatsarchiv and Mission 21 (Basler Mission in Basel), and St. Chrischona Library in Bettingen near Basel, Switzerland. In July 2008, I visited Brooklyn College Library, City University of New York, to consult the Hess special collections on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. (Robert L. Hess was a noted scholar of Ethiopian history who served as president of Brooklyn College from 1979 to 1992). The great bulk of the collection is specifically focused on the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century history of Ethiopia, Somalia, and their neighbors. Thus, by utilizing both primary and secondary sources, this study adds, from a comprehensive, transnational, and interdisciplinary perspective, a new knowledge and new breadth about indigenous Oromo institutions, on the history of the Oromo north of Abbay River, the role of Oromo women, and a new perspective on pan-Oromo

relations and Oromo relations with strangers, as well as the role of commerce for ethnic assimilation in East Africa. This book is still a far-from-complete study of the Oromo—but I hope that it will draw the attention of scholars for further research into this little-explored theme in African history.

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Colgate University
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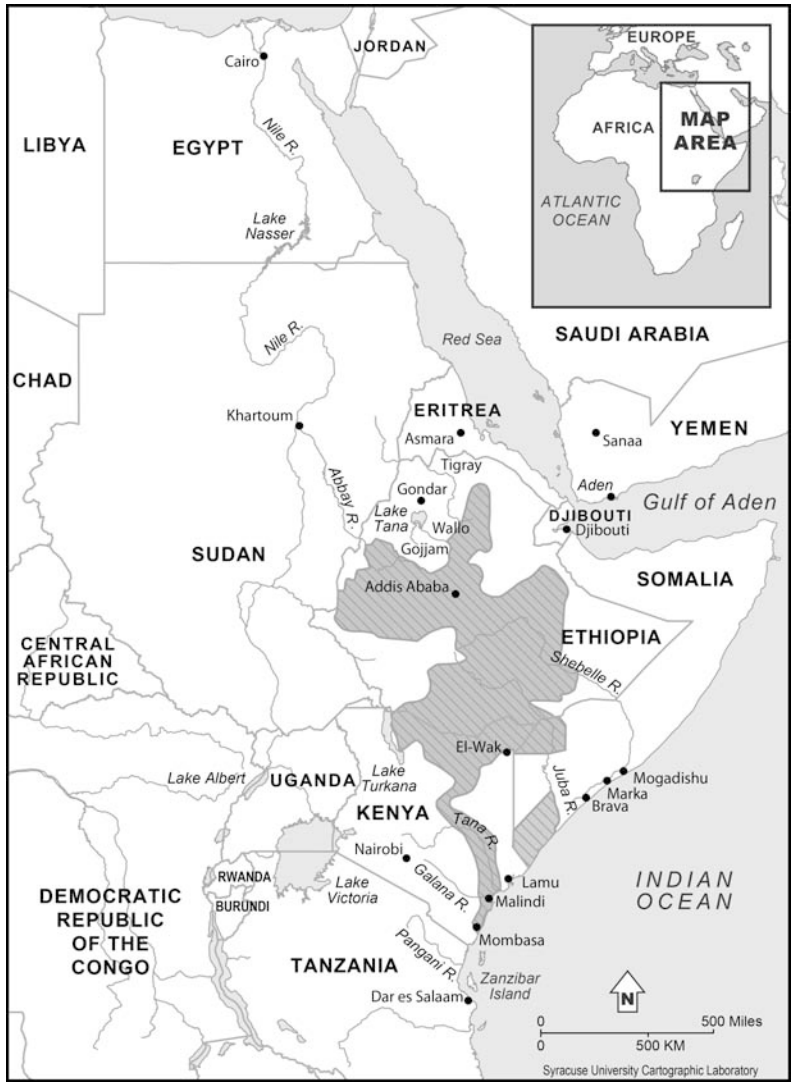
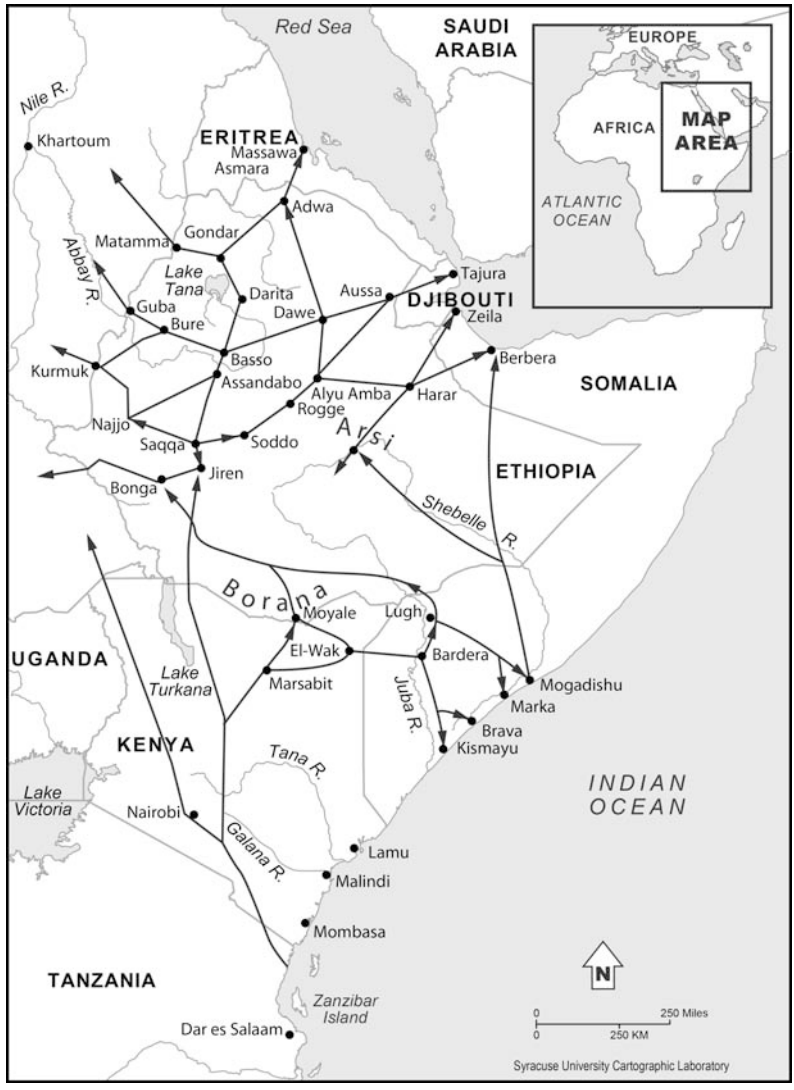
I would also like to thank all those who helped me during my fieldwork. I am also grateful to Joe Stroll (Syracuse University), who undertook the difficult task of developing the maps for this study. Special thanks also go to Rebecca Costello for her meticulous and invaluable editing. I am also thankful to Colgate University Library staff particularly Ann Ackerson for her patience during my years of continuous interlibrary loan orders. I am most grateful to Colgate University's Research Council, the Dean's Office, Core Cultures, Stickles Grant, and a Picker Research Fellowship Grant for financing my research. Finally, I am grateful to my wife, Laly, and daughter, Sena, who endured my absence and attention for long stretches of time as I worked on my manuscript. It is for Sena that this book is dedicated. I am also grateful to many others whose names are too numerous to mention in such a brief acknowledgment—my apologies to anyone whose name should have been mentioned.

Map 1 Ormania (Oromoland), ca. 1700–1880s

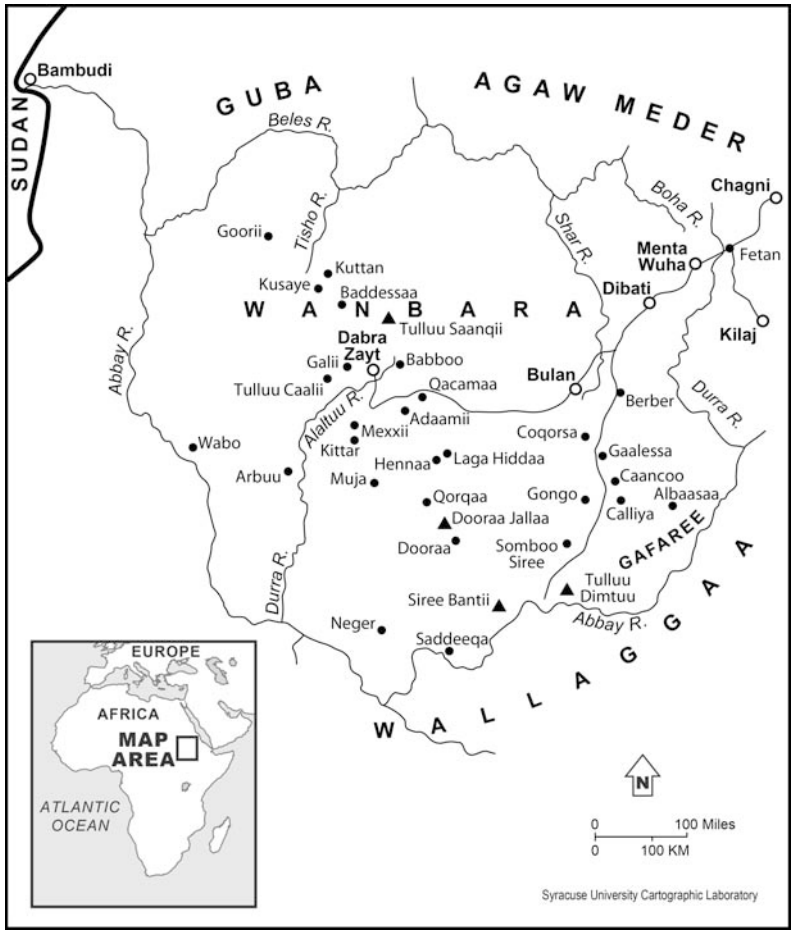


Map 2 Present Distribution of the Oromo in East Africa



Map 3 Major Trade Routes in Nineteenth-Century East Africa

Map 4 Wanbara and Wallagga



Map 5 Wanbara

Introduction

The Oromo are the largest single ethnic group in East Africa. Together with other Cushitic-speaking peoples, they have been the native inhabitants of the region since antiquity. Their country covers much of central, western, eastern, and southern Ethiopia, as well as northern and eastern Kenya as far as the Indian Ocean coast, an area approximately the size of Texas in the United States.[1] The period after 1704 was a time of relative peace throughout Oromoland and neighboring states, due in part to civil wars within the Ethiopian Empire that reduced military campaigns against the Oromo and other groups. During the resulting peaceful coexistence between 1704 and 1882, flourishing commerce and communication networks promoted the maturation of Oromo law and government, the integration of foreign ideas, and the assimilation of various non-Oromo cultures into Oromo culture. This study presents a comprehensive history of the Oromo, mainly during this period, from a transnational and interdisciplinary perspective.

During this period, an indigenous concept of peace—*nagaa Oromoo*—came to govern many aspects of Oromo life, relations with other societies, and interactions with the natural environment. It was manifested in daily life and speech—in blessings, prayers, songs, narratives, rituals, and ceremonial activities—as well as in producing more formal legal and administrative institutions. *Nagaa*, and the related concept of *qixxee* (equality), reinforced the process of ethnic integration and assimilation between the Oromo and their neighbors in the region. This book explores the major reasons that the Oromo were (and are) open to strangers; why they treat strangers equally as themselves, more so than other comparable groups; and how their welcoming institutions contributed to peace in East Africa, which would otherwise have seen major ethnic wars. Historians are sometimes prone to overlook the significance of things—like wars—that did not happen, but might have.

In the nineteenth century, political and economic developments in the Red Sea basin attracted an increasing number of British, German,

Italian, Austrian, and French travelers, explorers, diplomats, and missionaries to the East Africa region. These Europeans lived among the inhabitants of the region and learned, among other things, local languages, cultures, and political structures. Later, they published diaries, journals, and books that serve as particularly useful source materials for studying the Oromo during the nineteenth century. Impressed by many aspects of the Oromo nation—including the extent of its territory, the hospitality of the people, the sophistication of their political institutions, and the monotheistic religion—several travelers, missionaries, and, later, writers reported on the significance of what they witnessed. This led to a "romantic quest"[2] for Ormania, the name they used to describe *Biyya Oromoo* (modern Oromia), the country of the Oromo nation (see maps 1 and 2).

In several accounts, the Oromo are depicted as people who arrived in the Ethiopian highlands only in the sixteenth century. Others suggest that the Oromo were warlike people who were ready to kill anyone they found along the route of their expansion. The narratives that were created based on these accounts represent a distorted view of the Oromo story.[3] In the words of Richard Reid: "There can be few peoples in African history who have been as misunderstood, and indeed as misrepresented, as the Oromo . . . They have been, arguably, even more demonized by Ethiopian chroniclers of various hues and over a longer timeframe than the Somali, historically the other great rival 'bloc' confronting the Amhara in north-east Africa."[4] European travelers, missionaries, and diplomats who lived among the Oromo in the nineteenth century suggest, based on the memories they collected, that the Oromo were one of the earliest inhabitants of the region. In addition, they show that the Oromo were a peaceful people who welcomed and assimilated strangers and lived with others in peace, harmony, balance, order, and justice.

The Antiquity of the Oromo

For many centuries, the Oromo have occupied a vast territory in northeast Africa. Sir Richard Francis Burton, the British traveler who visited Harar in 1855, writes, the Oromo "are spread over a large portion of Africa."[5] According to his account, the Oromo had once lived in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean coasts and stated that they had contacts with the ancient Persian Empire.[6] He also states that "the white and black sheep of Ormania ([Oromo]-land) and of Somali land"[7] are of Persian origins. Having visited this part of Africa from northern Somaliland to Zanzibar, he stated that, "The

inhabitants opposite Zanzibar are Wuddooa [Africans], but there is reason to believe this part of the coast was formerly inhabited by the Guracha [Oromo]."[8] It is also interesting to note that he called the Oromoland "Ormania," following Johann Ludwig Krapf (Church Missionary Society agent), who coined it in the mid-nineteenth century (see chapter 5).

Herbert Vivian, another British explorer of the early twentieth century, also stated that the Oromo "come of a very ancient stock."[9] Furthermore, Darrell Bates wrote, "The [Oromo] were a very ancient race, the indigenous stock, perhaps, on which most other peoples in this part of eastern Africa had been grafted."[10] Other groups, particularly the Somali, have been described as an offshoot of the Oromo.[11] As such, these accounts speak to one underlying theme: that the Oromo are not recent arrivals on the Ethiopian scene.

Francesco Alvarez, who was a member of the Portuguese mission that arrived in Ethiopia in 1520, mentions two apparently Oromo names in his books. He wrote, "For in our time, which was a stay of six years [1520 to 1526], there were here four Barnagais [*Bahr Negash*], that is to say, when we arrived Dori was Barnagais; he died, and at his death the crown came to Bulla, his son, a youth of ten or twelve years of age, by order of the Prester John."[12] The *Bahr Negash* is a title for the governor of the Red Sea littoral, or present-day Eritrea. Both Doorii and Bulaa are typical Oromo names. Doorii is even more than a proper name; it is one of the names of the *gadaa* grades. Bulaa literally means "to spend overnight." When the Portuguese mission arrived in 1520, Doorii was already well into his tenure as *Bahr Negash*. Later, he was succeeded by his son, Bulaa. Alvarez met these rulers of the Red Sea area, and this is firsthand information that sheds light on the Oromo assimilation and active presence in northern Ethiopia before the first half of the sixteenth century.[13]

There are indications of Oromo settled life in the coastal regions of the Gulf of Aden. In the 1840s, Richard Burton explored various ruins, presumably of Oromo, in northern Somalia. Describing this undertaking, F. L. James wrote in 1885:

> He [Burton] then excavated [an Oromo] grave a short distance off [from Zeila], and about three feet below the surface he came upon a flooring of concrete, on which was the body with its head to the east and its feet to the west. It was so old that the bones and skull fell to pieces in his fingers. In another [Oromo] grave he found pink coral beads and a woman's hair-pin made of ivory. The flooring of these

> graves must have been prepared previous to the person's death, as it would take several days for the mortar to set.[14]

Other Oromo graves were discovered to the east of Berbera. Moreover, at a place called Olok, 5 to 10 kilometers (a few miles) west of Cape Guardafui, the French explorer Georges Révoil observed many ruins of houses and cairn-tombs. According to Merid Wolde Aregay, "At Khor Abdahan, just south of the Cape, he [Révoil] came across the remains of a rectangular building whose foundations were cut from the rock, where he also found potshe[r]ds and fragments of what he considered to be a Roman type millstone. What the Somali of Alleyah, on the Gulf of Aden, regarded as of [Oromo] make is more surprising. It was the ruin of a two storeyed construction built with lime and stones."[15] Stone mounds believed to be the burial site of ancient Oromo inhabitants were also discovered to the south of Berbera by another European explorer, F. L. James, who writes: "On our right we passed a small village near some stone mounds, said to be [Oromo] ruins; and I believe the [Oromo] lived in the country a long time ago."[16]

Oromo graves were carefully ornamented and designed, indicating the earlier existence of an organized community. They were numerous and divided into two types: small poles and larger types. According to I. M. Lewis, some of the smaller types belong to the Somali,[17] while the larger types around Mandera and Wajir south of the Juba River are said to be associated with the Oromo.[18] In any case, most of the graves, cairns, stone houses, wells, and ruins were attributed to the Oromo people, as also indicated by the renowned archaeologist Desmond Clark. He writes: "The numerous types of tumulae which occur throughout the Horn are ascribed to the [Oromo] and known colloquially as ['Oromo] Graves.' That the majority are the graves of these people there can be little doubt."[19]

According to F. L. James, Burton was also informed of a large ancient Oromo city near Djibouti. He writes: "In one place, on the road to Ras Jibuti, where tradition said there was formerly an immense [Oromo] city, there was a large knoll formed by loose rocks."[20] Some forty years later, James himself visited an ancient Oromo city in northern Somalia and reported: "Our explorations carried us among what appeared to be the *débris* of a large town with an extensive cemetery attached to it, and from all we could gather the [Oromo] in bygone ages had here built up a real city."[21] In the second half of the nineteenth century, Harald George Swayne also concluded: "From ruins, cairns, and graves which have been pointed out to me to be of

[Oromo] origin, I have been led to believe that before the Arab immigrations what is now called Somáliland, even to the northern coast, was owned by the [Oromo]."[22] While further investigation of these ruins is needed, it is important to note that the Somali themselves attribute these sites to the Oromo.[23]

In a recent study, Robert Collins and James Burns corroborate the presence of Oromo settlement on the East Africa coast far back in antiquity. They argue that "The first settlements on the coast were made before the Christian era by Cushitic-speaking pastoral peoples coming from Ethiopia and represented today by the Oromo of southern Ethiopia and the Somali. They are probably the 'red men' described in the *Periplus*."[24] According to the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* compiled between A.D. 45 and 50, the inhabitants of the East African coast were described as tall, red men who were hunters and keepers of cattle, sheep, and goats. Most probably they were Cushitic speakers including the Oromo. This sheds some light on the antiquity of the Oromo in the Horn of Africa region. It seems that the Oromo played a significant role in the Horn before the fifteenth century. In the words of Desmond Clark, "The [Oromo] seem to have controlled the whole of the Horn of Africa since at least the first few centuries of the Christian era, and during the sixteenth century spread inland to the south and west but subsequently were displaced by the Somalis pressing down from the north, and the main group of the [Oromo] were forced inland to their present habitat."[25]

Later travelers also confirmed the dominance of the Oromo along the East African coast. When the British explorer William Owen and his party visited the islands and coastal regions between Mogadishu and Zanzibar in 1824 and 1825, the Oromo had control of the coast. Owen wrote, "We were informed that the whole coast was peopled by [Oromo],"[26] including Mogadishu, Brava, Juba, and Mombasa. Harald George Swayne also described Lamu on the Kenyan coast as a mixed Oromo and Arab town.[27] The existence of the Oromo in close proximity to Mogadishu during the first half of the seventeenth century was also indicated by Michael Russell.[28] The Portuguese Father Joao Bermudez, who lived in Ethiopia during the first half of the sixteenth century, also wrote that the Oromo lived close to Mogadishu.[29] Jerome Lobo, who visited the East African coast in 1624, also met Oromo in Malindi, Juba, and surrounding areas. He described their governance under the leadership of the *Luba* (see chapter 1).[30]

Rock art and cave paintings in various sites on the Horn of Africa also indicate the antiquity of the Oromo. The rock-art caves of Laga Odaa, Ganda Biftuu, and Porc Epic around Harar revealed paintings

and engravings on protected rock faces, sheltered areas, and exposed surfaces. Porc Epic is near Dire Dawa city and includes cave paintings; while Ganda Biftuu is a painted rock face about 60 kilometers (37 miles) west of Dire Dawa. At Porc Epic, the paintings include humans (20 human figures) and wild animals (as opposed to domesticated species). At Ganda Biftuu, details of humans depicted in the painting include clothes, full facial features, and a hair comb, while the majority of the animals represented are domesticated, such as cattle with long horns and no humps. At Laga Odaa, about 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) from Ganda Biftuu, one drawing shows a human figure riding an animal that is most likely an ox. There were also other prehistoric sites in the neighborhood of Dire Dawa, and it is interesting to note that the paintings were, for the most part, very carefully drawn and that the figures are suggestive of characteristics of Oromo and Somali cultures today.[31]

The various engravings found in these areas depict camel and zebu cattle. They represent the actual Oromo and Somali cultures of today, as all of the cattle of these groups are of the zebu type. It seems that the Oromo first introduced this type of engraving, and later the Somali copied them. "The Dolbahanta [Somali] state that the first engravings here were the work of the [Oromo]."[32]

All the indications are that the Oromo had occupied an extensive territory covering much of East Africa. When Johann Ludwig Krapf arrived on the East African coast in the 1840s, he was told by the Swahili chief of Mombasa, Bana Hamade, that the Oromo formerly ruled perhaps as far south as Tanga and Usambara[33] in modern Tanzania. According to Richard Burton: "The dominion of the [Oromo] extended to the parallel of 8° lat. on the south, and to the meridian of 29° E. long. on the west, or perhaps even further. Their territories are, however, now much restricted."[34] Since at least the fifteenth century, the Oromo might have had a big influence on the coast as well as mainland East Africa, as recent research also indicates: "Swahili and Mijikenda ethnohistories recall Oromo supremacy on the coast and hinterland as far south as Pangani in Tanzania."[35]

The reason that the Oromo were hemmed in so that they now occupy their present habitat is unclear. The evidence that Cushitic speakers had lived in the entire Horn region in the remote millennia is beyond doubt. Among these people, the Oromo are said to be the most powerful, owing to their status as the most numerous group. In the words of Edna Mason Kaula: "The Cushitic people occupy the east, south, and western plains, and the mountain slopes. Of

this varied group the [Oromo] are by far the most important–and numerous–for they account for half of Ethiopia's population."[36]

Attitude Toward and Relations with Non-Oromo

Numerous accounts that present the Oromo as hospitable and welcoming of strangers belie the characterization of them as warlike people. According to D. P. Kidder, "They are a hospitable people, regard their oaths as holy, and revere old age."[37] This observation is further augmented by Herbert Vivian, who asserts that the Oromo "have distinct ideas of honour and hospitality"[38] to strangers. He writes: "Once they come to believe that fidelity is a duty in a given case, they are faithful unto death."[39] J. H. Phillipson, who visited the Oromo in Kenya in the first quarter of the twentieth century, also observed: "Personally, I have received nothing at their hands except kindness. They have made no excessive demands on my purse, but, on the contrary, have been liberal in the extreme, usually welcoming the traveller with a presentation of sheep, goats, and milk–enough, sometimes, to supply the wants of more than twenty people."[40]

Observations by nineteenth-century European travelers that the Oromo host strangers with generosity is confirmed by scholars. Among the Maccaa Oromo, Herbert Lewis notes: "Shoa [Oromo] communities are open communities, easy for newcomers to join, composed of people who are, in the first place, cooperating neighbors, not kinsmen or lineage mates. New settlers are accepted if they are willing to participate in community affairs . . . Members of other ethnic groups, such as Amharas, are accepted if they are cooperative."[41] Lewis also describes the Oromo in the Gibee region as having the same flair for hospitality as do the Shawa Oromo. John Hinnant reports that non-Oromo ethnic groups were openly welcomed by the Gujii Oromo.[42] It is very interesting to note that any non-Oromo newcomer is equally welcomed into an Oromo community with all the privileges accorded to any Oromo. The assimilated outsiders were all first citizens with the right to lead *gadaa* rituals and other ceremonies. This is based on the principle of *qixxee*, equality based on humanity (see chapter 3). The only thing required of them is to abide by the Oromo customs and be cooperative, which is also much needed in agricultural societies.

As an extension of equality, *qixxee* is used for a meeting to settle disputes in the community among the Oromo of Shawa. The concept emphasizes the idea that when everybody attends a meeting, all

members are equal. No one is considered unfit or second class in the deliberations.[43] The European travelers also observed that: ' "The Oromo accept well strangers,' wrote Antoine d'Abbadie, 'and do not at all place any obstacle in their way.' 'They are sweet, friendly, hospitable,' affirms on the other hand cardinal Massaïa."[44] De Salviac confirms this by stating, "nothing is more true."[45] According to Oromo law, strangers who are willing to be adopted by the former will be treated as the Oromo. There is an adoption ritual led by the *abbaa bokkuu* (president). Thus, the Oromo maintained significant relationships with neighboring non-Oromo. As de Salviac in late 1890s described, "Now it is unheard of that the Oromo does not have some alliance with the families of the bordering race."[46] After adoption, strangers could be sure that they would get the same privileges as the adopting clan and, therefore, protection from attacks by other groups, enjoying "the most stable peace and tranquility."[47]

It is important to note that the Oromo openness and welcoming spirit was not because of the presence of excess unoccupied land among their communities. There was, in fact, competition over scarce resources among the Oromo themselves. Openness and hospitality emanates from the fundamental belief among the Oromo that all humans are the children of God (Waaqa) and deserve to be treated with dignity and equality. This belief is enshrined in the Oromo indigenous system of governance, which encourages all Oromo to accept, live with, and treat others equally. As Donald Levine notes, "The [Oromo's] ability to make friends with outsiders and to incorporate them or affiliate with them readily in local communities has been reported for so many times and places that I am inclined to regard it as a characteristic aspect of their mode of relating to outsiders."[48]

Since their early days of contact with outsiders, the Oromo have developed a number of mechanisms for establishing relationships with non-Oromo communities. When they started to settle permanently among different communities in their early days of expansion, the Oromo seem to have devised different mechanisms to adapt themselves to their new conditions. "When the Oromo went forth from their homeland they had to find ways of relating to the peoples near whom they settled once the antagonisms of battle were temporarily or permanently set aside. Their own script contained no mandate to establish a dominion over others."[49] Instead, they assimilated and lived with the peoples they encountered.

For centuries, the Somali in the Ogaden and Juba and Wabe Shabelle regions have been in close contact with the Oromo. Starting from the Harar region, all the way down to the lower Juba and Tana

Rivers in the south, both seem to have competed with each other "for water, grazing, and agricultural land."[50] Around El Wak in Kenya (see map 1), this has resulted in a significant Oromo-Somali assimilation, particularly between the Warra Daayya Oromo and the Somali.[51] The Garre are, for instance, a mixture of the Oromo and Ogaden Somali groups. Another Somali group called Sab, or Rahanwin, who live in southern Somalia, have also blended with Oromo. Thomas Wakefield, who collected traditions from the region in the 1860s and 1870s, writes of the Sab, "They are evidently much mixed with [Oromo], who formerly occupied a portion, at all events, of this country."[52] There is also considerable assimilation between the Somali and Gabra. Many Somalis have adopted Boorana Oromo culture and the *gadaa* system. L. Aylmer writes, "Intermingled with them [Boorana] are to be found many Ajuran Somalis, of the Hawiyah division, and Gurreh, another large division of the Somali race."[53]

The Boorana, the Ajuran Somalis, and the Garre, Gabra, and Sakuye groups intermarry with each another, have close friendships, and share their villages. Even though the Somalis are largely Muslims, they have developed considerable working relationships with the Boorana, who practice the Oromo religion. The Somalis arrived in the Juba region after the Oromo, and they were welcomed by the latter. R. E. Salkeld, provincial commissioner in British East Africa (Kenya), who visited the region in December 1913, writes: "They [the Somali] had been preceded by the [Oromo], and these two peoples, who are so closely akin that it is impossible at the present time to tell [an Oromo] from a Somali, appear to have now occupied all the available territory in Jubaland and Tanaland adapted to their characteristics as nomadic stock-owners."[54]

Beyond the Juba River around Mombasa and the Malindi coast of the Indian Ocean, there was also assimilation of the Pokomo, the largest group in the Tana Province of Kenya, into the Oromo. Among the Pokomo around the Tana River, Oromo culture is strongly evident. A. Werner observed in the late 1860s that a branch of the Pokomo already had adopted Oromo language[55] and the Oromo *gadaa* government.[56]

It is important to note that the Oromo and their neighbors' relationships were not always free of conflict. Conflicts did occur; for instance, between the Oromo and Pokomo. But most importantly, they were both able to solve disputes and to live together amicably. Those amicable relationships eventually developed into integration. In describing dispute settlement between the Oromo and Pokomo, Werner writes, "Since that time the Pokomo on the north bank of

the river . . . 'have remained in peaceful possession of their country, but take good care not to provoke the [Oromo], who in the end, also find it to their advantage to refrain from attacking them, as they can at all times get grain from the Pokomo.'"[57] The Pokomo eventually assimilated into the Oromo and adopted Oromo clan names in addition to the Oromo language. Johann L. Krapf, who visited the region in the 1840s, also observed that the Pokomo understood the Oromo language and supplied the Oromo with various trading items such as rice and maize.[58]

Many of the ethnic groups in today's Kenya and southern Somalia have assimilated into Oromo society, accepting their institutions, *gadaa* government, and religion. Linda Giles, who conducted research along the Swahili coast of East Africa in the 1990s, also observes that Oromo traditional beliefs, particularly in spirit possession, were formerly widely embraced in the region.[59] Elsewhere, the Oromo openness to strangers led to the intermingling of the Oromo with others, and vice versa. In the Harar region, the Oromo have adopted Islam as well as the Harari culture. After settlement of their disputes with the Sultan of Harar in 1568, some Oromo groups came closer to the walled city and to the Islamic faith. And, according to Arthur Starkie, Oromo-Harari intermingling may have started even earlier: "Since the thirteenth century, however, they [the Harari] have greatly mingled with the [Oromo clans], and naturally their earlier characteristics have become less pronounced."[60]

From Raayyaa in Tigray to Orma on the Malindi coast of Kenya, the Oromo have greatly contributed to ethnic integration, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence. In describing the strong presence of the Oromo in the civilizations that appeared in East Africa, this introduction has shown the need for additional research on ethnic dynamism in the region. This introduction[61] also provides important evidence of the role of the Oromo in ethnic integration in a wider East African context. The *gadaa* democratic governance structure helped to solve conflicts within the Oromo and also with other groups, and contributed to the development of ethnic solidarity and integration in East Africa that was based on equal privileges.

In terms of numbers, too, the Oromo survived centuries of Ethiopian military expeditions, droughts, and other natural catastrophes to become the largest single group in East Africa. They maintained their unity, culture, language, identity, and national character under difficult circumstances, in spite of being assimilated into other groups elsewhere. Even as they adopted many from other ethnic groups, so, too, were they subsumed into other groups; yet, they continued

to be the most numerous in the region. In the words of Alexander Bulatovich, who visited Ethiopia in the late 1890s: "But they all recognize that they belong to the [Oromo] nation. They all call themselves 'Oromo.' Almost all of them have the same customs, language, type, and character, despite the difference of faith which exists between the [Oromo] pagans and [Oromo Muslims]."[62] Many African groups such as the Nguni were dispersed elsewhere, with little unity throughout southern Africa (see conclusion). Here we have continuity in a uniform language, culture, *gadaa* system, belief in Waaqa, and the common concept of peace and hospitality, all the way from Tigray in northern Ethiopia to the Indian Ocean coasts. As John Trimingham put it, the Oromo language is "the most widely-spoken language in Ethiopia. Considering the vast expanse of country over which it is spoken where the [clans] are separated by formidable physical barriers and even other language areas, the language has remained remarkably uniform."[63]

In spite of Islamic and Christian expansions, they kept their religion intact. The Oromo developed gender-specific organizations like *siiqqee*, *addooyyee*, and *ateetee* women's rituals that helped develop checks and balances in the whole nation. They even influenced other groups, who adopted the *ateetee*, *irreecha*, and Waaqa elements, among others. In spite of early Islamic influence in the region, the Aniya Oromo of Harar were still followers of the Oromo religion into the nineteenth century (see chapter 5). As Gemetchu Megerssa put it, "What is fascinating about the Oromo culture is, that despite their exposure to other cultures, all the Oromo communities found in East and Northeast Africa retain the essential features of their ancient religious and philosophical system of thought."[64] European travelers, missionaries, and diplomats witnessed the Oromo nation's commitment to maintaining *nagaa* (peace, harmony, balance, order, and justice for all). They were convinced that the Oromo were a welcoming and a peace-loving nation with established indigenous governance institutions in East Africa.

Chapter 1 provides an account of the Oromo expansion and settlement mainly north of the Abbay River, in spite of continual expeditions from the Ethiopian Empire from 1570 to 1704. It describes the basic concepts of Oromo unity, organization, leadership, *gadaa* government, and their assimilation into various ethnic groups to the north of that river.

Chapter 2 describes a history of the Oromo-speaking group in Wanbara to the north of the Abbay River. It is interesting that most of the Oromo who settled in Gojjam, Bagemeder, and Dambya were assimilated into the Amharic-speaking community, while others close

to the Sudan kept their ethnic identity intact. While there was no major Oromo expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, north of the Abbay River close to the Sudanese frontier, strong expansion and assimilation did occur. This chapter details the Oromo move northward and their interactions with local people. Despite assimilating into various communities in this region, the Oromo were able to keep their identity, language, government, and religious practices intact. Many people, including the Oromo themselves, are unaware of the existence today of Oromo north of the river on the Sudanese border, believing that they were completely assimilated. Yet, today, tens of thousands of Oromo live north of the Abbay River. Most of the sources used in this chapter come from interviews conducted with residents in the region.

Chapter 3 describes the Oromo concept of peace, Oromo law, mechanisms of incorporating other groups, and various institutions of peace. *Nagaa* (literally, "peace") is the most important concept in the way the Oromo conduct their daily lives, from religious practice to governance.

Chapter 4 details the significance of commerce for pan-Oromo relations in the nineteenth century as well as for relations with other groups. Mainly using travel accounts, this chapter details commercial transactions in Oromia, regional interconnections between Oromia and other states, relations between the Oromo and foreign merchants, and the contributions of Oromo interpreters and guides to the success of merchants and travelers.

Chapter 5 explores the dynamics of indigenous beliefs, the role of Islam and the introduction of Christianity into Oromia, and the efforts of missionaries and local converts in the nineteenth century. It describes the role of Oromo religion, including the *qaalluu* institution, *ateetee* ceremony, and *ireecha* festival, as well as connections to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Religious practices strengthened ethnic solidarity. This chapter also explores the introduction of Christianity into Oromia in the nineteenth century and details the efforts of missionaries and local converts, including how Protestant and Catholic missionaries tried to introduce a European form of evangelical activity and how they were welcomed by the Oromo.

Chapter 6 (the last chapter), describes the major factors that affected ethnic relations and peace in the region. The introduction of firearms by the kingdom of Shawa, the role of Shawan–European relations, the role of local collaborators, and loss of unity within the Oromo significantly affected ethnic dynamism.

1

Conflict and Integration

Oromo Settlement and Assimilation in Northern Ethiopia, 1570–1704

The Oromo developed a well-organized democratic governing institution that has endured for several centuries. This single institution of government is known as the *gadaa* system.[1] Within this system, the Oromo are ruled by a generational class, whose members assume office at the age of forty, earning the honorific title of *luba*. Each class rules for a period of eight years, after which the next group to reach that age assumes the mantle of collective leadership.[2] "The [Oromo] states are remarkable for the democratic character of their constitution. The chiefs are elected for eight years, and their power is limited by a council."[3]

These *lubas*, holding a nonrenewable eight-year term, are responsible for the political, economic, social, ritual, and military affairs of Oromo society. During the early years of Oromo expansion into various areas of East Africa inhabited by Christian, Muslim, and other groups, these *lubas* led and directed the movements of their people. Their expansion was initiated, among other factors, by demographic and ecological factors. According to traditions collected by Yelma Deressa, the Oromo cradle land in southern Ethiopia prior to the mid–sixteenth century was endowed with salubrious pastureland and fertile soil. The situation was favorable for a rapid increase in both human and livestock populations.[4] The resultant increase in population led to the emergence of different groups, including the two major Oromo moieties known as the Boorana and the Barentu. Over time, these groups multiplied in number and began looking for settlements that were more commodious for their ever-increasing numbers. Also, it seems that there were internal changes within the Oromo *gadaa* system itself. According to Schlee and Watson: "There is evidence

that the Oromo expansion since the sixteenth century was made possible by a reform of their *gada* system to make it fit with the actual age of the people who joined it, so that those recruited into the warrior age-set were actually young men. Rigid systems have a tendency to get out of step with the demographic reality and to require reform or ad hoc adjustments from time to time."[5]

Initially, Oromo expansion in the sixteenth century does not seem to have involved all the various groups moving en masse. Recent research has shown that only the pastoral Oromo who were looking for pastureland moved, while the settled agricultural groups stayed in the general area of their cradle land, the territories then ruled by the Muslim sultanates of Dawaro, Ifat, Waj, and Bale, and within the land of the Ethiopian Empire in today's Shawa region of Ethiopia.[6] Such patterns of movement helped the emigrant population to form a long chain of settlements along their major routes of expansion. The Barentu branch moved east and north, eventually settling in the Arsi, Bale, Harar, Gojjam, and Wallo regions of today's Ethiopia. The Boorana, on the other hand, trekked to the northwest, west, and southwest regions along meandering routes to what are today Shawa, Wallaggaa, Illubbabor, and Gojjam. Other groups also moved into Kenya as far south as the Tana River.[7] Today, the Oromo have become one of the largest and most widespread ethnic groups in Africa.[8] According to Gene Gragg, Afaan Oromoo (the Oromo language) is "probably the third-most widely spoken Afroasiatic language in the world, after Arabic and Hausa."[9] Ali Mazrui also mentions that the Oromo language is one of the neo-Islamic languages of Eastern Africa.[10]

In spite of the emergence of several groups during, and after, these expansions, the Oromo maintained their unity and identity in a number of ways. "They all respected the high priests of Waqa, the sky god. They joined together once every eight years for ceremonies at which they prayed for peace, fertility, and rain. Pilgrims went to one of a few sites where these ceremonies were held."[11] Addressing the enduring unity of the Oromo, Mekuria Bulcha also writes: "After separation, the different branches of the Oromo nation lived in federations and confederations in several autonomous but contiguous territories. Segmentation into different branches did not diminish the shared belief of common descent from one founding father."[12] This chapter details how the Oromo defended themselves against expeditions from the Ethiopian Empire (also called Abyssinia), and their eventual settlement and assimilation in northern Ethiopia from 1570 to 1704.

Pan-Oromo Confederations

The various Oromo groups began to form autonomous *gadaa* governments in the territories they had come to occupy. In some cases, these autonomous local governments were answerable to the overall *gadaa* of the main branches such as the Tuulama. Although Odaa Nabee, the seat of the *caffee* (governance council) of the Maccaa and Tuulama, located somewhere between today's Dukam and Bishoftuu towns, served as a unifying regional center, the Tuulamas' power gradually became decentralized into local republics, as was the case with other Oromo groups. Each of the major Tuulama groups formed its own *gadaa* government and elected its own officials; for example, as Lemmu Baissa describes it, "the Bacho had *chafe* [*caffee*] Ballo while the Soddo had Birbirsa Tiya, Jidda had Foqa Awas, and the Galaan had their *chafe* Galaan just south of Finfinee (Addis Ababa)."[13]

Since the Oromo abhorred concentration of power into the hands of a single individual or a few persons, the *gadaa* system allowed a decentralized self-administration. The *caffee* among the Tuulama branch, thus, functioned at both local and higher levels. For instance, the Foqa Awash took responsibility for maintaining order and peace and for rendering justice locally among the Jiddaa group of the Tuulama. At a higher level, the regional, or intergroup, *caffee* of the whole Tuulama branch consisted of the representatives of the local *caffees* of the various clans. In theory, the whole Tuulama assembly at Odaa Nabee had supreme powers and could reverse the decisions passed at the local level, but in practice, the local *caffee* seem to have been virtually independent.[14]

The decline of *gadaa* government as an institution for the whole of the Oromo nation might have eventually contributed to the formation of independent Oromo states. The *gadaa* leaders found it difficult to exercise their power over each Oromo group, and war leaders gradually established themselves over their own territories. The establishment of local governments did not create a groundswell of Oromo identifying with their clan governments rather than the larger Oromo identity. Despite the transformation of the way they were governed, the Oromo nation continued to emphasize group rather than individual interests and to uphold pan-Oromo unity rather than specific clan affiliation. Although they moved into different territories, the various branches of the Oromo people retained their common identity and shared beliefs. From the accounts transmitted by the contemporary Ethiopian monk, Bahrey, it seems that various Oromo groups formed confederations, particularly in defense of their respective autonomous territories.

The earliest of these confederations were the *Afre* and the *Sadacha*. During the days of the Robale *luba* (1570 to 1578), two Maccaa Oromo groups, the Calliya and Hookoo, forged an alliance with the Liiban and Guduruu and assumed the collective name of *Afre* (literally, the confederacy of four). The *Sadacha* (confederacy of three) was formed by the Warra Karrayyuu, Warra Ilu, and Warra Noolee of the Barentu branch[15] in the Wallo region. Another *Sadacha* confederation was formed between 1578 and 1586 by the Boorana groups of Hakaakoo, Abboo, and Suuba. These confederations were formed to help each other in defense of their territories. The Boorana *Sadacha* moved further to the southwest and joined the earlier confederation of the *Afre* in Damot. The alliance of these two confederations allowed for better defense of the Oromo territories in the west and southwest and consolidated their respective *gadaa* governments in all the lands between the Abbay and Gojjeb Rivers. These include Wallaggaa, Jimmaa, Illubbabor, and the surrounding areas. When Emperor Sarsa-Dengel of Ethiopia (1563 to 1597) led a series of expeditions against the Maccaa, Tuulama, Jaawwii, and other Oromo groups, the formation of those confederations produced significant results in keeping his army at bay. On one occasion, exhausted by his prolonged struggle with the Oromo, the emperor is said to have blurted in despair: " 'It is better,' ran one of this king's sayings, 'to fight those who shed the blood of Christ [the Falasha—Ethiopian Jews] than the Pagan [Oromos].' "[16]

Emperor Sarsa-Dengel had limited success against the Oromo to the south of the Abbay River. The Oromo confederation and unity proved effective, and contributed to his decision to abandon all territories to the south of the river and move farther to the north, near Lake Tana. Sarsa-Dengel decided to shift his eastern regiment to the north to subdue the Falasha and the rebel prince, *Bahr Negash* (title given to the governor of the Red Sea littoral) Yeshaq. As quoted in Merid Wolde Aregay, "After the behet Wadadoch [most favorite, military title] died, and the country was wasted by the hands of the [Oromo], Hase Malak Sagad [Emperor Sarsa-Dengel] was exiled and he came to Dambiya."[17]

Emperor Sarsa-Dengel's move to Dambya in 1578 coincided with the advent of a new and powerful *luba,* Birmaji (1578 to 1586). The Oromo had by then developed protective body-length shields of oxhide, with which they scored spectacular victories. It was also during this period that the Sadacha confederation was formed. The combined forces of the *Afre* and *Sadacha* proved decisive in confrontations with the empire. They were able, for instance, to capture the

royal prince Susenyos and take him into captivity. He was one of the great grandsons of Emperor Lebna-Dengel (died 1540) taken into captivity during the earlier *Luba* Robale (1570 to 1578). He was, however, rescued during the *Luba* Birmaji and sent to Sarsa-Dengel's mother, Silus Haile, in eastern Gojjam, where he was apparently reinstated in his father's estates.[18]

The successes of the *Afre* and *Sadacha* (Boorana) confederations in defending their territories as far west as Wallaggaa and as far southwest as Illubbabor made constant communication with the common government of the Maccaa and Tuulama at Odaa Nabee relatively safer than in the past. Owing to the long distance and increased security problems, travel to Odaa Nabee for regular *gadaa* ceremonies became difficult. The Maccaa, therefore, decided to set up their own *caffee* at Odaa Bisil, located between the towns of Geedoo and Ijaajjii.[19] Even though the Maccaa founded a new *gadaa* government center, they maintained good relations with the Tuulama, who kept their center at Odaa Nabee. The Maccaa-Tuulama, together with Barentu groups, formed a pan-Oromo confederation and conducted simultaneous expansions north of the Abbay River. In 1585, for instance, the Boorana crossed the Abbay into Gojjam, while groups of the Barentu conducted expansions into the Ethiopian province of Bagemeder.[20]

Oromo pressure from two directions forced Emperor Sarsa-Dengel to devise several new policy measures to defend his imperial domain. Unable to keep control of Damot to the south of the Abbay, he decided to keep the Oromo out of Gojjam, because losing it would have dealt a serious blow to his power. Gojjam was his principal province, thanks to its riches in gold and horses. An Italian traveler, S. G. Baratti, described the riches of Gojjam as follows: "The other Kingdoms are less remarkable, only that of *Damut* and *Goiame* are full of Mines of Gold. The Emperour keeps them with above 6000 men in Arms continually."[21] In fact, the forces stationed in Gojjam were not only numerically significant, but also composed of the emperor's famous regiments. To encourage them to block Oromo expansion into Gojjam, the emperor exempted the people of Gojjam from tribute obligations of supplying him horses.[22] When these measures proved ineffective, Emperor Sarsa-Dengel devised a policy of striking an alliance with friendly Oromo groups and settling them in Gojjam and Dambya so that they could stiffen the line of defense against other Oromo groups. He allotted the uncultivated and fallow lands of Gojjam and Dambya to the Oromo and began mingling them with the Ethiopian society.[23] Nevertheless, these measures could not

keep the two provinces free from Oromo expansion, which was actually further intensified.

In 1586, Oromo forces attacked the royal camp at Mangesto in eastern Gojjam and dispersed the royal family. During the operation, the Oromo mobilized their forces simultaneously and attacked from three directions. The Maccaa moved against the royal camp from the direction of Gindebarat, the Tuulama from the direction of Amonat and Walaqa, and the Marawwa and Wallo, of the Barentu branch, from the direction of the Bashilo and Mille Rivers.[24] This was a coordinated move by a pan-Oromo confederation of both the Boorana and Barentu moieties under the leadership of *gadaa* officials of the Mulataa *luba*.

By 1586, the Maccaa had already formed their own *gadaa* assembly at Odaa Bisil, but they continued to work with the Tuulama and Barentu groups. That same year, the Oromo also held a governance council (*caffee*) in Gojjam and issued decrees on further actions and matters of common interest. Despite the creation of various *caffee* by the subsequent groups, the *gadaa* council of all Oromo was at work during this period. By the early seventeenth century, however, the overall leadership of the *lubas* had diminished, and the Oromo had resorted to forming alliances under new respective confederation leaders. In the process of the Oromo expansion in the seventeenth century, the leaders of the *Afre*, *Sadacha* (of both the Barentu and Boorana branches), and other confederations seem to have eclipsed the role of the *lubas* of the pan-Oromo *gadaa* government.

This process of prolonged warfare between the Oromo and the Ethiopian Empire gradually forced the pre-Oromo inhabitants of the southwestern regions to move elsewhere and take refuge. Many of the diverse populations of Damot, among whom the Gonga and Gafat are specifically referenced, fled across the Abbay into Gojjam and "enriched the ethnic composition of the province."[25] It should be noted, however, that this migration of the Gonga and the Gafat was not their first presence in the region. Prior to the sixteenth century, Gonga groups had spread on both sides of the Abbay River. But later, the Gonga living north of the Abbay seem to have been cut off from the southern Gonga due to the Oromo expansion into Damot and Bizamo. Although the exact length of time the Gonga were present in Gojjam needs confirmation, they seem to have moved into southern Gojjam and the Wanbara area largely as a result of political and demographic changes in the sixteenth century.[26]

The Gafat are strongly believed to be the first inhabitants of highland Gojjam, and all the other peoples of the area seem to have come

much later into the area. Prior to the sixteenth century, they had apparently spread on both sides of the Abbay. According to the traditions of the people, both the Agaw and the Amhara seem to have come to the area of Gojjam long after the Gafat.[27]

The Agaw seem to have been inhabiting northern and eastern Gojjam since Aksumite times (ca. second century B.C. to A.D. 1140). According to tradition, the Agaw are descended from the Seven-House Agaw, who came from Lasta, northern Wallo; they included the Ankasha, Azena, Chara, Kwakwera, Matakkal, and Zigam. Their other clans, like the Bil (Belaya), Dangla, Gwagwusa, and Tumha, may have been either latecomers or descended from the original seven groups. At present, all these names are applied to administrative units in parts of Agaw Meder.[28] The Agaw, having at first settled in northeastern Gojjam, apparently trekked farther to the west into areas where the Gumuz were living. The Gumuz are members of the Nilo-Saharan language family, whose tradition says they have lived in present-day Matakkal up to the shores of Lake Tana since time immemorial. Their oral history indicates that, apparently pushed farther westward by the Agaw, they came to be limited to the hot lowland parts of Matakkal, which they presently inhabit.[29]

It was to this area, with such diversified population groups, that the Oromo began to move and settle, gradually becoming one of the important ethnic groups there—a process that started in the days of Emperor Sarsa-Dengel in the second half of the sixteenth century. Following his death, the struggle for royal power among his relatives greatly enhanced the process of Oromo settlement in Gojjam as a whole. When Emperor Sarsa-Dengel died in 1597, a power struggle in the Ethiopian imperial court ensued. The political infighting facilitated the process of Oromo settlement north of the Abbay in a rather complicated manner. The Empress Maryam Sena, Kefle Wahed (the governor of Tigray), and *Ras* (honorific title next to *negus*, king) Atnatewos (the governor of Amhara) became the three most powerful personalities in the empire. The governors were both sons-in-law of the emperor, and together with the empress they formed a powerful triumvirate. Later on, however, the empress added to her party *Ras* Za-Sellase, whom James Bruce identifies as a Gurage renowned for his bravery in the army.[30]

Just before his death, Emperor Sarsa-Dengel had nominated his cousin, Za-Dengel, as his successor. In a contradictory move, the party of the empress instead enthroned the minor Yaqob, an illegitimate but natural son of Sarsa-Dengel. They deported Za-Dengel to Deq Island in Lake Tana, from where he later escaped to live in

a remote mountain hideout in Gojjam. Prince Susenyos, who had the right to claim the throne as a great-grandson of Emperor Lebne-Dengel (1508 to 1540), also escaped to his Oromo allies in western Shawa to avoid imprisonment. Susenyos then began to raid and plunder the territories south and east of the Abbay River. Thousands of Oromo followed him (note that he had been captured by the Oromo and lived with them for a while, until he was rescued and returned to Gojjam); Oromo attacks on Amhara, Bagemeder, Enarya, Gojjam, and Walaqa between 1597 to 1607 were essentially associated with Susenyos. Together with his Oromo (and some Berababo Gafat) followers, Susenyos attacked eastern Gojjam in 1597. Then he campaigned in the region of Waj in the south and sought to force the former subjects of the kingdom there to pay him tributes. He even became a member of the Oromo *luba* and led the Oromo in campaigns against the kingdom of Enarya south of the Abbay. With the *Sadacha*, Susenyos penetrated Enarya's defenses and killed its governor, Gumcho. The people of Enarya, however, reorganized themselves and defeated Susenyos.[31]

Concerned by Susenyos's rebellion against them, the empress and her allies at the royal court deposed Yaqob and brought Za-Dengel back into power. The main reason for this was apparently that Yaqob had reached the age of fourteen and wished to exercise full authority, while the triumvirate wanted to keep the power in their own hands. When Za-Dengel assumed power, many of the dignitaries of Yaqob, who was exiled in Enarya, escaped from the court and joined Susenyos in Walaqa. He augmented his army, and with momentum on his side, Susenyos stepped up his revolt. He crossed over to Gojjam and laid it waste from 1603 to 1604. Oromo pressure on Gojjam also increased during this time. Susenyos then returned and camped in Darra east of the Abbay River. Emperor Za-Dengel was forced to lead an expedition to Darra against Susenyos and his Oromo allies. For this purpose, he decreed a general mobilization, excepting only the disabled. The emperor moved against Darra and confronted Susenyos and his numerous Oromo, who were mainly Warantisha (one of the historical Barentu branches of the Oromo) followers. Susenyos's army ambushed and killed many soldiers of the emperor. In a heavy rainfall and hail, the emperor's troops were unable to track down the rebel prince. The only thing emperor Za-Dengel could do was to plunder Oromo cattle and return to Gojjam.[32]

Because of the increasing *Afre* pressure on Gojjam, emperor Za-Dengel ordered *Ras* Atnatewos of Gojjam not to combat the Oromo until he had arrived; but Atnatewos could neither postpone nor avoid

confrontation. In the decisive battle that followed, Atnatewos's forces were routed. These strong Oromo pressures on his empire eventually led emperor Za-Dengel to seek European military assistance. In 1604, he wrote a letter to the Pope of Rome (Pope Clement VIII, 1592 to 1605) disclosing his desperate struggle with the Oromo as follows: "[W]e have in our country certain heathen enemies [the Oromo]. If we march against these we cannot find them, for they fly, and when we return, they come in where we are not like robbers; and therefore to destroy them we desire him [the King] to send us forces and all sorts of officers to direct the assault on the enemy's mountain strongholds."[33]

In the meantime, emperor Za-Dengel grew increasingly unpopular among his own people, according to some, because of the depredations that occurred during the general mobilizations he had decreed and, even more so, due to his reported conversion to Catholicism. In 1604, his people rebelled against him, and he was killed at the Battle of Barcha in Dambya.[34] Important personalities of the court led by *Ras* Za-Sellase of Dambya subsequently decided to recall Yaqob from Enarya and raise him to the throne again. Za-Sellase and *Ras* Atnatewos, each for his own reasons, agreed on this arrangement. Enraged by their action, Susenyos traveled to Amhara, from where he sent a letter asking *Ras* Atnatewos of Gojjam to recognize him as the lawful successor of emperor Za-Dengel. Without waiting for the *Ras's* response, Susenyos traveled to Gojjam with a large Oromo following. Atnatewos turned around and recognized him, while Za-Sellase hesitated. Ignoring this, Susenyos crowned himself and declared his takeover a fait accompli.

When Za-Sellase still refused to accept his enemy's ascension to power, Susenyos ordered his Oromo troops to attack Bagemeder. The conflict continued, with Yaqob being crowned again by Za-Sellase and his allies, who went on hunting for Susenyos. Finally, the forces of Yaqob and Susenyos met at Gol, near Yabart in eastern Gojjam, where Yaqob lost his life and Susenyos finally assumed full power.[35]

It should be noted that Susenyos owed much of his success to his alliance with Oromo groups. In gratitude for their assistance, he allotted them tracts of land in Gojjam, Dambya, and Agaw Meder. The most important Oromo groups who followed him were the Maccaa, the Basso, the Warantisha, and the Jaawwii, but there were many others as well. Both the Boorana and Barentu groups were also represented, and were all settled in Gojjam and Bagemeder. They were so numerous that Susenyos had to confiscate church land to satisfy his Oromo allies, which highly angered the Christian clergy of the

region. Pieces of land belonging to churches at Makana Semayat, built by Emperor Galawdewos (1540 to 1559) in Bagemeder, and at Mayfade Maryam, built by *Itege* (empress) Silus Haile between the Chemuga and Shigez Rivers in Gojjam, were partly confiscated and redistributed to the Oromo.[36]

The localities over which the various Oromo clans settled still bear the same name: Maccaa, Ilmaana Dansaa, Jaawwii, Guutaa, Basso, Liiban, and so on. The Ilmaana Dansaa district is sometimes interchangeably called Maccaa, although the latter was applied to a bigger territory near Lake Tana inhabited by an Oromo group of the same name. The successors of Emperor Susenyos continued to sanction the settlements of various Oromo clans in Maccaa to help them fight the other Oromo. The Oromo of Maccaa played an active role in the Gondarine (ca. 1636 to 1855) politics throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to James Bruce, the number of Oromo dwellers in the Maccaa district alone in 1768 was at least 15,000.[37]

Like the Oromo to the south of the Abbay, those of Maccaa practice the *gadaa* system, although under the influence of the Gondarine rulers. Bruce mentions that the *abbaa bokkuus* had more power over Maccaa than the emperor in the eighteenth century. The most important place and capital of Maccaa and Ilmaana Dansaa was Yebaba, where several Gondarine rulers (such as Emperors Iyyasu I, Takle Haymanot, and Yostos) built castles and set up a temporary capital.[38] Today, the Oromo of Gojjam and Bagemeder are integrated into the Amharic-speaking society even though they recognize their Oromo ancestry.

Once on the throne, Emperor Susenyos (1607 to 1632) turned against the Oromo. When the Oromo realized that Susenyos had betrayed them, they decided to dethrone him. "Those of the [Oromo] who favoured Susenyos remained with him, but the rest decided to oppose him. All the [Oromo] decided to overthrow him once and for all."[39] Oromo expansions into Gojjam and Bagemeder became increasingly organized, and Susenyos had to march against them to protect the throne on various fronts. In 1610, a pan-Oromo confederation was formed when a group made up mostly of members of the Arsi Barentu branch decided to engage Susenyos's army in Gojjam. At the same time, the Liiban group of the Boorana moved in from a different direction. While the emperor was busy fighting the Barentu groups, the Liiban marched on western Gojjam as far as Agaw Meder.[40] The emperor's chronicle makes it clear that the Oromo conducted joint operations to overthrow him after he turned against

them in seeking to control the fertile lands of Gojjam and Dambya. Susenyos's forces defeated the Barentu groups, and he wanted to pursue them beyond the Abbay River, but he could not follow through with his plans because of the reluctance of his troops.[41]

When the fog of battle cleared up, it became evident that only one regiment of the Oromo had been defeated in southern Gojjam. Other Oromo groups continued to move and settle in the Bir River Valley, where Susenyos marched against them. This region would continue to be a scene of constant contention between the Oromo and the emperor for a long period of time. Emperor Susenyos achieved a temporary victory against the Oromo, who simply recrossed the Abbay River southward, only to come back with reinforcements to launch a counterattack at a more propitious time. This strategy eventually helped them to settle in areas north of the Abbay. While the emperor was occupied elsewhere, the Oromo were able to defeat regiments of his army and settle in the region, which further enriched their groups north of the Abbay. This strategy also kept Oromia safe from the continuous expeditions of the emperor. The Oromo kept the Ethiopian Empire busy in their territories, which reduced expeditions to the rest of the Oromo south of the river.

It is apparent that, just as they did for Emperor Za-Dengel (1603 to 1604) before him, these Oromo pressures weighed heavily on Susenyos; he began requesting military assistance from Europe. In 1610, he wrote to the pope of Rome (Pope Paul V, 1605 to 1621) and the king of Portugal, complaining, just as Za-Dengel did, about the disorderly state of his empire and requesting that the Portuguese provide troop assistance to save the country, as they had done during Ahmad Grañ's invasion. (During the Muslim–Christian Empire conflict of 1527 to 1543 about 400 Portuguese troops arrived and helped defeat Ahmad Grañ's Muslim army). The Pope replied, promising him military aid[42]; however, Portuguese troops did not arrive to assist militarily. Instead, Jesuits (see below) like Father Pero Paez sometimes accompanied the emperor during his campaigns, helping with theological discussions. Susenyos continued to have a strong attachment to and admiration for the Jesuits in his empire.

Unchecked, the Oromo maintained their pressure on the emperor's domain in various directions. A rebellion broke out in Tigray, for instance, against *Ras* Se'ela-Krestos, Susenyos's brother and governor of that province, at the beginning of his reign. While Susenyos was marching to Tigray to crush the rebellion, the Marawwa Oromo confronted him in Bagemeder. The emperor's force was defeated, and most of his officers perished in the conflict. Unable to proceed to

Tigray, he returned to Qoga, his temporary capital. Following their victory, the Marawwa and other Oromo groups formed a confederation to undertake an expansion into all the lands between the Takaze River and Lake Tana. They pursued Susenyos as he retreated, obliterated Enfraz, and burned down the royal settlement at Qoga.[43] It is interesting to note that Emperor Minas (1559 to 1563) had transferred his power base to this region in 1559 for security reasons; given the conflict with the Oromo, the area was no longer secure, and even the royal court could not protect itself.

The second decade of the seventeenth century witnessed repeated Oromo expansions into areas north of the Abbay River as far as Tigray. In 1617, groups of both the Boorana and Barentu Oromo, such as the Ittuu, had formed a pan-Oromo confederation known as the Booranaa League[44] (perhaps Waldaa Booranaa in Afaan Oromoo) to move northwards in a coordinated manner. Accordingly, some Boorana groups and the Ittuu lined up against Gojjam, the Marawwa against Bagemeder, and the Karrayyuu against Tigray. Although there were earlier Oromo settlements in all these regions, they had not yet consolidated their positions because of repeated attacks by the emperor's forces.

Caught off guard by the simultaneous threat from three directions, Susenyos and his officers temporized before deciding to march against the Karrayyuu in Tigray. When he reached Bagemeder, his officers described for him the hopelessness of the case, as follows:

> We cannot save Tigrē. If we go down by Wāg Meder and Abargallē, we shall not find enough water and grass for our camp. It will not even suffice for the merchants, let alone for us. If we descend via Lemālemo it will be too far, and the [Oromo] will already have returned, having done what they set out to do. Let us save Gožžām, which is nearer to us, lest both countries be lost.[45]

Susenyos and his officers returned to save Gojjam, which gave the Karrayyuu a free hand in Tigray. When Susenyos reached Gojjam, he found that *Ras* Se'ela-Krestos had already defeated one flank of the confederation's fighters. The rest of the Oromo continued to reinforce their compatriots who had settled in various parts of the province.

Intent on dividing and conquering Emperor Susenyos's army, the Oromo forged a well-organized confederation and launched coordinated attacks in multiple locations. They pooled their resources and decided to dethrone the emperor, as well as to settle in the fertile areas north of the Abbay. So far, the Booranaa League seems to

have been a major pan-Oromo confederation, well known by that name at the time. Here, the name *Booranaa* does not seem to refer to one branch of the Oromo. It was applied probably because of the *angafa* (elder) status of the Boorana branch. Although Beckingham and Huntingford[46] state that the league collapsed that same year, the fact that there were continuing operations indicates that it might have lingered on for some time.

In 1620, three years after the Booranaa League's maneuvers, there was another pan-Oromo operation. While the Maccaa and Tuulama continued to settle in Gojjam and Dambya, the Barentu groups expanded further into Bagemeder. Some members of the *Afre* crossed the Guman River in southern Gojjam and settled in areas extending all the way to Matakkal; others moved into eastern Gojjam. Disturbed by these developments, Se'ele-Krestos, the governor of the province (who transferred to Gojjam from Tigray in 1612), appealed to Emperor Susenyos for help. After a fierce battle between the Oromo and the combined forces of Susenyos and Se'ela-Krestos in the Bir Valley, the Oromo retreated south across the Abbay River. At about the same time, the Tuulama crossed to Gojjam via Baranta in eastern Gojjam. The inhabitants of the region failed to inform Susenyos about the Tuulama advance because they feared further plunder by the emperor's army. It is also possible that the local population in eastern Gojjam, which included the Oromo, were in support of their incoming kin group. Therefore, the Tuulama seem to have settled in those parts while the emperor's forces were still in Gojjam, although some of them crossed back to the east of the Abbay.[47]

One of the results of the Maccaa-Tuulama campaigns against Gojjam in 1620 was the weakening of the alliance between Enarya and the emperor against the Boorana. That same year, King Benaro of Enarya sent his son Yemane-Krestos to *Ras* Se'ela-Krestos in a doomed attempt to forge a stronger alliance. Nothing effective could have come of it, because Gojjam itself was seriously weakened by repeated Oromo moves.[48] Therefore, Benaro's concerted efforts against the Boorana failed.

When the emperor set out for Gojjam to fight off the Boorana groups, he left *Dajjach* (short form of *Dajjazmach*, commander of the gate) Walda-Hawariat, his son-in-law, at Danqaz, the temporary capital, to guard his throne. It was during this time that the Barentu groups of the Wallo, Jiillee, and Karrayyuu descended upon parts of Bagemeder. While the emperor and his other officers were busy fighting the Maccaa-Tuulama in Gojjam, *Dajjach* Walda-Hawariat

was forced to march against the Barentu, who defeated his troops and killed him and other officers.[49]

Success of the Oromo Confederations

Between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Oromo managed to expand and settle in various parts of Gojjam and Dambya, despite the Ethiopian rulers' best efforts to put up an effective resistance. As indicated earlier, Emperor Sarsa-Dengel had exempted the people of Gojjam from having to pay tributes, in order to encourage resistance against Oromo settlement, allowed friendly Oromo groups to settle in Gojjam and Dambya, and stationed strong regiments and governors in Gojjam. It is possible that Emperor Susenyos transferred his energetic brother *Ras* Se'ela-Krestos from Tigray in 1612 to deal with the growing Oromo power in the province. The Oromo nevertheless became an influential force in Ethiopian politics.

The Oromo rose to such prominence in Ethiopian affairs because of the swiftness with which they overpowered their enemies in military confrontations. They used their famed intelligence-gathering strategy in the frontier districts, launched surprise attacks when possible, and effected organized retreats ahead of stronger enemy formations. Their overall strategy was to avoid conventional wars as much as possible. In Gojjam and Dambya, they were able to defend their positions against their enemies' strong resistance and the difficult terrain of the Abbay Valley. They mastered the challenge of geography through courage and endurance.

Contemporary accounts report that the Oromo "cross it [the Abbay River] at all times without difficulty, either by swimming or on goats skins blown up like bladder: other means of passing are in small rafts, placed upon two skins filled with wind; or, twisting their hands round the horse's tail, they are drawn over by them."[50] According to a seventeenth-century Yemeni ambassador to Gondar, the Oromo "are of a strong physique, of endurance in long journeys and in bearing hardships."[51]

In fact, this explanation has more to do with the way the Oromo mobilized their society and military campaigns than with their robust physical conditions. Women participated in campaigns by digging trenches, raising ramparts, fortifying camps, and providing supplies to soldiers using pack animals.[52] It is interesting to note that the *gadaa* system excluded women from age-sets and administration. This is perhaps the most important limitation of the *gadaa* system. Although women were not included in the *gadaa* administration, they actively

worked for the common cause, participated in political life, and had parallel organizations of their own known as *siiqqee*. Literally, *siiqqee* means "stick," but it has deeper meaning—it is a woman's staff and her representative. A woman who is unable to attend a meeting such as an *ateetee* ceremony (see chapter 5), for example, can send her *siiqqee* and be counted as present.[53] As women were excluded from the *gadaa* age-set system, *siiqqee* became a mechanism through which women fought for their rights.

Women also had other institutions like the *ateetee* ritual, *addooyyee*, and the right to become spiritual leaders, *qaallittii* (see chapter 5). Women "were also regarded as *muka laaftuu* (soft wood—a depiction of their liminality) and the law for those categorized as such protected them . . . *Gadaa* laws provided for them, and society honored it. Thus, the *siiqqee* institution functioned hand in hand with the *Gadaa* system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances."[54] According to *gadaa* principles, both sexes have "a strong functional interdependence and one was not valued any less than the other."[55]During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the unity, coordination, military strategy, and discipline of all Oromo sustained their fighters and their populations through difficult confrontations and physical challenges. They had an effective intelligence network that fed commanders not only with information relevant to military operations, but also concerning locations of fertile lands for occupation and settlement.

In 1627, for example, when a serious Oromo expansion was suspected, Emperor Susenyos appointed *Dajjazmach* (commander of the gate) Buko, apparently an Oromo, as governor of the province of New Damot (north of Abbay River), replacing Se'ela-Krestos, who was nevertheless ordered to assist Buko whenever called upon. The emperor himself was ready with another army regiment to combat the advancing Maccaa from south of the Abbay by stationing his troops at various locations in the Bir Valley. When the Oromo observed that Gojjam was thus fortified, they retreated after a few skirmishes, leaving disinformation that they had diverted their attention to Enarya. In great relief, Buko and Susenyos demobilized their forces. When their spies reported this, the Oromo swiftly moved into the defenseless province and boosted Oromo settlements in that province. Susenyos returned to Gojjam, only to be defeated handily. He was later able to reverse the situation; however, Buko was killed in action farther west, where Se'ela-Krestos was again sent to stem the Oromo advance. The Oromo recrossed to the south of the Abbay River and avoided confrontation with the *Ras*.[56] In 1629, the Oromo recrossed

the Abbay to Gojjam when their spies reported that the area was not defended. Its governor had left for Lasta to crush another (probably religious) rebellion. Fequre-Egzi, a general left behind by *Ras* Se'ela-Krestos, tried to resist, but he, too, was killed in action.[57] Oromo expansions into Enarya, Bagemeder, and other provinces thus continued unabated.

Due to hair-splitting religious controversies that led to civil war, Susenyos was forced to abdicate his power in favor of his son, Fasiladas, in 1632. The controversy was ignited by the Jesuits. In 1557 the Jesuits (The Society of Jesus), who were the militant order of the Catholics, arrived in Ethiopia with the intention of renewing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They were one of the results of the Counter-Reformation that the Catholic Church established to challenge the Protestant Reformation. We have seen earlier that Portuguese troops had arrived to help Ethiopia against Muslim invasions. The Jesuits were successful in converting Emperor Za-Dengel, who was forced from power opposed by the people in 1604; therefore, their plan was cut short. They were more successful with the next major emperor, Susenyos, who not only converted but declared Catholicism the state religion in 1622. This led to the introduction of Catholic liturgy, rebaptism, circumcision, and banning of fasting on Wednesdays and Friday; circumcision and fasting were two of the most established Ethiopian Orthodox Church practices. It was because of this that the people rose against him and forced his abdication. Upon assuming power, his son and successor, Emperor Fasiladas (1632 to 1667), expelled the Jesuits and restored the old Orthodox doctrine.

One of the most important legacies of the Jesuits is religious controversies. They preached the two (human and divine) but undivided natures of Christ against the established Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which was based on the one-nature doctrine, claiming that the two natures of Christ perfectly united, thus the Geez name Tewahedo—union. Though expelled, the Jesuits, therefore, ignited religious controversies that continued to the end of the nineteenth century.

Emperor Fasiladas also inherited the protracted struggle of resisting the Oromo expansion. When the Yemeni ambassador visited Gondar in 1648, he was greatly impressed by the Oromo as a powerful people. He reported to his king in Yemen that "They are exerting pressure on the Christians of al-Habasha from all sides and borders of their territory, none of these regions being devoid of them."[58] His report is an indication that, by the second half of the seventeenth

century, the Oromo had consolidated themselves, and there were few pan-Oromo operations against Emperor Fasiladas. In addition, the Oromo strategy of engaging the Ethiopian army north of the Abbay River reduced expeditions to the south of the river. Their fatherland, Oromia, had been defended well.

On the other hand, frontier skirmishes, particularly in southern and southwestern Gojjam, continued under Fasiladas. Greatly frustrated by the hit-and-run strategy of the Oromo, Fasiladas decided to mount a frontal attack on them, south of the Abbay. In 1645, he led a strong expedition to Guduruu and defeated the *Akabo* (Akaako?) Oromo at a place called Sobe. As usual, however, this did not stop the Oromo from putting heavy pressure on Gojjam in 1649 and 1650; they also attacked Enarya, Bagemeder, and Dambya. Around 1662, the Boorana also attacked Gojjam, while the Barentu descended upon Bagemeder. While the emperor was fighting the Boorana in Gojjam, the Wallo groups moved into Bagemeder, where they met major resistance.[59]

Fasiladas's son and successor, Emperor Yohannes (1667 to 1682), also attempted to check the advance of the Oromo into Gojjam, with no better results. His reign was filled with religious civil wars within the empire. Being a very religious person himself, he paid much attention to church matters and to ways of regulating them; however, he led a series of expeditions against the Oromo, the Gumuz, and the Agaw of Matakkal. But Oromo settlements in southern Gojjam seem to have been well established by then, with or without official royal permission. Even more important, the Oromo settlers in these areas continued to have strong contact with their kinsmen south of the Abbay River. Encouraged by the early settlers, particularly the Oromo of Limmuu and Amuruu, they moved north of the Abbay to settle in New Damot, Wambarima, Zigam, and other parts of southern Gojjam.

During the reign of Emperor Iyyasu I (1682 to 1706), for instance, a certain Ibido is reported to have crossed from Amuruu to Damot with his whole family and all his livestock. As we shall see in the next chapter, Ibido's descendents would become the people who laid the early foundations of the ruling local dynasty of Gojjam. Another Oromo founding father from Amuruu is also reported to have settled in southern Gojjam in the district of Yemalog. The reign of Emperor Iyyasu seems to have been marked by significant Oromo settlements in Gojjam, Agaw Meder, New Damot, and Wanbara, settlement initiated by the Oromo themselves without official clearances from the Ethiopian royal court. To check such unauthorized advances, Iyyasu made a series of campaigns against the Oromo south of the Abbay. He

had many Oromo allies during the move, and he was able to defeat the Oromo in Horroo Guduruu in 1704 (see below). He also proceeded further south to Enarya, with some dramatic results that, nevertheless, were not enough to turn the tide of history. In fact, one of Iyyasu's major achievements during this expedition was to bring in fresh Oromo groups, especially the Jaawwii, and settle them in Gojjam. Thus, many of the people of today's Gojjam are of Oromo origin.[60]

It is clear that with Oromo society consolidating its hold in the vast area south of the Abbay, relations were becoming more and more pacified. And the Oromo settlers in Gojjam, New Damot, and Agaw Meder now considered these as their homelands and began to serve as loyal subjects of the Ethiopian emperors, fully participating in the military and administrative services of the empire. The Oromo of New Damot were given Oromo governors and sometimes rebelled when non-Oromo governors were appointed by Emperors from Gondar. Thus, the Emperor Bakafa (1721 to 1730) had to appoint *Dajjazmach* Waraña over New Damot to appease the situation. Waraña was a famous general from the Jaawwii Oromo group. He encouraged the settlement of the Jaawwii and other Oromo groups in New Damot and Agaw Meder, thus pacifying his kinsmen south of the Abbay River and allowing them to settle in his domains.

When Waraña died, the Gondarine emperors appointed a certain Eshete to succeed him as governor of New Damot, but the people revolted against him and declared Fasil, the son of Waraña, in his place as their governor. They fought, defeated, and killed Eshete, and the Gondarine Court was forced to confirm Fasil as governor of the region. Fasil even annexed Maccaa, which was farther north than his current dominions. He also made several campaigns into the region of Agaw Meder and allowed new Oromo groups south of the Abbay to settle in New Damot, Maccaa, and Agaw Meder.[61]

Some Oromo chiefs south and east of the Abbay apparently claimed lordship over their Oromo settlers in Gojjam. In the first half of the nineteenth century, for instance, Marye, the chief of the Darra Oromo in Shawa, put up the pretense of ruling over the Meettaa Oromo in eastern Gojjam. Although the Meettaa Oromo were officially under *Dajjach* Goshu Zawde of Gojjam, Marye seems to have exercised some authority over his fellow Oromo through family ties. Strong marriage, trade, and other forms of relations among kith and kin on both sides of the river tended to fortify claims like Marye's to positions of authority over their relatives.[62] Similarly, Ado Ibsaa, the local chief of the Limmuu, Hebantuu, Amuruu, and Giddaa areas south of the Abbay, also claimed authority over the Oromo and

Shinasha of Dangab on the eastern borders of Wanbara. It is even said that they paid tribute to him in the first half of the nineteenth century. Using such family connections, the Oromo continued to move into New Damot, eastern Gojjam, and Wanbara through the end of the nineteenth century. The Oromo of Kutay made incursions into eastern Gojjam in the 1840s.[63] Those of Limmuu and Hebantuu kept on moving into the Bir River Valley and further west into the Durra River Basin on missions of hunting as well as settlement. By 1870, the old processes of Oromo expansion into southern Gojjam seem to have dissipated, while they continued until about 1900 in the area of Wanbara, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In most parts of Gojjam, the Oromo settlers were gradually absorbed by the local population. They abandoned their ancient *gadaa* system, language, culture, and even their identity in favor of the dominant Amharic-speaking society of Gojjam. Today, there are such Oromo places in Gojjam as Ilmaana Dansaa, Maccaa, Guutaa, Burqaa, and Jaawwii. Nevertheless, these communities still have strong traditional memories of their Oromo origins. In contrast, the Oromo of Wanbara, close to the Sudanese border, have kept their identity intact to the present day. This was clearly because the region was remote from the center, and it was, effectively, not annexed until the end of the nineteenth century. Despite the many annual expeditions sent against it, Wanbara remained free of political control until that time. Always enriched by fresh Oromo immigrants from Wallaggaa, the Oromo of Wanbara were able to withstand external pressures and maintain their cultural integrity for much longer than other groups could.

The Ethiopian emperors were involved in power struggles and civil wars during the *Zamane masafent* (Era of the Princes, 1769 to 1855), which greatly reduced expeditions against the Oromo. Until the rise and consolidation of Shawa, there was little military threat against the Oromo from north of the Abbay River. This might have reduced the need for pan-Oromo confederations. This lack of pan-Oromo operations against attacks led to internecine fighting between the various Oromo groups. The Shawan rulers took advantage of the fighting and disunity within the Oromo. Firearms imported by Shawan kings also worked against the Oromo. Thus, gradually some Oromo groups, particularly the Tuulama, lost their independence and were unable to forge a concerted action against the Shawan expeditions to annex the rest of the Oromoland (see chapter 6).

Confederations and alliances, in addition to helping them defend themselves and consolidate their positions, allowed the Oromo to

develop a unique military organization and distinctive techniques, particularly in cavalry, that inspired fear in their enemies. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Manoel de Almeida noted: "What makes the [Oromo] much feared is that they go to war and into battle determined and firmly resolved to conquer or die. The Emperor Seltan Çegued [Susenyos] recognized this quality in them and in most of the Abyssinians the exact opposite."[64]

As late as the nineteenth century, the Oromo were known as an effective fighting force. Even outside forces considered the Oromo quite formidable, and feared encounters with them. When the British led a punitive expedition against Emperor Tewodros in 1867 and 1868, the force they were concerned about most was not the army of the emperor, nor any other force, but the Oromo. Referring to the Oromo, the British observed in their military communications: "As some of these pay tribute to Turkey, and others are bitter enemies of King Theodore, there does not appear much reason for anticipating that our troops will meet with any serious obstacles except such as arise from the climate and the nature of the country to be traversed, unless the [Oromo] should decide on fighting in defence of the king."[65] Aware of the skill and the bravery of Oromo fighting forces, particularly the cavalry, the British decided to approach them diplomatically during their expedition.

What contemporary observers were unable to notice was the cooperation and alliances the Oromo were quick to forge when facing formidable enemies. As the pan-Oromo confederations demonstrate, it was a standardized practice for the Oromo to come together and help one another in cases of external attack. During the reign of Iyyasu I (1682 to 1704), the Oromo of Guduruu repulsed his planned expedition to the Gibee region. The Guduruu inflicted a major victory over his army, and he was forced to turn around, although he was able to reach the Gibee region during his second expedition in 1704. In addition, during the reign of Emperor Takle Giyorgis I (who ruled intermittently, 1779 to 1800), the Oromo of Wallo and other groups of the Barentu branch blocked his planned expedition against Shawa.[66] The emperor seems to have prepared to attack the Oromo of Shawa as the age-old expeditions against the Oromo continued.[67]

Even though the pan-Oromo confederations were unmistakable examples of Oromo cooperation, it should be noted that there were Oromo deserters who fought on the side of the Ethiopian army. Some of these deserters guided the emperors against their fellow Oromo. During Emperor Iyyasu I's expedition to Guduruu circa 1700, there were some Oromo groups who guided his army, but they were

eliminated by the Oromo. This was indeed a major defeat for Iyyasu's army, and when a famine broke out in Gojjam a year later, it was named *Guduruu* as a painful remainder of their shameful defeat in Guduruu.[68]

Today, the idea of cooperation and alliances pioneered by the early pan-Oromo confederations is symbolized in the Oromo saying, "*Ijoollee biyya abbaako"* ("children of my fatherland)". In general, when referring to their country, the Oromo say "*biyya abbaako"* ("my fatherland"). During the time of the confederations, the epithet referred to the whole of Oromoland (Oromia) rather than territories under the respective federations such as *Afre* and *Sadacha*. The fact that the Oromo used the description *Oromoo keenya* ("we, the Oromo"), rather than *Arsi keenya* ("we, the Arsi") or *Tuulama keenya* ("we, the Tuulama"), when referring to themselves shows that clan or regional affiliation was never used as an identity marker before Oromoland was annexed by Emperor Menelik II (reign 1889 to 1913). In spite of external influences and internal segmentation, the Oromo kept their ancient traditions, values, and history and continued to claim descent from a common ancestral father and to consider the various Oromo groups as brethren. When the Maccaa-Tuulama Association was founded in 1963, the name that the founders chose for the organization was not a new coinage, but instead a conscious effort to revive the spirit of cooperation and alliance that characterized the earlier confederation of the two branches. We have seen above that these branches of the Oromo had been in confederation, although they had separate *gadaa* governments. In many ways, the Maccaa-Tuulama Association is an important legacy of the earlier pan-Oromo confederations.

2

Identity and Integration

Ethnic Relations and Assimilation North of the Abbay River

Oromo settlement and assimilation north of the Abbay River continued unabated until the end of the nineteenth century. In this chapter, we will look at the history of the Oromo-speaking group living to the north of the Abbay River (Wanbara) and those assimilated into Amharic-, Agaw-, and Shinasha-speaking groups. Many people, including the Oromo themselves, are unaware of the existence today of the Oromo living north of the river on the Sudanese border with their identity, language, *gadaa* government, and religious practices still intact. In spite of strong assimilation at work in this remote frontier, the Oromo of Wanbara managed to keep their identity, and Afaan Oromoo is the lingua franca in the region. Since 1992, this group has been included within the Benishangul-Gumuz national regional state with limited political representation. They resent being excluded from the Oromia national regional state and, especially, being unable to use their mother tongue in the schools and court system.[1]

The pre-Oromo inhabitants of the area were not strong enough to resist Oromo expansion; they were decimated as a result of the Ethiopian Empire's continuous campaigns and slave raids. The abundant natural resources of the Matakkal region invited continuous invasions by the more organized highland societies. It may even be that wealth, particularly gold, had brought those of the present-day region into contact with the Aksumite kingdom as far back as the sixth century. The "silent trade" in the area of the sources of the Nile River cited by Cosmos Indicoplestus in his *Christian Topography* in the sixth century was apparently a reference to this region. The frontier lowlands also remained a rich source for the slave trade for many years. A series of slave raids by the Christian rulers of the Ethiopian

Empire was undertaken mainly against the Gumuz inhabitants of the area. The earliest known Christian expedition against the region was conducted under Emperor Yeshaq (reign 1413 to 1430), who claims to have made the Gumuz tributaries to the state.[2]

With strong power bases in northern and eastern Gojjam, the Christian rulers undertook almost annual expeditions into Gumuz country. After the wars of Ahmad Grañ[3] (1527 to 1543), who had himself made significant advances into the area, and as a result of the Oromo expansion, the Ethiopian Empire shifted its center of gravity to the Lake Tana region. Since that time, Ethiopian rulers made many attempts to incorporate Gumuzland into their empire and to have greater control over the region's natural resources. The Gumuz of the area around the Durra River stiffly resisted, but they were not in a position to withstand the continuous and devastating campaigns of the much better organized Christian state. Particularly after Emperor Susenyos came to power in 1607, these expeditions became a common practice.

These campaigns affected not only the Gumuz and other members of the Nilo-Saharan language speaking groups, but also the Agaw and the Shinasha inhabitants of the area. Immediately after he took power, Susenyos made a large expedition against the Gumuz, the Shinasha (Gonga), and other populations of Matakkal, led by his principal officers. Susenyos also attempted to control the frontier areas, which led to confrontations with the Funj Sultanate of the Sudan (1608 to 1821). *Ras* Se'ela-Krestos, for instance, penetrated the land of Gumuz and Gonga and proceeded as far as Fazogli (present-day Sudan) in 1615. As Jerome Lobo, a Portuguese missionary, wrote: "In the year 1615, Rassela Christos, lieutenant-general to Sultan Segued [Emperor Susenyos], entered those kingdoms [Fazogli and Wanbara] with his army in an hostile manner; but being able to get no intelligence of the condition of the people, and astonished at their unbounded extent, he returned without daring to attempt anything."[4]

Campaigns against the inhabitants of the western borderlands continued under the successors of Susenyos. Emperor Fasiladas (1632 to 1667) and his successor, Yohannes I (1667 to 1682), devastated this region almost every year. It was Emperor Iyyasu I (1682 to 1706), however, who earnestly attempted to incorporate this region. In 1689 and 1697, he attacked the Durra River region up to Berber, which is historically in eastern Wanbara, and conducted various expeditions into the area, which was the stronghold of the Gumuz people.

The Ethiopian rulers had a powerful local ally, Chuhay, an Agaw chief to whom they entrusted the affairs of Matakkal in general.

Chuhay had his power base at Sigadi and undertook expeditions into the western lowlands against the Gumuz and the Gonga. After Chuhay died, his descendants seem to have been given similar responsibilities by successive emperors. In fact, the successors of Chuhay continued to lead campaigns into the region until the end of the nineteenth century. During the Oromo expansion toward Agaw territories in Matakkal, it was mainly the Agaw chiefs claiming descent from Chuhay who resisted the Oromo. Supported by their Gumuz allies, they attempted to check the Oromo advance beyond the Durra River, with much success. Particularly, a certain Agaw chief, *Azaj* (commander) Jangua, is mentioned as having effectively withstood such Oromo incursions into parts of Agaw Meder.[5]

With the exception of Agaw areas, the Oromo faced little or no resistance, and ethnic relations and integration became considerably dynamic. Other groups, including the Shinasha and Gumuz, adopted Oromo culture, and their *gadaa* governance system. On the other hand, in highland Gojjam, many Oromo were subsumed into Agaw- and Amharic-speaking societies.

Most traditions suggest that, prior to the Oromo settling there, Wanbara was predominantly inhabited by the Gumuz and Gonga peoples; however, there are also strong indications that other ethnic groups had lived in the area in earlier times. Two ethnic groups called the Agadi and Gabato are specifically said to have been early inhabitants of Wanbara. The Agadi occupied highland Wanbara. According to local tradition, these people were potters and cattle herders; some ruins in the area are still believed to have had Agadi origin.[6]

In his M.A. thesis, Tesema Ta'a writes of traditions that show that the Agadi also lived in Wallaggaa to the south of the Abbay River, near the town of Naqamtee. Their territory extended further to the west, on both sides of the Dhidheessa (Didessa) River. When the Maccaa Oromo settled in the area around the Waamaa River west of the Gibee, the Agadi were forced to evacuate the region. It is said that many fled to areas as far west as the White Nile; however, some stayed behind and were later assimilated by the Oromo. They were so completely absorbed by and integrated into Oromo society that, presently, no groups in Wallaggaa attribute their origins to the Agadi.[7]

When the Oromo began moving into Wanbara, most of the Agadi had already trekked far to the west toward what are today the Sudanese borderlands. They were allegedly forced to evacuate the region because a strange swarm of birds came and began to devour their children. Although both Negaso Gidada and Tesema Ta'a report that the Oromo of Wallaggaa consider the Agadi members

of the Nilo-Saharan language–speaking peoples, my informants in Wanbara insist that they are kin to the Omotic Shinasha, both in the color of their skin and linguistically.[8]

The Gabato, on the other hand, seem to have been Nilo-Saharan. In Wanbara, they originally occupied the Gum-Gum mountain region. Later on, however, they were forced to move toward what is today the Sudanese border, both for economic and defensive reasons.[9] In Wallaggaa, the Gabato occupied an extensive territory, and are considered to be one of the largest Nilo-Saharan groups there. Following Oromo settlement in the region, some highland Gabato seem to have been assimilated into Oromo society. The Gumuz, generally, had been living in the lowland areas of Wanbara since ancient times. They were restricted to lowland areas, while the highland regions were occupied by the Agadi and some Shinasha, even before the advent of the Oromo. The Shinasha of Wanbara claim that their ancestors came from the land of biblical Canaan. They are said to have left their country in search of pastureland and thus moved into Ethiopia. Through northwest Ethiopia, they reached Shawa, where they settled. Due to overpopulation there, the Shinasha are said to have moved again, into Gojjam and neighboring regions. These references to Canaan and Shawa may only be indications of very early contact with the Christian empire of Ethiopia. Otherwise, these people are part of the general Gonga populations of Ethiopia.

What is very clear about this group's identity is that they are one of the main peoples of the Ethiopian interior, speaking Omotic languages. According to all available literature and the traditions of the people themselves, Shinasha presence in the region of Wanbara can be dated back to before the sixteenth century, certainly prior to the advent of the Oromo. Most likely, they were part of the Gonga population in that area. Due to the Oromo expansion and settlement in areas south of the Abbay, the Shinasha of Wanbara may have been cut off from the main Gonga population that lived to the south of the river.

We know that by the early seventeenth century, the southern Gonga were largely assimilated to the Oromo, while the Gonga/ Shinasha groups north of the river were regularly victims to the slave-raiding expeditions of the Ethiopian Empire and their local representatives. Thus, pressed both by the Oromo and the Ethiopian Empire's slave raiders, the Shinasha people both south and north of the Abbay River had lost their independence by the early eighteenth century. Some clan groups north of the river apparently moved into less favorable lowland areas, west of the Durra River in present-day Matakkal.[10]

The Oromo movement into this region had been continuous since the seventeenth century. Tradition indicates that the earliest movements were connected with the feelings of adventure and youthful achievements by members of Oromo society in those frontier areas. Young people headed to these areas for the purpose of hunting big game, which brought them honor in their society and admiration among women. After demonstrating these feats of courage, they at first returned home south of the Abbay. Gradually, however, such temporary visits led to permanent settlement. There were two major routes for Oromo movement into Wanbara. The first, which can be called the eastern route, started from Limmuu and Hebantuu and led mainly to Dangab and other parts of eastern Wanbara. The second started from the districts of western Wallaggaa and particularly targeted the western parts of Wanbara.[11]

Oromo Settlement in Eastern Wanbara

Basing themselves in an area immediately south of the Abbay River, the Oromo of Hebantuu and Limmuu continued their expansion into Dangab and eastern Wanbara. It would appear that the avant-garde of the movement consisted of various Oromo and Gonga groups such as the Hindibo and Hindobo, who had been largely marginalized by the traditional *qabiyyee* system of land-holding that gave priority in land rights to the first Oromo settlers over later arrivals. The issue of land rights was so stringent that some groups were forced to cross the Abbay in search of still-unoccupied fertile land. The traditions to which I have access particularly focus on the Gonga of Dinigas in Limmuu, who had been actively involved in the northward movements of people across the Abbay.

It is said that before the Hindibo and Hindobo groups crossed to Dangab, a bull belonging to the Hindobo clan had been lost. The owner, a member of the Hindobo clan, started to look for the bull with the support of the related Hindibo Gonga. They crossed the Abbay River, it is claimed, following the footprints of the bull, and finally found it at Tulluu Dangab, which is within view from Dinigas across the river (see map 4). There, the Gonga not only found the bull, but also discovered unoccupied fertile land. They might have also come into contact with earlier Gonga settlers in the area; however, they are said to have at first returned to Dinigas with the bull. They held a council in Limmuu, where they reported their discoveries, and many of them decided to move into eastern Wanbara afterward.

The Hindibo were a large group, and thus, they spearheaded the new expansion into Wanbara. The four principal Hindibo subclans, the Jangiro, Jitamo, Nabbijano, and Narbo, are said to have decided in council who was to go and who was to stay behind. The Jitamo were to stay behind for the time being, while the others crossed to Dangab through what was later called *malkaa Limmuu* (literally, "Limmuu ford"). These early migrants first settled around Tulluu Dangab, where the bull was found. There, they divided the fertile land among themselves, occupying Somboo Sire, Tulluu Jingin, Gongo, and Diimtuu. Later, the Jangiro moved much deeper into Wanbara further to the west; however, not all the Gonga crossed to Wanbara. Those who wished to do so, moved, while others remained. Today, there are Gonga groups on both sides of the river. Those who crossed and settled came into contact with the early Shinasha groups, mainly near Bulan and the Dora depression, and intermarried with them. Yet the newcomers were already Oromized and had adopted the Oromo *gadaa* system, language, and culture. They soon developed their *caffee* (assembly) at Gongo. Called *caffee Dhibbaa*, it developed into a major center where disputes were resolved, supplications made to *Waaqa* (God), and laws promulgated.[12]

Some marginal Oromo clans also crossed to Wanbara together with the Gonga. These groups consisted mainly of weavers and blacksmiths (*tumtuu*). In Oromo society, the *tumtuu* had very limited rights to own land compared with other groups. In some cases, they were allowed to have only small plots of land around their homes or in less favorable areas. The *tumtuu* were dependent mainly on their crafts, rather than land, for making a living. Such limited rights seem to have forced the *tumtuu* to move into Wanbara. They occupied fertile lands in the Dangab region and set up their own *caffee* at Caancoo. Today, there are many *tumtuu* Oromo in the Dangab region.

It is difficult to determine absolute dates for these early settlements in Wanbara; however, known traditions show that the settlements may have taken place as far back as twelve generations ago or more. Of the various select genealogies examined, three give a time-depth of twelve generations; one each, eleven and ten generations; two, nine generations; three, seven generations; and one, six generations. Allowing for twenty-five years for each generation, we can trace those settlements back to the end of the seventeenth century; however, a more significant Oromo settlement was apparently established there at a later time.

These early settlers founded resting sites in eastern Wanbara for more planned expeditions farther north. At first, they set up

temporary centers at a place called Gafaree in Dangab (see map 5). There, they built temporary huts called *godoo duulaa* (literally, "war huts"), where they discussed rules and regulations and general plans for future campaigns. Gafaree also served as a launching pad for movement farther north into Berber and westwards into western Wanbara. In the process of expanding northward, the Oromo founded other resting centers. After such campaigns, some travelers returned to Limmuu and Hebantuu in northern Wallaggaa, and final settlements were created only gradually. The largest Oromo settlement in the Dangab region seems to have taken place toward the end of the eighteenth century. About eight generations ago, *abbaa duulaa* Gaaggaa Deedde organized and led the Oromo of Hebantuu to settle in eastern Wanbara. The Oromo under Gaaggaa occupied fertile areas in Dangab and Wanbara. They took the greater parts of Somboo Siree, Diimtuu, Qorqaa, Gaalessa, and Caancoo. These settlers further strengthened the former settlements and continued expanding northwards into Berber and westwards into Wanbara.[13]

Oromo Settlement in Western Wanbara

The Oromo who settled in western Wanbara came largely from the districts of Boojji, Gidaamii, Mandii, and Najjoo of western Wallaggaa, from which Wanbara could be seen across the Abbay River. It is said that, at first, a group of sixty warriors, locally called *Gaachana Jaatama,* was sent to Wanbara under the *abbaa duulaa* (commander) Aancho. These warriors crossed into Wanbara, following the footprints of wild animals. They established a fordable site on the Abbay River, which they named *malkaa* Aancho (*Aancho ford)* after the *abbaa duulaa* leading the expedition; it is still known as such (see map 4). In Wanbara, they set up *godoo duulaa* at a place called Dhagaa Rigataa. From there, they undertook expeditions in southern Wanbara. They found the region very suitable for future settlement, which they reported back home.[14]

A second and much stronger campaign into Wanbara was organized under a new *abbaa duulaa*, Jiloo Wubbii. Instead of conducting separate raids, the principal Oromo clans, including the Amuumaa, Arrojjii, Baabboo, Giddaa, Igguu, and Manasibuu, formed a league, with each clan under its own chief, but with the *abbaa duulaa* Jiloo presiding over all.

This strong campaign under Jiloo paved the way for a large-scale Oromo settlement, with much of Wanbara being occupied by them only since then. Led by their respective *abbaa duulaa,* groups of the

Amuumaa, Giddaa, Manasibuu, and other Oromo clans decided to move and settle in Wanbara. Jiloo himself remained in Wallaggaa. Thus, the Amuumaa under their *abbaa duulaa*, Molee Seeggo; Giddaa under Nacaa Odaa; and Manasibuu under Goolee Abbayyii, divided the land among themselves. They occupied the land on the basis of an institution called *Korma Karaabichaa,* which is roughly translated as "leading bull." This was developed at the famous *caffee* Odaa Bisil, described in chapter 1. According to this custom, an Oromo clan could occupy a piece of land where their bulls had rested after a day's journey. Thus, Nacaa's bull rested at Kittar, which was then taken by the Giddaa clan under Nacaa. Much of the population of Kittar today still consists of the Giddaa Oromo. Accordingly, Goolee Abbayyii's bull rested at a site later called Manasibuu. The Manasibuu occupied the area and named the region after their own group. Molee's bull rested at Gawilla, which was occupied by the Amuumaa, to which much of the population of Gawilla today still belongs.[15]

These settlements in western Wanbara took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. The genealogies collected from the area show an average time-depth of nine generations;[16] therefore, we may presume that the event took place, at the latest, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Negaso Gidada dates the Oromo settlement in western Wallaggaa to about 1733.[17] It thus seems that their move across the Abbay to occupy highland Wanbara could not have taken place much after that.

The Oromo settlers in Wanbara enticed more and more of their folk in Wallaggaa to join them, allowing them to settle with them in the districts they had occupied earlier. This was largely aimed at augmenting their numbers, which also increased the power of the *abbaa duulaa,* who could later assume the title of *mootii* (king). For example, Molee Seeggo was the *abbaa duulaa* of the Amuumaa when they settled in Gawilla area, and he became the *mootii* there. Even though the *gadaa* system (with no kingship system) was the main governance structure within the Oromo society, here we see the emergence of kingship. The military leaders of the Oromo during the expansion eventually disregarded the authority of the *abbaa bokkuus* (president) and assumed leadership of their group (see chapter 4 for details).

When a family moved to a new site, they first built a hut. Because there was a great abundance of trees and grass for thatching roofs, construction could be done easily and rapidly. The huts were not intended for permanent settlement. They were constructed mainly for temporary protection and to claim ownership of the land. According

to a widespread belief in Oromo society, the act of taking possession of a certain area is traditionally legitimized by building huts on the piece of land over which ownership is claimed. Near the huts built in this way, cattle kraals were also set up within a short period of time. The kraals would be moved often, when the ground became muddy and wet with animal dung and urine. These moves tended to help extend the size of cultivable land, while the cattle dung also served as natural fertilizer. This was, particularly, the pattern of how Wanbara was occupied. Young men first constructed their huts and cattle kraals, and then brought their families and relatives later. It was these young men who became chiefs over their respective villages. After they had established themselves, they would encourage more relatives from Wallaggaa to settle in the newly occupied land in Wanbara. These young men thus expanded the villages over which they became *abbaa qoroos* (district governors).

There were other factors, such as interclan conflicts, violent crimes, and unhappiness with their social status, that forced some Oromo to leave Wallaggaa and settle in Wanbara. In some cases, such as the Dongoroo Oromo in eastern Wanbara, clan conflict over land and other issues in Wallaggaa would lead one of the parties to move to Wanbara, where fertile land was plenty. The factor of crime was also important. The presence of the Abbay River between Wanbara and Wallaggaa made the former an ideal place for hiding to avoid the serious consequences of a traditional blood feud known as *gumaa*. The murder of a person created *gumaa* between the killer and the family of the victim. After committing such crimes, many individuals moved to Wanbara to avoid being killed.

In the late nineteenth century, other external factors drove the migration of Oromo people into Wanbara. Following the Shawan conquest of Wallaggaa, the *gabbar* (tribute exaction) system was established. Garrison centers were stationed mainly in Horroo Guduruu. The *gabbar* system and the very oppressive nature of *neftaññña* (armed men) rule made life unbearable and intolerable in parts of the region. The people were forced to leave their homes and move into relatively safer areas, sometimes elsewhere in Wallaggaa but mainly Wanbara. Wanbara remained free of such political control until the end of the nineteenth century. Even after its annexation by Gojjam, Wanbara retained much of its local independence. An Oromo chief, Biftuu Anno (see below), was appointed governor of the region by King Takle Haymanot, and he greatly facilitated new Oromo settlements there. In particular, the Oromo of Horroo Guduruu moved to eastern Wanbara in this way.

Due to the severity of the *neftaññña* administration and the heavy taxation they extracted from residents, the Oromo of Horroo Guduruu escaped to the Wanbara region in increasing numbers, making it an important place of refuge. The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888 to 1892 was also an important factor causing the Oromo of northern Wallaggaa to move and settle in Wanbara. According to tradition, large-scale settlement in Wanbara took place due to famine elsewhere.[18]

The Oromo in Wanbara embarked on further territorial expansion into neighboring areas, particularly Agaw Meder. They attempted to move beyond the Durra River, which brought them into much conflict with the Agaw. The Agaw did not want the Oromo to move into their territory, and several frontier skirmishes took place between the two until the annexation of the region by King Takle Haymanot in 1898.

Several other Oromo groups moved into Agaw Meder and Matakkal from south of the Abbay River, aside from those who had already been settling in various parts of Gojjam since the sixteenth century. According to tradition, the present Agawña speakers of Belaya seem to have been originally Arsi Oromo who settled there, led by a leader called Gurash. He was said to have led them by way of the town of Gabra Gurraacha in northern Shawa and succeeded in reaching as far as the territory of Belaya. He occupied a locality known as Jaawwii, which was named after an Oromo clan that had settled there.[19] The fact that the locality is still called by this name provides a pertinent clue supporting the oral tradition. Although it is difficult to pin down the period of the Arsi settlement in Belaya, based on genealogies, it seems to have taken place at the end of the seventeenth century.

Similarly, another chief, Amuruu, led the Oromo into the Azana, Zigam, and Sigadi localities of Agaw Meder. Gradually, they were assimilated into the Agaw, but most of them still recall that they were Oromo from south of the Abbay. A church near Sigadi is still called Arusi Mikael after the Arsi clan that settled there.[20] This tradition corresponds with the chronicle regarding Oromo settlement in Matakkal during the reign of Emperor Susenyos. In the third year of his reign, Emperor Susenyos fought the Oromo who were already at Zigam and in the Durra River region.[21] As we have seen in chapter 1, following his ascension to the throne, Emperor Susenyos allowed the Oromo to settle in many parts of Gojjam and Matakkal. This demonstrates that the Oromo had already settled in this part of Matakkal as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century. Traditionally, the Durra River basin was the stronghold of the Gumuz, who continued

to put up stiff resistance against the Ethiopian rulers and their representatives. The Oromo might have joined them in defense of this region, which gradually helped them to occupy its highland areas. Today, however, they are Agawña speakers.

Oromo-Shinasha integration was much stronger. Through the *meedhicha* institution, non-Oromo communities assume positions of full equality with the Oromo, with no differences between them. *Meedhicha* are strips of skin cut from a freshly sacrificed animal before it is skinned and butchered. *Meedhicha* may be worn by men, boys, and married women, but not by girls; they are integral to rituals of sacrifice and signify the incorporation of their receivers. Among the Arsi, Boorana, and Gabra Oromo, eight *meedhicha* are cut from each sacrificed animal, two from each lower leg, in such a way that part of the dewclaw provides a light bob for each. An elder preserves his *meedhicha* from the wear and tear of daily life by transferring them to his ritual staff, where they serve as enduring indicators of his participation in these rituals. At some ceremonies, additional strips of skin may be cut and distributed. For example, at a child-naming ceremony, the strip from the umbilicus *handhuura* is given to the central participant in the ceremony.

During the adoption and incorporation of individuals and groups, *meedhicha* provides graphic and enduring symbols of the newly created relationships. *Meedhicha* were tied around the wrists of participants as part of the process of adoption and assimilation of non-Oromo into the Oromo.[22]

In Wanbara, it was largely applied to the Shinasha people. Some of them were taken to Wallaggaa, where they were adopted and given equal privileges with the Oromo. Most of them stayed in Wallaggaa, while others returned to Wanbara, where they, in turn, adopted their own relatives in Wanbara through the *meedhicha* institution. For instance, a certain Igguu Duqqai is said to have played a considerable role in the adoption of the Shinasha groups in this way. Duqqai, the father of Igguu, is believed to have been chief of the Shinasha in Wanbara. His son, Igguu, was adopted in Wallaggaa. Later returning to Wanbara, Igguu is believed to have encouraged most of the Shinasha to accept the *meedhicha* adoption process. Since he was from a well-known family, Igguu could influence many Shinasha groups. Today, the role of Igguu in *meedhicha* as well as the *buttaa* practices is specially remembered in the living traditions of the local people.[23]

The majority of the Shinasha were at first adopted in Wallaggaa for two reasons. First, the adoption had to be undertaken in the area where the majority of the adopting Oromo group lived. If the Giddaa

Oromo in Wanbara adopted Shinasha people, the Giddaa Oromo of Wallaggaa needed to recognize the adoptions since they were to become relatives of both the Giddaa of Wanbara and Wallaggaa. Second, in earlier times, the traditional symbol of the Oromo law, the *alangaa* (whip), which was used at the ceremony, was only available in Wallaggaa. The *alangaa* was slashed for each article of old or new legal declarations, as the following traditional poem shows:

> *Alangaa quwaasee / Seera qasam godhe.*[24]
> Having slashed the *alangaa*, / He promulgated the law.

In the *meedhicha* institution, the *alangaa* was always used to confirm the adoption process. At first, no members of the Oromo clan who manufactured it had settled in Wanbara, and the ceremony had to be held in Wallaggaa. Later, however, they brought the prepared *alangaa* from Wallaggaa, and the ceremony could be held in Wanbara as well.

Following the arrival of the *alangaa,* the *gadaa* system was firmly established. According to tradition, the principal Oromo clans met to discuss how to strengthen the *gadaa* institution, not only for the purpose of adoptions, but also for the establishment of a *caffee* (Oromo assembly). Other than the *caffee* Caancoo founded by *tumtuu* Oromo in the Dangab region, the Oromo of western Wanbara set up their own *caffee* at place called Raaboo. The new center was strategically placed surrounded by trees. It became an even stronger center than that of Dangab, like in the ancient Odaa Nabee and Odaa Bisil, where *gadaa* rules and regulations were issued.

The adoption of non-Oromo communities or individuals was very important in Wanbara, and the clan to be adopted had the right to have the ceremony either in Wanbara or in Wallaggaa. The symbolic rituals used to adopt the non-Oromo groups varied from place to place. The most common mechanism was to take an oath after the rituals. This is a highly respected oath. Many Shinashas of Wanbara have kept their adoption mainly due to the oath taken by their forefathers.

Another symbolic ceremony followed immediately after the adoption. Both Oromo and the group to be adopted would mix their blood to confirm the adoption process. Afterward, the adopted group assumed the clan name of the Oromo adopting them. In other words, if a Shinasha group was adopted by the Giddaa Oromo, his clan would be called Giddaa. Interestingly, two non-Oromo brothers could be made to belong to two different clans, each according to the

clan adopting them. Thus, a Shinasha man adopted by the Baabboo Oromo clan became a Baabboo, while his brother, adopted by the Manasibuu, became a Manasibuu.[25]

Intermarriage was allowed between the Oromo and members of adopted communities. After a few generations, it was hardly possible to make a differentiation between them. Most of the Shinashas of Wanbara were assimilated through such marriages. This ancient mechanism of assimilation helped the Oromo to incorporate and absorb a large number of non-Oromo communities, which greatly facilitated the process of Oromo expansion as well as peaceful coexistence. In fact, the dynamism of the Oromo movement into extensive territories inhabited by different communities within a relatively short period of time was largely due to this well-established system of assimilation.

In addition to the *meedhicha*, there was another important venue of cultural and social assimilation. *Harma-hodhaa* was a ceremony establishing a kind of parent-child relationship. Although translated literally as "licking the breast," *harma-hodhaa* "was effected by the 'symbolic licking' of the right thumb of the would be 'Breast Father' by the prospective 'Breast Son.' "[26] For instance, the right thumb of the Oromo chief in Wanbara would be immersed in honey and butter prepared for this ceremonial occasion. The Gumuz or Shinasha individual representing his clan or family would lick the anointed thumb and become the chief's 'son.' The whole group to which the individual belonged became 'sons' to the Oromo.

The *harma-hodhaa* ceremony itself takes place to settle former conflicts, and to establish mutual use of resources and other forms of support. Hector Blackhurst indicates that: "The ceremony [*harma-hodhaa*] highlights the nurturing aspect of the relationship, the practical aspect is in fact one of clientship where the son expects some material assistance in return for the political and economic support he will give to his father."[27] The symbolic rituals, as well as the significance of this system, are almost uniform throughout Ethiopia. Blackhurst's survey conducted in Shawa, and Katebo's in Arsi, show that *harma-hodhaa* is one of the most important traditional principles of conflict resolution. It forms an environment of cultural tolerance and strong friendship. *Harma-hodhaa* is also applicable within the same ethnic group. Among the Gumuz, it is popular and widely practiced. In times of conflict, or for communal use of the neighboring grasslands or other important economic resources, the concerned communities establish this system. It is simple and does not necessarily require high-level elders' councils. Through their representatives, individuals,

families, and clans could organize and perform these rituals in the presence of respected elders.

Two Gumuz chiefs representing their clans could perform the *harma-hodhaa* ritual in order to sanction the communal use of resources. In most cases, however, such as conflict over resources, less powerful clans would perform the *harma-hodhaa* ritual in seeking the protection of stronger clans. This may include an agreement over common use of the resources: the less-powerful ones would receive protection, and the stronger allies would be allowed in turn to use the resources of the others. For example, where resources such as gold-panning streams, riversides, and hunting grounds—the mainstay of the Gumuz—were located under the charge of less powerful clans, they could be subjected to attack and eventual loss. The various clans needed to employ communal defense strategies. Therefore, the *harma-hodhaa* served as a widely practiced institution applied to form alliances and foster peaceful coexistence.

During the ritual, the two parties take an oath of mutual assistance. The 'father' agrees to treat the 'son' the same way as he would treat his natural son and provide all necessary material assistance. The 'son,' in most cases, represents his group, and the whole group will at once become the 'sons' of the 'father.' In Wanbara, most of the Shinasha living around the town of Bulan were assimilated into the Oromo through the *harma-hodhaa*. During Oromo settlement of the region, conflicts arose over the use of the natural resources of particularly fertile areas. Through the traditional elders, the Oromo and the Shinasha finally agreed to put an end to their conflict through discussions and negotiations. They gathered under trees or at ritual places like Gongo and Caancoo; the Oromo licked the thumbs of the Shinasha, and vice versa. Traditional merrymaking and meticulous ceremony continued, they became important friends, and their former feuds were resolved.[28]

Similarly, the Gumuz living around the town of Berber in the eastern part of Agaw Meder resolved conflicts with the Oromo through this system. The Gumuz and Oromo chiefs representing their groups licked each other's thumbs, making both groups important friends. This system is also applicable to branches within a single ethnic group and plays an important role in preventing regional conflict. Similar to the *meedhicha* ritual, verbal blessing of elders followed by pledging an oath, are practiced during the *harma-hodhaa* ceremony.

Another important form of interethnic relations in Wanbara was the *michuu,* literally meaning "friendship," through which the Oromo and other highlanders established relationships with all other

groups of the region. When highlanders moved into lowland areas inhabited by the Gumuz, they needed protection, provisions of food, and shelter. Similarly, when the Gumuz traveled into highland areas to attend market days or for other reasons, they were provided similar services by the Oromo. The reciprocal bond of *michuu,* described more fully elsewhere,[29] could also be invoked for more important issues of peace and conflict in the whole region.

Oromo Assimilation in Highland Gojjam

Next, we will turn to Oromo assimilation in highland Gojjam. While the Oromo of Wanbara kept their identity intact, those of highland Gojjam abandoned their culture long ago. As discussed in chapter 1, they settled in various parts of Gojjam, Dambya, and Bagemeder. Although they are aware of their Oromo origin, they were assimilated and adopted the Amharic language. The districts where they settled still have Oromo names such as Maccaa, Guutaa, Basso, and Liiban. The Gojjame ruling house itself traces its origin to a certain Oromo man called Ibido, who crossed to New Damot from Amuruu south of the Abbay River during the reign of Emperor Iyyasu I (1682 to 1706). He settled in New Damot and married a local woman with whom he had a son, Walda Abib. It was Walda Abib's son Yosedeq who founded the ruling house of Gojjam. At first, he was at odds with Emperor Iyyasu II (1730 to 1755), who, later on, gave him his half-sister Walata-Israel in marriage. Greatly fortified in this way, Yosedeq ruled Gojjam from 1751 to 1758.

Yosedeq was succeeded by his son Haylu, who was thus a member of the Gondarine royal family; however, he was initially not very strong, and the royal court appointed a more mature and loyal person over Gojjam. With the coming to power of Emperor Solomon (1777 to 1779), however, Haylu was appointed ruler over all the lands from Dangalbar to the Abbay. He was also made *Ras* and ruled Agaw Meder, Damot, Gojjam, and Maccaa up to Dangalbar.[30]

Ras Haylu attempted to challenge the Yajju lords (see below), who had become kingmakers in Gondar with effective powers in their hands. But his death in 1795 led to internecine feuds among members of his own family, which naturally helped the Yajju lords. Haylu was succeeded by his son *Ras* Mar'ed, who soon began to be challenged by his brother-in-law, *Dajjazmach* Zawde, the governor of New Damot.

Like Haylu, Zawde also descended from the Amuruu Oromo. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, other Oromo groups from

Amuruu had crossed the Abbay River and settled in New Damot. Emperor Iyasu I is said to have given them land at Yedingra in the district of Yemalog. One of them had a son or grandson named Sillin. Sillin married Cherit, the daughter of Racho, another Oromo settler in the adjacent district of Din. Cherit and Sillin had three sons, of whom the eldest was Yakrestos Zawd, most commonly called Zawde.[31] Zawde grew up to become a noted warrior, even challenging Haylu's power in New Damot. He rebelled against Haylu's rule and attracted many followers. Due to his growing power, Haylu enticed him into an alliance by giving him his daughter Denqenash in marriage and making him his governor of New Damot. But on Haylu's death, Zawde wanted more and began challenging Mar'ed for supremacy over the whole of Gojjam. When Mar'ed died in 1799, Zawde was in control of all the land from Dangalbar to the Abbay River. By 1800, he was the governor of Agaw Meder, New Damot, "Gojjam proper," and Maccaa, despite being challenged by the son and official successor of Mar'ed, Gwalu.

The Yajju lords intervened in the rivalry between Gwalu and Zawde, with *Ras* Gugsa of Yajju siding with Gwalu. Zawde lost the struggle at first and had to take refuge in Amuruu, where he mobilized his Oromo relatives. He returned to Gojjam with a strong Oromo cavalry and defeated Gwalu and other rivals in 1805. Then he continued to challenge the power of *Ras* Gugsa, who led another effective expedition against him in 1809. Zawde was now defeated and captured, Gwalu being reinstituted as the unchallenged governor of Gojjam until the 1820s, when Zawde's son Goshu began to challenge him afresh.[32]

To the north of Gojjam, the Wallo, Yajju, and Raayyaa Oromo were long assimilated into Amharic-, Tigre-, and Afar-speaking groups. Most had settled in Wallo and Tigray since at least the sixteenth century. The Raayyaa, the most northerly of all the Oromo, are assimilated into Tigre-speaking groups, while Yajjus are mostly assimilated with the Afars.[33] By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Ali Gwangul from the Yajju Oromo emerged as a powerful figure not only among his own people but also within Christian Ethiopia. Since 1769, Ethiopia had experienced a period of instability characterized by civil wars and absence of a strong central authority. The emperors at Gondar were mere puppets of the Yajju dynasty founded by Ali Gwangul, also called Ali the Great. This dynasty, centered in the town of Dabra Tabor, had the real power over the whole of the Ethiopian Empire, until the last Yajju ruler, *Ras* Ali Alula II, was defeated in 1853 by Kasa Hailu, the future Emperor

Tewodros II (1855 to 1868). The Yajju were Muslims in faith but highly Christianized, and followed Amhara culture. Their main aim was to form regional power structures without limitation to one ethnic group or faith. *Ras* Gugsa Marsu (1803 to 1825), perhaps the ablest and most powerful ruler of the Yajjus, consolidated the power of the dynasty. The Yajju controlled most parts of Bagemeder, including Gojjam, Gondar, and Wallo, and by the 1830s were slowly advancing into Tigray.

To the south of Yajju, another dynasty was founded by Wallo Oromo toward the end of the eighteenth century. The Wallo Oromo were less assimilated into Amhara culture and had been strong in their Islamic faith since medieval times. This group was founded by Muhammad Ali, and the dynasty, Mammadoch, was named after him. This dynasty went into decline following the death of his grandson *Abbaa* Jirru Liban in 1825, and thereafter was divided among rival factions until eventually the whole region was annexed by the kingdom of Shawa in the 1870s.[34]

While the Gojjame lords were in a power struggle, Oromo groups seem to have slowly continued their settlement in various parts of the Gojjam peninsula. It was clearly during those days that most of the Oromo of Hebantuu and Limmuu and those of western Wallaggaa penetrated into Wanbara. When the British traveler Charles Beke visited Gojjam in 1842, there were already many Oromo groups in Wanbara.[35] One of the results of the power struggle among the Gojjame lords was the discontinuation of the traditional expeditions into Matakkal, which gave the Oromo a relatively free hand in Wanbara. In the 1820s, Goshu, Zawde's son, came to the political arena. He began to challenge Gwalu and his ally in Gondar, *Ras* Gugsa, who led other expeditions into Gojjam. Like his father, Goshu was defeated and fled to Amuruu country to organize support among his Oromo relatives. When *Ras* Gugsa returned to Gondar, having appointed his loyal follower Gobana, over New Damot, Goshu returned with a strong Oromo army, with which he defeated Gwalu and Gobana's forces. Gwalu, in turn, fled to Dabra Tabor, where he died. From 1823 to 1839 or 1840, Goshu ruled a united Gojjam relatively unchallenged.[36]

Under Goshu, Gojjam enjoyed relative stability. He extended his administration to Amuruu country in Wallaggaa and to Dangab in eastern Wanbara. At that time, Amuruu was ruled by its local chief, Ado Ibsaa, who had annexed Horroo, Giddaa, Hebantuu, and Limmuu. Ado is said to have been a relative of Goshu, which helped the latter to extend his influence in Horroo across the river. He even

gave Ado the title of *fitawrari* and the governorship of Shinasha country north of the Abbay,[37] which included Dangab in Wanbara. The Oromo of this region still talk of having been governed by the governor of Horroo.

Goshu ruled Gojjam until he was succeeded by his son Birru. Like his predecessors, Birru continued to have conflicts with the Yajju lords. For this reason, the successors of *Ras* Gugsa conducted repeated campaigns into Gojjam. Internally, Gwalu's son Tadla began challenging Birru in the 1840s. At first, Birru proved stronger than Tadla, who was badly defeated. He later fled to Jaarsoo in Shawa and stayed there until Birru was captured by Kasa Hailu (later Emperor Tewodros) in 1854. Both Birru and his father Goshu were defeated by Kasa, in 1854. Kasa threw his weight on the side of Tadla, whom he appointed as governor of Gojjam. But Tadla did not really submit to Tewodros, and he remained a rebel until he died in 1867. Essentially, the struggle for power in Gojjam between the two related families continued to dominate the region's internal history. During the last phase, the conflict was between Dasta Tadla and Adal Tesemma, whose power was later enhanced by his alliance with successors of Tewodros.

Adal actually grew up in the family of his relative Tadla, together with Tadla's son, Dasta. But he rebelled in New Damot against Dasta, who succeeded his father. Dasta's quarrel with Tewodros' successor, Emperor Takle Giyorgis (1868 to 1872), gave Adal his chance. When Takle Giyorgis invaded Gojjam, Dasta fled to Guduruu south of the Abbay. Adal was neutral in the conflict, and Takle Giyorgis ruled Gojjam directly for some time. During this interval, Adal won the support of Takle Giyorgis by capturing Dasta and handing him over to him. Takle Giyorgis then considered Adal a loyal vassal and made him the governor of a united Gojjam, with the title of *Ras*, in 1869. He also gave him his daughter Laqech in marriage, further sealing the alliance. Thus in the period 1869 to 1874, Adal consolidated his power by subduing all local rivals.[38]

The transfer of power from Takle Giyorgis to Emperor Yohannes IV (1872 to 1889) brought new dangers to *Ras* Adal. As the son-in-law of Takle Giyorgis, he had sent troops in support against Yohannes IV to the battle of Assam, where Takle Giyorgis was defeated. Later, Yohannes, after assuming power, decided to bring Adal into line and marched to Gojjam to get his submission. At the same time, he took with him Adal's rival, Dasta, who was Takle Giyorgis's prisoner. Adal fled into inaccessible mountain fortresses, and Yohannes failed to capture him. When he left Gojjam, Emperor Yohannes appointed

Dasta as his governor of Gojjam in Adal's place. But as soon as Emperor Yohannes and his army left Gojjam, Adal attacked and defeated Dasta, who lost his life in the conflict. Having no other viable candidate and threatened by Egyptian encroachments in the north, Yohannes had to be realistic and accepted Adal's submission. At Amba Chara, Adal officially submitted to Yohannes, and he was made governor of the whole of Gojjam. He was also allowed to expand his territory to the south of the Abbay River into the Oromo lands.[39] The story of Adal's attempts to control these areas and his confrontations with King Menelik will be briefly described in the last chapter.

What concerns us here are Adal's new movements into Wanbara, which became increasingly aggressive after the Battle of Embabo, in June of 1882. Due to the rich natural resources of the western lowlands bordering the Sudan, he began sending a series of destructive campaigns into the region. The contemporary Dutch traveler Juan Schuver testifies that the Gojjame soldiers were plundering Wanbara in the summer of 1882.[40]

Wanbara and other borderland regions became a sort of no man's land and subsequently suffered from slave raids and poachers from the Sudan, particularly after the Egyptian occupation of the Sudan in 1821. The Mahdists who replaced the Egyptians in 1885 also raided western Wanbara. In 1882, Schuver described slave raids against the Gumuz. Such pressures from the Ethiopian Empire and the Sudan forced the Gumuz to move into Wallaggaa, mainly along the Dhidheessa Valley.

But neither Sudan nor Gojjam under *Ras* Adal Tesemma were ready to fully annex the region, due to their own individual internal problems and priorities. In 1898, however, *Ras* Adal, who became King Takle Haymanot, carefully prepared himself to take control of the region as a part of Ethiopian occupation of the Sudanese borderlands. Since local Oromo chiefs had shown reluctance to serve in the previous campaigns, the *negus* seems to have used other Oromo groups to pave the way for effectively controlling the area as a whole. According to tradition, some early captives like Biftuu Anno were sent back to Wanbara to encourage the people to accept Gojjame rule and Christianity. These returnees played a considerable role in preparing the local people. When the king arrived in 1898, there was little or no resistance.[41] The king started the expedition from his capital, Dabra Marqos, by way of Agaw Meder and proceeded to Wanbara, where he founded the town of Dabra Zayt ("Mount Olives").

The new site was well placed on a hillside. A large river called the Alaltuu passed through it (see map 5), and the area was heavily wooded; there would be no shortage of firewood. Thus, a new town and church were founded in 1898, in the middle of Wanbara. Nine priests followed him during the campaign to propagate Christianity and baptize the people. While the King was there, many Oromo are said to have embraced Christianity and were baptized. The King then decided to appoint governors over the region. According to tradition, he asked the people to elect candidates for the administration of their respective areas, and he confirmed the appointment of each himself. For all the territories west of the Shar River, he appointed twelve, and for the Dangab region, five, *qoroos* (governors).[42] The names of these early *qoroos* are still remembered:

***Fitawrari* Biftuu Anno.** The highest official was *Fitawrari* Biftuu Anno, most commonly called Abbaa Oboo, after his eldest son, Oboo. Biftuu was christened Gabra Sellase and appointed governor of Wanbara, west of the Shar River. All twelve *qoroos* nominated for the region were responsible to him. According to tradition, he was considered a favorite son of the King, who was his godfather. Biftuu was originally from Gidaamii in western Wallaggaa. His grandfather, Bako, moved to Wanbara and settled at Kittar. The early life and career of Bako is shrouded in legend. But his son, Anno, later emerged as a strong chief in the area. Anno became *qoroo* over his village and married a Shinasha woman named Gonnossee, who was Biftuu's mother. This family is an example of the active intermarriages between the Oromo and the Shinasha people. In the early resistance against the Gojjame, Anno was killed, and his wife, Gonnossee, and her son Biftuu were taken into captivity. Later on, Gonnossee returned to Wanbara with Biftuu.

While he was still young, Biftuu was able to acquire a good knowledge of the Amharic language and familiarity with the Gojjame court structure. Even after he returned to Wanbara, he maintained close connections with the court at Dabra Marqos and cultivated friendships with the Gojjame settlers in Wanbara. Before his arrival in Wanbara, King Takle Haymanot used Biftuu to convince the local people to submit peacefully to his rule. As a result, when he arrived, Takle Haymanot met little to no resistance, and Biftuu was made his first governor of Wanbara and protector of the new church. Through Christianity, the Gojjame officers became relatives of Biftuu's family. One of the Gojjame officers there, *Bajerond* Leo, became godfather to Oboo, the son of Biftuu, thus establishing strong family connections between the leading Gojjame settlers and Biftuu. Takle

Haymanot liked Biftuu so much that, while appointing him, he is said to have told the local people, "I give you Biftuu, my son, as your loyal governor."[43]

Biftuu had his power base in Kittar (which includes the town of Dabra Zayt), over which he was appointed *qoroo*. All the other *qoroos* in the area were directly responsible to him. He was actually considered as *mootii,* in the same way as the rulers of Leeqaa Naqamtee. Indeed, Biftuu had a strong relationship with the *mootiis* of Leeqaa Naqamtee. Two of his sons, Oboo and Jaarraa, spent time at the court of *mootii* Kumsaa Morodaa in the town of Naqamtee.

***Fitawrari* Turaa Jimmaa.** He was also among the captives of *Dajjazmach* Wale taken back to Gojjam. *Dajjazmach* Wale was the commander of the Gojjame army that invaded Wanbara in the early 1880s. Turaa Jimmaa was given the Amharic name Tesemma, by which he is most often known. He was appointed *qoroo* over Gawilla, which was originally occupied by the famous Molee Seeggo. Molee Seeggo, as indicated earlier, led his Amuumaa clan across the Abbay and occupied Gawilla. *Fitawrari* Turaa Jimmaa/Tesemma was a direct descendant of Molee Seeggo, and he must have inherited among his people the great respect and influence of his ancestors. Takle Haymanot used that respect to pacify the Gawilla Oromo by giving them Molee Seeggo's descendant as his first local governor there.

***Fitawrari* Morka Jaanoo.** Like Tesemma, he was taken captive by the Gojjame army. He was specially captured by a certain officer, Wudineh, who adopted him. He was often called Morka Wudineh. By origin, he was a Shinasha, who had been assimilated through the *meedhicha* ritual. His grandfather, Guchi, was one of the Shinasha who were taken to Wallaggaa for the adoption ceremony. He was made *qoroo* with the title of *fitawrari* (military title generally below *dajjazmach*, which means commander of the vanguard force) over Baabboo Kuttan. When he died, he was succeeded by his son *Qañ̃azmach* (military title for "commander of the right") Mullataa.

***Fitawrari* Maccaa Aruo.** He was also one of those captured by the Gojjame army and later employed as a guide during Takle Haymanot's expedition into Wanbara. He was made governor (*qoroo*) over Wagidi, with the title of *fitawrari.* Following his death, he was succeeded by his son Dasta.

***Fitawrari* Burusoo Morkii.** His father, Morkii, was the local chief of the Tirimmi district. During the early Gojjame campaigns, Burusoo was taken into captivity. While in Gojjam, he studied

Amharic and the rules of Gojjame administration with his other fellow captives. Takle Haymanot later made him *qoroo,* with the title of *fitawrari,* over his father's district, Tirimmi. He had lost his son while he was still alive; when he died, his grandson Atomsaa succeeded him. Atomsaa has served as one of my primary sources.

***Grazmach* Safaano Gamaa.** Safaano was a local chief who was later appointed *qoroo,* with the title of *grazmach* (military title for "commander of the left"), over Baabboo Galii. After his death, his son Fayyisaa assumed the office.

Awwaayii Igguu. Awwaayii was the grandson of Duqqai, who had been chief of the Shinasha in Qaaqee. Duqqai was adopted into Oromo society, and it was his son Igguu who played a pivotal role in leading many other Shinasha groups into being similarly adopted. Awwaayii, who was the son of Igguu, was appointed *qoroo* over Qaaqee by Takle Haymanot together with the others; however, Awwaayii proved to be too independent and rebelled against the Gojjame administration. In particular, he refused to accept Christianity, and even tended to burn the churches built by the Gojjame. Therefore, King Takle Haymanot ordered the people of Qaaqee to elect another *qoroo,* and *Bajerond* Leo was sent with highland troops to quell the rebellion. Awwaayii was captured and exiled to Tulluu Saanqii. Waqbulcho Diidii was appointed *qoroo* in lieu of Awwaayii, which further aggravated the situation: Waqbulcho had had a personal quarrel with Awwaayii on an earlier occasion, and, from his place of exile, Awwaayii organized his supporters against Waqbulcho. He even began to establish firm contacts with Mahdist Sudan. In support, some Mahdist troops invaded Qaaqee, Waqbulcho's territory; however, they were easily defeated and destroyed by the people, and Awwaayii, who had joined them, was himself wounded and died soon afterwards.

After the death of Awwaayii, Waqbulcho continued to govern Qaaqee; however, *Aaddee* Kooree Igguu, Awwaayii's sister, kept up the family feud. The appointment fee, *Mashomiya,* which *Ras* Haylu instituted on his accession to power following the death of his father, Takle Haymanot, in 1901, fell into her hands. She took two female slaves to *Ras* Haylu as *Mashomiya,* while Waqbulcho did the same. Tradition has it that since both offered the same amount of *Mashomiya*, Haylu was unable to decide whom to favor. Finally, after prolonged conflicts between the two and their supporters, Haylu divided the Qaaqee district into two units, over which he appointed the contending groups. Later, this was further confirmed and consolidated through local chiefs including Salbaanaa

Abbaa Horroo and Waco Alibo, who reconciled the two parties. Then, Kooree reinstated Ligdii, the son of her brother Awwaayii, into the office.

***Fitawrari* Bayero Bultum.** By origin he was a Hindibo who had moved to Wanbara from Dinigas in Limmuu. He had earlier been a local chief there, and was appointed *qoroo* over Dooraa Jallaa by the Gojjame administration. He was succeeded by his son Ibsaa.

Kumee Tanqii. He had also earlier been a local chief among the people; the Gojjame made him governor of Manasibuu, near the town of Dabra Zayt. He was succeeded by his son *Grazmach* Guduree.[44]

Buloo Mootii. He was made *qoroo* of the Minjo area, where he was later succeeded by his daughter Dissiisee.

Jimmaa Dimikki. Appointed *qoroo* of Saanqii, he ruled for a short period of time and was succeeded by *Fitawrari* Godaanoo Bojogoo.

***Azaj* Dalana Kooree.** A Shinasha by origin, he was appointed *qoroo* over Gongo near the Dangab area by the Gojjame. He governed for a short period of time and was succeeded by *Qañña*zmach Esho Zenebo.

The twelve *qoroo* listed above were appointed over the various districts of Wanbara, which did not at that time include the Dangab region. Over this region as a whole, Takle Haymanot appointed a man called Mootii Guduruu as superintendent, with his power base in Somboo Siree, for which he was also made *qoroo.* Under him were appointed the following four local administrators:

1. Nonnoo Gaaggaa, the *qoroo* of Qorqaa;
2. Jiloo Goosuu, the *qoroo* of Kookko, which was part of Somboo Siree;
3. Bajato Beesee, the *qoroo* of Jaaro; and
4. Babanjaw Bazneh, the *qoroo* of Dhagaa Jaldessaa.

While the first two were of Oromo origin, the two others were Shinasha.

According to some local sources, Takle Haymanot considered Dangab a part of his Limmuu territory in Wallaggaa. Accordingly, all of the above five officials are said to have been placed under the king's Oromo governor of Limmuu, Dabbab Moa. They all paid their tribute to Dabbab, who had a resident tax collector called Qecoo Gaaggaa. Qecoo collected all tributes in Dangab and handed them over to Dabbab in Limmuu. In the days of *Ras* Haylu, however, Dangab was administered as part of New Damot in Gojjam.[45]

Takle Haymanot seems to have given similar consideration to a number of Oromo and Shinasha areas, which he allowed to be administered by their own ancient local chiefs, with the regional *qoroos* having no power over them. One such area was Bulan, including the locality of Zigih as far as the Shar River. Here, the Shinasha had not been integrated into Oromo society. They had only become "friends" of the Oromo through the *harma-hodhaa* ritual and had not had the *meedhicha* system applied to them. This meant that the Anifo clan of the Shinasha of this region was less integrated and had kept their identity, although they had also adopted Afaan Oromoo and other Oromo customs. Over this area, Takle Haymanot first appointed *Dajjazmach* Adal as his representative to oversee the local chiefs there.

Other areas were given similar privileges. One such area was Hexosumoo, a vast pastureland near the town of Dabra Zayt, over which a relative of the Wanbara *qoroo,* Biftuu Anno, was allowed to be governor in his own right. He was called Tufaa Waaroo, and when he died, he was succeeded by his son Adulaa. Other Oromo districts with similar privileges included Damana, under Buloo Bookaa; Qacamaa, under Waaqayyo Aduwash; Sonkora, under Cawwaaqaa Gannoo; Nagar, under Badhaasaa Naannoo; and many others. All these areas were ruled by their own governors whose only connection with Takle Haymanot's chief *qoroo* of Wanbara, Biftuu, was to pass to him the tributes they had collected from their people, for transmission to the Gojjame Court.[46]

The twelve *qoroos* of Wanbara were given the right to appoint sub-governors in their respective territories. These served as local judges and organizers of communal tasks, but their main duty was to collect taxes from their people in each *qoroo* territory. Leading individuals among the Gumuz of Wanbara were made sub-governors. The Gumuz paid taxes to the sub-governor, who handed them over to the *qoroo.* The appointment of Gumuz as sub-governors seems to have further strengthened the relationship between them and the Oromo.

Having annexed the region for Gojjam and appointed *qoroos*, King Takle Haymanot stationed garrison troops in Wanbara and returned to his capital. When the British traveler Oscar Crosby traveled through Wanbara in 1900, he indicated the presence of a military outpost at the town Dabra Zayt. The king also left representatives whose main responsibilities were to supervise the levying and collection of taxes, and to administer justice. *Bajerond* Dasta was made the chief supervisor of the region appointed by Takle Haymanot, and *Bajerond* (honorific title for royal treasurer) Mihrate was assigned to act there as the

king's goldsmith. The *qoroos* were, however, very much on their own, which attracted further Oromo settlement and assimilation in the region from the south of the Abbay River.

This Oromo assimilation with other groups was at work elsewhere in East Africa. Now that we have seen the dynamism north of the Abbay River, we will turn to the south as far as Kenya. The Oromo indigenous institutions promoted integration and peaceful coexistence with various ethnic groups in the region. The Oromo concept of peace, Oromo religion, and various institutions contributed to peace of East Africa as a whole, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

3

All Are Welcome

Peace of the Oromo Nation and Ethnic Integration

"The word Peace *is reiterated in every [Oromo] prayer and greeting."*[1]

Peace of the Oromo

Nagaa (peace) is the most important concept in the daily lives of the Oromo. It is expressed in daily greetings, "in the songs they sing, in the prayers and blessings they offer, in the ritual and ceremonial activities they undertake, in the speeches and narrations they deliver, in the administrative and legal actions they perform and in the proverbs, folktales and stories they cite or tell."[2] In every household, the members say prayers calling for peace in all aspects of their lives, from their own families to the community and the government, along with prayers for fertility for themselves and for their means of livelihood and sustenance. As Jan Hultin observed, "Peace, fertility and abundance—of children, of crops, of cattle and of wealth—were prominent themes in the prayers and blessings of the *gadaa* system. They are also what most other rituals sought to attain."[3]

The concept of *nagaa Oromoo* (peace of the Oromo nation) is based on the indigenous values and beliefs enshrined in the *gadaa* system; it is a universal principle and encompasses everything. Asmarom Legesse also remarks upon the strong concept of peace and blessing in the Oromo nation: "peace is a pervasive and sustained concern in Oromo life. The long blessings that are given daily by Oromo elders are prayers for peace. The theme of peace is everywhere."[4] Prayers are made at the time of elections by the people as well as by the elected officials. When *abbaa bokkuu* (the president) assumes power, for example, he prays for peace for the nation.

Today, at every wedding, whether in urban areas or the countryside, whether Christians or Muslims, educated or not, the Oromo conduct religious rituals to bless the bride and the groom, wishing them peace, children, health, and prosperity. In the words of Tena Dewo: "That the Oromo pray for the peace of everything, even for such things as stone, water, and air, shows that, in Oromo cosmology, everything is the interconnected through myriad webs and threads. Human beings are related not only to fellow humans but also to nature, and even to the spiritual power believed to be supernatural."[5]

Many specifics of the Oromos' meticulous rituals vary from place to place, but carrying grass is a common element of many rituals. When strangers travel in an unfamiliar territory, they carry grass to show it to possible attackers, which guarantees peaceful passage by helping to transcend language barriers. The American Arthur Donaldson Smith, while traveling in late nineteenth-century East Africa, wrote, "They might not have understood the [Oromo] language, but they could have had no doubt of our meaning when we picked up grass and held it towards them, as this is the universal sign of peace throughout Northeast Africa."[6]

Grass also has significance in rituals; it symbolizes fertility and prosperity. Carrying grass in their hands at a wedding, for example, the attendants will say to the couple, "live long in peace, multiply, prosper, let your enemies be destroyed." The father, mother, and other close relatives of the bride will offer prayers and blessings to the couple before they leave the bride's house. As well, before the groom leaves his home to take his bride, he will be blessed, and prayers will be said.

Grass is also used when the *qaalluu* (a spiritual leader, a priest of the Oromo religion; see details in chapter 5) leads the people in prayers for peace, welfare, wealth, and protection of the country.[7] The *qaalluu* also acts as a mediator in conflict resolutions; cases that are beyond the authority of the local elders are forwarded to him. Whether in rituals, greetings, or prayers, the most important word that the *qaalluu* frequently uses is *nagaa*—peace. "At communal rituals, in the daily ritual moments and at ordinary moments of exchange, peace is always exchanged and wished for the community and for particular individuals in the community."[8] During morning and evening prayers, *nagaa* is repeated in individual households as well as during public gatherings, where the audience repeats after the leader. Believing that mankind is connected to nature, the Oromo

pray not only for humans but also for other elements in nature, as the following prayer shows:

> O, *Waaqa* (God) give us peace
> Peace to the land and sky
> Peace to humans
> Peace to *uumama* (nature)
> Peace to animals
> Peace to wild beasts
> O, God listen to us, we pray to you
> Make us live in peace, we know that you can do it
> O, God you are the only Father we have
> Protect us from evil, protect everything from evil
> We do not want to do evil to anyone, protect us from those who intend to do it on us
> Save us from the spears, swords, and fires of war
> We do not want to set fire to anyone, help us in keeping away from those who want to set it on us
> Help us in our effort to do away with evil
> O, God, peace matters most to us, keep away from us all those anti-peace forces
> O, Father, give us your light that leads us to sustainable peace.[9]

These prayers are lifestyle practices made daily, not only during times of war and crisis. During natural catastrophes, the *abbaa bokkuu* will convene the people (usually under an Odaa tree) to pray, in order to invoke Waaqa (God) to keep them in peace. In times of drought, it is believed that Waaqa is unhappy with the people, so they beg for forgiveness, praying, "please give us your peace and your rain." "Prayers are offered directly to God and consist of paired phrases, between which the response 'Peace, peace' is interposed. They proceed from generalized value statements to particular prayers or praises . . . For the Boran to quarrel is not only a disturbance of the peace of the Boran, but also of the peace of God, for to Boran these two concepts are but one."[10]

Indeed, the Boorana Oromo in Kenya and Ethiopia are described as the most fervent keepers of the peace. Mario Aguilar writes, "Prayers and blessings are an important part of the daily life of every Boorana."[11] The all-pervasive phrase, *nagaa Booranaa* (peace of Booranaa), "is always on someone's lips"[12] and signifies strong pan-Boorana cooperation and unity rather than a mere absence of conflict. In Mario Aguilar's words: "The Peace of the Boorana

[*Nagaa Boorana*], is not only the absence of war, but it refers to the complete unity of people among themselves, their union with nature and their union with God. With the disruption of peace, there is a complete disruption of the world around them. Without *Nagaa* animals cannot give birth to offspring and the grass cannot grow. *Nagaa* is a gift from God and they pray for peace every day, in the morning and in the evening."[13]

Nagaa should, therefore, be maintained constantly under the guidance of elders. "Elders know that such a 'Peace' is delicate and its continuance requires constant effort, and are always on the alert to settle any dispute which may threaten it. Even a child should not be allowed to bed with resentment in his 'stomach.' "[14] All Boorana elders have a responsibility to encourage the maintenance of peace, while "every Boran has a duty not to diminish it."[15]

As Baxter explains it:

> All Boran, even infants, participate in greetings (they are the first words that babies learn) and in prayers and so are active, daily participants in the construction of "The Peace of the Boran"—*Nagaa Borana*. Boran can rejoice just because they are continuously constructing something on which to rejoice. The words of prayers, blessings and greetings continuously create and recreate connections between the organizational and the cosmological structures, such as the moieties and *gaada*, and workaday life. The words give purpose and dignity to daily life but they are also one of the strongest threads from which the fabric of Boran society is woven.[16]

During evening and morning prayers, the elders lead people in asking for peace. "The adult members of each village or camp usually come together daily to offer prayers, as a duty and a joy."[17] Although elders guide the people in prayers, keeping the peace of the Boorana is the responsibility of each individual and household. "The elder men, on the other hand, are social and ritual seniors; they are gentle and dignified; they are oriented towards society and cultivation; they communicate with God, the Sky, through prayer and sacrifice; they are constantly concerned with the maintenance of peace, which is a necessary condition for the flow of God's blessings and the continuity of life."[18]

Because exclusion from rituals is a devastating sanction on a family or an individual, people cannot afford to isolate themselves from participation in greetings and blessings. Cooperation is too crucial for a rural community, and among the Boorana, everyone pays attention to detail in order to keep the peace. They gather in unity to pray

to Waaqa. The *nagaa Booranaa* "becomes the ideal for the society, and it is kept through the efforts of every individual and of every household."[19] The Boorana maintain that Waaqa does not allow people to do harm against another, which "is the single most stressed mortal sin."[20]

The *nagaa Booranaa* symbolizes the constant blessing of Waaqa, and the Boorana are determined to bring it upon themselves at any cost. Prayers and sacrifice are important ingredients in invoking God, who provides rain, fertility to women and livestock, and prosperity. "Men must keep right with each other in order to keep right with God, and they must keep right with God to keep right with each other. Good social relationships and proper ritual relationships are reflexes of each other."[21]

Keeping the peace of the Boorana is very important even to those who are away from the heartland or who have converted to another religion. Among the Waso Boorana in Kenya, for instance, the *nagaa Booranaa* continued to be the foundation of the society, even after they assumed the practice of Islam. As well, Mario Aguilar, writing of the Waso Oromo, said: "Peace with God and with one another in a community is the foundation for all their religious practices. They have assumed Islam as their public religion, but in its totality the Waso Boorana's religion rests on their philosophical and organizational religious principle, i.e., the *Nagaa Boorana*."[22] Peace of the Oromo nation, therefore, is beyond religion and has roots in pan-Oromo identity and philosophy. In the words of Baxter, "Sociologically, or so at least it seems to me, the most distinctive feature of Boran is the 'Peace of the Boran.' "[23]

Islam did not replace the philosophical foundation of the Waso Oromo. Instead, both exist in a situation of complementarity. "In this current Waso Boorana system of religion, the God of the Islam, the God of the Christianity, and the God of Oromo are all one and the same, and therefore the 'oneness of God' for the Waso Boorana is also represented by God's presence outside Islamic ritual places such as a mosque."[24] The younger generation in Waso pays even more attention to Boorana religious practices than to Islamic ones.[25]

Nagaa Booranaa has to be maintained for life, prosperity, unity, and ultimately, the nation itself. Like in the other Oromo areas, among the Waso, daily greetings demonstrate peace, and children are taught how to greet, bless, and respect others. "The process of learning how to greet others provides the practical integration of a person into society and provides him/her with a particular social role. In the case of the Waso Boorana, greetings also make that particular

individual an active contributor towards the societal need for peace, the *Nagaa Boorana*. Most of the Waso Boorana greetings express a wish for peace to others. The word *nagaa* (peace) reflects the foundational principle of Waso Boorana life, the *Nagaa Boorana*—the Peace of the Boorana."[26]

Whether among the Waso or other Boorana Oromo, greetings convey a blessing and peace, which help to foster assimilation and peacefulness with other groups in Kenya and Somalia. The *nagaa Booranaa* is always expressed as a common good of the Boorana, their neighbors, and other Oromo elsewhere. "After all, the same greetings and the same blessings can be heard in Isiolo or Nairobi, Kenya; in Washington, D.C., USA; or in Melbourne, Australia."[27] For various reasons, many Oromo men and women left their homeland and settled elsewhere around the world, making the Oromo "a global nation."[28]

Owing to their relatively uninterrupted *gadaa* practices, the Booranas' concept of peace may, thus, be more pronounced, but indeed, it is basically the same among all other Oromo groups. Every Oromo individual and every household take the responsibility of keeping the peace for their nation, just as the Boorana do. "The *nagaa* concept characterized the inner rhythm of Oromo communal life everywhere."[29] Whether in Boorana or elsewhere, the concept is associated with the *gadaa* government. Even though the use of the *gadaa* system has declined and even been abandoned in some areas, the concept of *nagaa* has survived, and is today widely practiced in all corners. Prayers and blessings are still major practices within the Oromo nation today.

As Jan Hultin also noticed, "Prayers and blessings are central features of Oromo culture. They are not only reserved for ritual occasions but are a prominent part of daily life. Baxter's observation from northern Kenya that 'Boran society sometimes appears to float on a river of prayers and blessings'...is, I think, true for most parts of Oromoland; it is a pan-Oromo feature."[30] As Baxter himself put it: "Oromo religious culture is remarkably homogenous in that, I think, any Oromo would feel at ease as a participant in rituals, prayers, blessings and greetings anywhere in Oromoland. There appears to be an inner consistency within the local varieties of expression which enables one to speak of Oromo religion."[31] Although the Oromo continued to move into far-flung territories and to come into contact with other cultures and influences, they maintained their principles of peace of the nation, peaceful coexistence, and sharing resources with others. Because conflicts are naturally unavoidable, sometimes

quarrels did occur between the Oromo themselves, but they did not develop into war, and *gadaa* principles played a key role in maintaining peace. "The myth of common descent, the concepts of *gada* (egalitarianism) and *nagaa* (peace and co-operation) together express some deep sense of solidarity and feeling of peoplehood/ nationhood that existed."[32]

Dhaabaa: Keeping the Foundation

The Oromo culture allowed (and still does) the individual the mobility to settle in different regions; no firm geographical boundary has existed in terms of movement of groups. As long as there was land available, residential movement of groups or individuals was welcome. Family heads could move and settle anywhere they could find land and favorable climatic conditions. Two brothers could end up in widely separate localities, although usually siblings preferred to live close to each other. In Oromo society, the eldest son has the right to inherit his father's property and land, while his younger brothers must move elsewhere.

It is an Oromo custom, however, that the original ancestral land should not be abandoned. That is why the *angafa* (elder) is always there to inherit and keep the *dhaabaa* (literally, "pillar," or "foundation") of the family's ancestral origin. The eldest son always remained on his father's land; the other sons had to move in search of new land for themselves. Later, the sons of the eldest sons, in turn, followed their relatives who went before them, and joined them in the new country. *Dhaabaa* is a term used to refer to the common ancestral property, and it is very important for a family to keep it at any cost. Symbolically, *dhaabaa* refers to the original land of the group where their ancestral father first settled. Even though retaining ancestral homeland is common practice elsewhere in Ethiopia, among the Oromo it holds considerable significance. *Dhaabaa* is an important institution in which the relatives could even force the *angafa* of the family to get married, inherit his father's land, and keep the property for the next generation. *Dhaabaa* is a tangible symbol of common ancestral ownership—it keeps balance, order, and peace. Except in pastoral areas of Oromia, *dhaabaa* is a very important institution.

In some areas, *dhaabaa* is also referred to as *dhoqqee,* which literally means "mud" as well as "cow dung," referring to the cattle pen, which is considered a source of life and fertility.[33] Cattle hold considerable significance in African societies, and therefore, cattle ownership is considered prestigious in rural Oromia. "Owners of

1,000 head of cattle receive the honour of being crowned, and the right to wear a goat-skin bracelet called *mediča* which nobody else may wear; at a public gathering they sacrifice two cows after the award."[34]

Therefore, as Hultin describes it, "People who share descent and who regard each other as entitled to a share of a common lineage estate say that they have *d'oqqee* together."[35] Cattle, the livelihood of the Oromo, have great significance in the making of arable land as well as maintaining its fertility. "The cattle of the first 'father' of the land had fertilized the land with their dung and so had the livestock of the 'father's' sons and descendants. The concept *d'oqqee* thus has a wide range of meaning. It is a synthesis of a whole complex of ideas about fertility, cultivation, descent, and land tenure."[36] Moreover, cow dung has an important place in Oromo domestic economy. It is used as fuel, plastering material, and floors, and the common saying "May you have plenty of cow dung" is equivalent to "May you have many cattle."[37]

When younger brothers move away from home, they might come into contact with other Oromo or non-Oromo groups, but they still live in peace. They enact peacemaking rituals and consider each other friends. Then, all kinds of community relations follow. The Oromo, particularly the Boorana, have better milking stock than many East African groups.[38] As a result, there are various cattle-related rituals that go along with the centrality of cattle, particularly cows, in Oromo tradition. One such ritual is *saa dhaabbachuu*.

Saa Dhaabbachuu

Saa dhaabbachuu means celebrating, blessing, and giving thanks for the birth of a calf. It was formerly widely practiced in rural areas of western Oromia; today, it is still being practiced in some areas. The ritual's origins are shrouded in legend, but it shows the Oromo dependence on cattle; the wealth of a man is measured by the number of cattle he owns. It is reported that among the Arsi, Tuulama, and Maccaa groups of the Oromo, there are ceremonies similar to *saa dhaabbachuu* in which they classify the cows in two groups: *fanso,* an ordinary cow that could be sold, and *saa ateetee*[39], a cow dedicated to the fertility goddess. The *saa ateetee* cow and her products, including milk and butter, cannot be sold. The Oromo pray to the fertility goddess on behalf of the cow, much like women do in the *ateetee* ceremony (see chapter 5). For the Oromo, keeping the *nagaa* ensures fertility for their cows as well as for women.

In western Oromia, the ceremony is observed as follows. Starting from birth, the calf is allowed to get all of its mother's milk until it becomes strong and able to graze, at about four weeks old. After that, most of the milk will be collected and kept in a special container to which various spices, including garlic, are added. After the milk has been collected and kept for about four weeks, preparations will begin for the ceremony, which is held usually on a Saturday or Sunday. Food and drinks such as local beer and, occasionally, honey mead will be prepared. Roasted coffee will also be readied. Then, "A stick about two metres long, called *dabata*, is smeared with butter at the top end and put in the special part of the house, called *gola*, where *daba* is stored."[40] *Dhaabaa* in this case refers to a special part of the house where all the various ceremonial items for the commemoration are stored.

On Saturday morning, the cow will be brought home from its *kraal* (an enclosure for cattle) for the ceremony, and the calf will be brought to her. After the calf has some milk, the wife of the house starts to milk the cow. She says prayers and pours the fresh milk on the back of both the calf and the cow while feeding them the roasted coffee. The prayer includes: "O God of my father, O God of my mother, O God of my race, O God that knows the truth, be merciful and kind to me; O my God, let my *okole* [pot for milking the cow] come to me time and time again, let my *gadi* [a rope to tie the cow while milking] be thick, Make the calf and the cow like each other, Make the back of the cow soft for me."[41] The *okolee* refers to a wish for having more cows for milking, while the wish for the back of the cow to be soft refers to fertility. Following the prayer, the cow will be let go to join the others in the field.

Afterward, neighbors will be invited to a short ceremony. They will be served roasted coffee and will participate in the prayers, this time led by the husband. He goes to the *dhaabaa,* where the items including the *okolee* are stored, to offer prayers that the guests will repeat after him three times. They also pray for prosperity for the house. The most important part of the ceremony will take place on Sunday. More guests will be invited, and the wife of the house will repeat the same prayer said on Saturday. Then a goat will be prepared for ritual slaughter by the husband. He will take the goat into the threshold of the house and butter it from head to tail while saying prayers. The most important message of the prayer is to appeal to God for protection of cattle and the family. This stage is called *areerrachuu.* The goat is slaughtered, and the husband dips his fingers into the blood to mark his forehead with it. Then he says: '"O Mighty God, make me a good man and my words understandable to others and [give me] the

power of my forehead to guide people. Touching his Adam's apple, he says, 'O God, give me long life.' Then he touches all members of the family on their foreheads and their Adam's apples, repeating the same invocations."[42]

The goat will then be skinned. The meat from its front legs, before removing the skin completely, is placed on the hands of the ritual performer as a symbol of offering to the *saa dhaabbachuu*. It is considered a *haaluu*, a religious act that should be performed during a traditional ceremony. Parts of the rest of the meat will be cooked for consumption by the participants. The feast will start with drinks and roasted coffee. The participants bless the hosts and their property. Then the milk-drinking ritual follows. The milk, which has been collected for weeks, will have fermented, becoming like curds and whey. "The gourd is passed to everybody starting with the master of the house. Everybody takes four mouthfuls of milk. If a guest does not like the milk, he kisses the gourd four times since the udders of a cow are four."[43]

Before leaving, the participants bless the hosts and wish them all happiness and prosperity. Some of the most common blessings include:

Blesser	**Head of the Family**
Have you taken it?	Yes, I have taken it.
Take [prosperity] with it.	Amen.
While asleep, have good dreams.	Amen.
When you rest, have good thoughts.	Amen.
Let your enemy be like a fallen tree....	Amen.
Be as *handode* [a creeper] in a valley;	Amen.
blossom throughout winter and summer.	Amen.
Be like *čokorsa* [a grass];	Amen.
cover the earth.	Amen.
Be like the clouds;	Amen.
cover the sky.	Amen.
Be like *kiltu* [a sycamore tree];	Amen.
extend sideways from above.	Amen.
Be thick from under.	Amen.
Be like a lake;	Amen.
glitter always....	Amen.
Be like the sands, for they shall never be exhausted.	Amen.
Let curses never touch you.	Amen.
Let blessings always veil you.	Amen.
Let your cows mate while standing.	Amen.
Let them give birth while resting.	Amen.

In the house, eat white [milk and cheese]. Amen.
When going out, wear white [garments]. Amen.
Let Sabbath add for you all blessings that
I have forgotten besides those I have said. Amen.[44]

There are similar rituals connected to cows among the Boorana. They have a cow-milking village, where families arrange rituals and elders gather to discuss matters of interest. Milking villages are also "the enduring moral point to which those who herded the dry stock in the satellite camps were attached. Milking villages and the dry stock may have been several days walk apart, but information and intelligence flowed readily between them. The members of a dry stock (for a) camp would be young childless couples, unmarried youths and girls and a more experienced man or two to advise. Camps moved frequently, especially following localized rainfall in the rainy season, whereas milking villages were much more settled."[45]

Whether at *saa dhaabbachuu,* or milking villages in Boorana, the participants pray for peace of the nation, the environment, land, and so on. They pray that cows will continue to deliver calves, that women will bear children, and that everyone will be at peace and prosper—that they will enjoy balance, order, and lawfulness. They believe that Waaqa provides pasture to the animals and keeps them in peace and that "The fertility of the land and the livestock is closely related to a good relationship between God and man, and this in turn depends on the peaceful settlement of conflicts within the Boran community, and between themselves and all their allies."[46]

All Are Welcome: Ethnic Integration in East Africa

> "Oromo treat non-Oromo persons not only as equals but also as brothers and sisters."[47]

The Oromo are among the most open and welcoming nations of modern Africa. In the words of Baxter: "[T]he incorporation or adoption of strangers, individually or in groups, has been constant throughout Oromo history. One became an Oromo by becoming an accepted member of an Oromo community or becoming a client."[48] Among the Maccaa Oromo of Shawa, Herbert Lewis explains, that they "are open communities, easy for newcomers to join."[49] Lewis has also described the same dynamic among the Oromo in the Gibee region, while John Hinnant has reported similar cases in which other ethnic groups were welcomed by the Gujii Oromo.[50]

It is very interesting to note that any non-Oromo newcomer is equally welcomed as an Oromo, and given all the privileges of Oromo culture. All are considered first-class citizens with the right to lead *gadaa* rituals and other ceremonies. We have seen in chapter 2 how Igguu Duqqai was adopted and became a leader of the *gadaa* rituals regardless of his background. That acceptance emerges from the principle of *qixxee*, equality based on humanity. The only major requirement is to abide by the Oromo customs and to be cooperative, an essential behavior in any agricultural society. As an extension of equality among the Oromo of Shawa, the *qixxee* principle is employed in meetings meant to settle disputes within the community. It emphasizes the ideal that, in the words of Herbert Lewis: "When they come together, all the members of the group are equal . . . Each member of the community is invited to and expected to take part in community affairs; each man can participate as an equal, limited only by his own abilities. His place in a *k'it'e* [*qixxee*] depends on his skills as a debater and leader. There is wide scope for individual achievement."[51]

The ritual leaders, the *qaalluus*, also serve as mediators in local disputes. According to Herbert Lewis:

> The court of the *k'allu*, or, more correctly, the *ayana*, is also the site of conflict resolution, litigation, the hearing of court cases. The *galma* areas are sacred ground consecrated to and watched over by the spirits. They thus serve as the place for the settlement of disputes. Respected elders are chosen by their neighbors, and installed formally in these positions by the *k'allu*. The judges listen to cases and pass judgments in an attempt to bring about justice and reconciliation. At some major *galma* there will be a half dozen such courts operating concurrently. They provide a very important component of order in the rural areas in western Shoa (or did before revolution).[52]

Among the Gujii, in another Oromo area, spiritual leaders, particularly the *qaallittii* (females), play a similar role in dispute resolutions and keeping the peace. They help interpret the law of the land and help other dignitaries of the *gadaa* system in keeping order, balance, and justice among the Oromo and with other neighbors.[53] No one is considered unfit or second class in the deliberations. All are welcome in the community regardless of background, and the elders are consensual equals among equals.

During the adoption ritual, the strangers come to the *abbaa bokkuu* wanting adoption into Oromo society. They approach an Oromo family to inform them of their intentions and to ask them to direct or accompany them to the ritual site, usually under an Odaa tree. After

preliminary contacts have been made, the adoption ceremony takes place. The ritual varies from region to region. In one of the rituals described by de Salviac: "The Abba bokku holds out to them the scepter and the thumb, and then lowers it to the top of the head. They declare the newcomer son of the elders and brother of all. There is exchange of presents. The immolation of a sacrifice cements the perpetual alliance. If it is a particular family that adopts, the father presents the thumb to suck and the mother offers her breasts to the adopted."[54]

If the strangers are traders who want security and access to local roads with their goods, the *abbaa bokkuu* arranges with his colleagues in the adjacent territory to offer the same. It is generally expected that the Oromo will welcome strangers, and the process is familiar to most. The next group along the route will thus welcome the strangers and perform the adoption ceremony with them. The adoption ceremony is also practiced among Oromo traveling to remote or distant areas within Oromia, as well as those who want to be adopted by another clan. In most cases, smaller, weak clans want to be adopted by stronger, more populous clans for security reasons. Adoptees are sure to receive the same privileges as their adoptive clans and, therefore, are protected from attack by other groups. John Trimingham writes: "The eldest son has a superior position and takes two-thirds of the inheritance, the second two-thirds of the remainder, and so on. Adoption is common and the tie is such that the adopted son enjoys the rights of the first-born even if a son is born subsequently."[55]

The whole clan and the next immediate clan will be informed of the adoption of strangers by a family. "The Oromo, quickly informed about the new brother whom Providence has sent to them, accept him under the roof of their hut, share with him their milk, their honey and their broth, alleviate his misfortunes, save him from danger, and the whole [community] will take up arms to avenge any injuries which he would have sustained, regarding it as if it was done to the community."[56] This is a remarkable development which contributed to peace in East Africa. In the next section, we will analyze the questions: Why are the Oromo open to strangers? What are the basic philosophical foundations and indigenous institutions that promoted peaceful coexistence and integration of ethnic groups in East Africa?

Oromo Governance Structure

As described earlier, the Oromo developed a governance structure that was based on democratic principles. In the words of

Legesse: "Oromo democracy is one of those remarkable creations of the human mind that evolved into an indigenous political system as a result of centuries of adaptive changes. It also developed a formal body of laws governing all their institutions because of five centuries of deliberate, rational, legislative transformation. It contains genuinely African solutions for some of the problems that democracies everywhere have had to face."[57]

This governance structure survived centuries of external influences, as we have seen in chapter 1. Particularly since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Oromo indigenous institutions underwent various levels of transformation. In most areas, the *gadaa* system declined, while in some areas like Leeqaa Naqamtee, Leeqaa Qellem, and the Gibee region, authoritarian monarchical rule replaced the ancient democratic government; in Boorana, the *gadaa* system continued to function. Yet, even in the monarchical areas, egalitarian Oromo democratic values continued to survive. "This bedrock of Oromo democratic culture has continued to thrive, at its lowest levels, long after all the larger institutions were weakened by colonialism. Village- or clan-level democracy survives today in many parts of Oromo country, in Ethiopia and Kenya, regardless of the type of superstructure that was imposed upon the society."[58] In areas where the *gadaa* system declined, the practice of treating non-Oromo on an equal basis and eventual assimilation and peaceful coexistence did not. The philosophy of regarding all human beings as equals on the basis of *qixxee* continued.

The well-developed laws of the Oromo continued to function elsewhere. "There is adequate historic evidence showing that the Oromo had a highly developed democratic political-legal system during the past five centuries and that the system has endured among the Borana in Southern Ethiopia until the present time. It also continues today as a variety of village- and clan-level democracy in other parts of the Oromo nation such as Arsi, Macch'a and Tulama and most of the Kenyan Oromo: Boran and Orma."[59]

As well, the Oromo nation developed full-fledged legal systems with clear checks and balances. The leader of the nation, *abbaa bokkuu* himself, is subject to the law in the same way as other Oromo. If a leader commits a crime or violates the laws of the land, he must appear before the national assembly (*caffee*) and be removed from office. As Legesse put it: "In contrast to what happens in most traditional African societies, the Oromo make a clear distinction between laws (*sera*) and customs (*ada*). It is mainly the laws that are the subject of legislative action. The body of laws so developed are binding on all

the people. There are no leaders whose position is so exalted that they stand above the law."[60]

The highly respected *caffee* assembly takes place under an Odaa tree. The *abbaa bokkuu* takes a seat at the top of the slope of the assembly site, while the *doorii* and *raaba*—the assessors and magistrates—sit lower down the slope. The assembly occupies seats facing their leaders, and everything is presented in order. There is a strict order applied to seating, speech, hierarchy, and more. "The Oromo court of justice still carries the name *Tarre* (alignment, hierarchical order)."[61] C. Jaenen also described the procedures in a similar way. The *abbaa bokkuu* sits on a three-legged stool, draped in a white sheet with his scepter, called a *bokkuu,* and his assistants take seats under a tree and listen. He adjourns the meeting for the next day, when a bull will be slaughtered. The *abbaa bokkuu* plunges his scepter in the animal's blood and shows it to the assembly, who declare the proposition debated upon a law. This is typical Oromo parliamentary procedure.[62]

Elections and transfers of power also take place during ceremonies. The *abbaa bokkuu* will be elected every eight years, while there is a ritual conducted during the fourth year of his reign. When a new *abbaa bokkuu* is elected, he makes fervent prayers to Waaqa to receive power and guidance to lead the nation. Kneeling, he prays to Waaqa: "Be my way and my path. Keep the stone of obstacle farther away from me. Make me triumphant over the horn of the enemy."[63]

When a law is agreed upon, the magistrate, after prayers, climbs up a raised stone or platform and pronounces the *seerrii ba'e* ("the law is raised"). This declaration is greeted by outbursts of joy from the crowd. The Oromo assembly has the highest authority, and final resolutions are binding. It "is an event of great importance and interest,"[64] and "The Oromo are one of the most orderly and legalistic societies in Black Africa and many of their laws are consciously crafted rules, not customarily evolved habits."[65] For conflict resolution or court cases, the procedures are similar. Jaenen writes:

> A young bull is brought to a Tuesday meeting under a sacred tree. If the judge decides the case is worthy of consideration, the animal is slaughtered and witnesses are called for the trial which opens the following day. Witnessing is compulsory. Should the case involve two clans, a jury trial is held instead. The defending clan choose ten jurymen and the accusers choose eight. The eighteen-man jury is then divided into two groups of nine, the sacred number of the [Oromo]. The groups are seated at each side of the judge, each chooses its spokesman, and then the case is debated by the two juries . . . When both juries have

> finished their representations, they retire separately. The judge takes action only if both juries agree. By this system revenge within the [clan] is avoided.[66]

In cases of murder, the *abbaa bokkuu* or elders intervene to reconcile the two groups. Blood money is illegal, but is still taken in some cases. The elders set the amount to be paid in order to satisfy the victim's relatives. Then, a reconciliation feast is held. "The victim's relatives stack their arms as a token of peace, and an ox is brought and slaughtered. A member of the victim's family dips the point of his spear in the blood of the ox and hands it to the assassin, thereby indicating that blood has been shed to the satisfaction and vindication of the family. A riotous banquet follows during which the sacrificial ox is devoured."[67] If somebody injures another person, the former is responsible to feed the latter until full recovery is gained.

In case of conflict with non-Oromo groups, the elders convene a meeting for an open-air discussion. All are welcome to attend. As Walter Plowden witnessed in the 1840s in Guduruu: "Their relations with foreign [groups] are settled by a meeting, in the open air, of all who choose to attend, when, standing in a circle leaning on their lances, the elders argue for peace or war—each speaking in his turn, with admirable order, and a proper deference paid to age and character."[68]

Adultery is abhorred and, if committed, the price paid will be heavy. If the husband kills the adulterer (other man), there is no blood on his hands, although he might be in danger of revenge by the relatives of the slain individual. In most cases, disputes and crimes are solved through mediation. Plowden adds: "In all cases not provided for by law (which are not many), a [meeting] is called, when all agree as to the amount of punishment, and all combine to inflict it summarily, even to the burning of the house and despoiling the whole property of the offender."[69]

According to Oromo ethics, political leaders do not have special authority in the legal decision-making process. Marco Bassi, writing of the Boorana, said: "Boran do not dispose of any executive force, nor can anyone, including the political leadership, impose anything on others by the use of force or violence."[70] This is equally true of all Oromo. According to Oromo law, anyone who wants to use force in enforcement against another will be excluded from the society, because that person will have disturbed the peace of the community. Peace is considered not only the absence of strife, but also active cooperation and abiding by customary laws. As Baxter described

it: "Backsliders are simply brought into line by being excluded from the blessing and prayers, even from the exchange of greetings, and hence from the Peace. No man can exist for long as a social, herding or ritual isolate. The last resort, after withholding greetings and blessings, is the curse, which separates its recipient from all social and ritual support."[71]

The assembly has authority over all functions of the court and government, including to fine or exile criminals. As there were no prison cells in Oromoland, those who exhibited unruly behavior and refused to abide by society's ethics could be banned and sent beyond the borders of the territory. Alexander Bulatovich also describes that there was no corporal punishment for minor offenses, and that murder is punished severely, including confiscation of the offender's property.[72] *Gadaa* rules and regulations must be respected by everyone. As Baxter put it, the Oromo "have especially captured the imaginations of travellers and ethnographers because of their ancient, enduring and complex system of age-grading, *gada*, which, it has been consistently reported, has also served as the basis of a uniquely democratic political system."[73]

The Oromo tie their administering of the law to their religious rituals and leaders. It is believed that Waaqa taught the *qaalluus* about the law, ceremonies, and keeping the peace.[74] Exclusion from the rituals itself is a punishment, so everyone is determined to be part of the society and is expected to implement what is required. One cannot simply live in the community; either they have to flee and be counted as dead, or they must conform to the customs. Cooperation is very important among agricultural societies, and people are naturally forced to abide by the law. In the words of Hinnant:

> At the time of creation God gave a body of laws which must be obeyed to ensure continuous well-being. These laws are of two broad types: jural rules and regulations concerning obeisance to God. The latter are the products of the *gada* system and will be discussed below. The former have the concept of *nagea*, peace, as their ultimate concern. Congruent with this principle is the emphasis on restoring peaceful interaction between disputing parties. To be in a state of peace through reconciliation (*arrarsa*) is essential for participation in any religious ceremony, particularly for the recipient of the benefits desired from it. It is believed that if a person participates in a ceremony when not in a state of ritual purity through reconciliation he will gain no supernatural benefit and may indeed anger God. As a result, when it is known that there are arguments involving participants, adjudication and reconciliation must precede the main ritual action.[75]

That law also governs relations with other groups: the peace of the Oromo encompasses everything, including non-Oromo; this is why they are open to assimilating strangers and give them equal privileges. During the *moggaasaa* assimilation ritual, the assimilated groups were given the same rights as the Oromo. When Johann L. Krapf visited Shawa, he observed: "If [Oromo] likes a stranger, he makes him his Mogāsa, or favourite, declaring before the Abadŭla, the governor of a small district, that he has made him his friend, and that no man should touch him. This ceremony is performed before the whole people, and sacrifices are offered. If any one should kill or offend the Mogāsa, he is obliged to pay 100 kum or 100 oxen, which is the price paid by a murderer. If you have become the Mogāsa of [Oromo], you can go through the whole [clan]."[76] Krapf himself was confident that if he visited the area ruled by a certain Jaarraa who was the son and successor to Queen Chamie of the Tuulama Oromo in Shawa, he was sure to be given this privilege. He had once been to the region and observed how welcoming they were to him as well as to his mission.

As outlined in the introduction, the Oromo—numerically speaking—were the most powerful nation in East Africa during much of the nineteenth century. Still today, they are the largest in the region. Despite their position, the Oromo did not want to extend their political dominion, subjugate other peoples, exert central authority, or convert people to their religion.[77] "The ancient Oromo democracy was based on equality, mutual respect, freedom and national liberation. It was morally unacceptable to deprive peoples of their basic human rights. Therefore, the Oromo nation pursued a policy of peaceful coexistence with its neighbors big and small alike."[78] And, as stated before, non-Oromo groups were adopted and "were regarded as the equals of the 'true Oromo.' "[79]

Further, unlike many other groups, the Oromo are open to marginalized minorities. Elsewhere in Ethiopia, certain groups of craftspeople, including tanners, blacksmiths, potters, and others, are socially, politically, economically, and culturally marginalized. Although they produce useful agricultural tools, house wares, and so on, they are considered, among other things, impure, unreliable, cowards, quick to anger, and untrustworthy.[80] Therefore, they are excluded from interactions with their neighbors throughout Ethiopia, who even avoid sharing utensils, tools, and other things with them.

The Oromo, however, welcomed and integrated these workers into their society. For instance, many smiths in the Waliso area (south of Addis Ababa) were incorporated into the Oromo. "The groups

that migrated to the Woliso area from Gurage and Kambata/ Hadiya moved from the type of marginalisation generally described in this book to a situation where they became accepted by Oromo clans and acquired land."[81] They were persecuted in southern Ethiopia among their Kambata and Hadiya neighbors, which forced them to move into Oromo areas. It is difficult for marginalized groups to obtain agricultural land because the mainstream society forces them to depend on their crafts rather than on land for their livelihood. In the Waliso area, however, the Oromo allowed them to own land. Most smiths have taken up farming on land they were allowed to purchase by being incorporated as *moggaasaa* into Oromo clans when they arrived in the area.[82]

This openness may have attracted several other groups of marginalized minorities from southern Ethiopia to the Waliso area, because the Oromo continued to welcome them all. Freeman and Alula write:

> The Idig came to Woliso from different districts of Gurageland in search of land and to get away from the repressive system under which they lived. The first migrants, who were led by Fenk'il Fereja, Aba Arabo, Jufar Negemo, and Dwato Gersamo, settled in this area in the late 1890s. They asked permission from the Oromo clans of the area to settle on their land and became *mogasa* of the Abado clan with whom they lived peacefully. Under the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front Government, at the time of redemarcation of regional boundaries along ethnic lines, a Sebat Bet Gurage representative asked them to accept Gurage ethnic identity, but they refused and opted for an Oromo identity instead.[83]

The Idig also faced exclusion among the Gurage people in southern Ethiopia and thus moved to Oromo areas. Unlike other groups in Ethiopia, it is interesting to note such welcoming extended by the Oromo to the excluded communities and their peaceful coexistence. As described above, their openness is enshrined within their egalitarian ethos and democratic institutions, as well as their foundational philosophy that all humans have the same father, Waaqa. They pay strong attention to friendship, mutual assistance, and living together as enshrined in their *gadaa* system, whose principles include "balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties."[84] This not only contributed to reducing interethnic conflicts, but also to strong ethnic solidarity and integration in Oromo regions.

Examining another region, Herbert Lewis also observed: "What is most striking about Oromo social life in the Ambo area of western Shoa is the stress on neighborhood, friends, voluntary association, and organization for mutual aid and recreation. Although they are conscious of belonging to patrilineages, and recognize obligations to kinsmen, daily life and economic cooperation, partying, mutual aid in times of trouble, are all carried out above all with fellow members of the community and co-members of voluntary associations such as *iddir*, the burial and mutual aid society which informally serves to demarcate communities."[85]

Levine, who also studied the Amhara ethnic group, found stark contrasts between them and the Oromo. "Precisely the opposite condition [to the Oromo] seemed to me to characterize the Amhara of northern Shoa and my impression has been confirmed by others. Amhara live in closed communities, hard for newcomers to join. Newcomers are regarded with suspicion and, if they belong to other ethnic groups, find it extremely difficult to gain acceptance."[86] Legesse corroborates that notion:

> Hence, one notable difference between Oromo and Amhara assimilation is that the Oromo gradually grant full citizenship to the peoples they assimilate, a fact that steadily swells their numbers from generation to generation. Their success derives from the fact that they give ample elbow room to the assimilated aliens who are allowed to: (1) *Merge completely* and claim common ancestry with their Oromo hosts; (2) *Retain their identity* and become new corporate entities (clans) inside Oromo society; (3) *Form an alliance* with the Oromo hosts and duplicate Oromo institutions for themselves. These are the three different strategies of assimilation available to aliens at different stages of becoming Oromo.[87]

He adds that Amhara assimilation, on the contrary, "is limited to elite levels and is half-hearted in approach." He continues: "[Emperor] Menelik's ambivalence to his own grandson and heir is pervasive in Amhara culture. Assimilation opens the door a crack; it does not fling it wide open. There is always a trail of evidence pointing to the assimilé's alien descent that can be brought to the surface, whenever it becomes necessary to slam the door shut, and turn against an assimilated ally."[88]

It is important to note that the Oromo nation is open and welcoming in spite of competition for resources. The Oromos' openness does not imply that they enjoyed an excess of unoccupied land in Oromoland; indeed, there have been conflicts over resources among

the Oromo themselves. Rather, the welcoming stance reflects a basic understanding of humanity rooted in the Oromo indigenous institutions. It also shows the significance and tenacity of the Oromo indigenous governance system. Through centuries of republican democratic government, legal traditions, and religious practices, it has become a lifestyle for the Oromo to accept, live with, and treat non-Oromos equally.

Moreover, the Oromo religious belief in Waaqa (see chapter 5) teaches followers to be open to others and to treat fellow human beings as equals. At the time of adoption, Oromo religion and law forbids making biological and social distinctions between groups. "The more concrete reason [for treating non-Oromo groups fairly] is the moral obligation sanctioned by religion. In view of their indigenous religion, treating a brother or sister (who is considered a child of *Waaqa*) unfairly is an offence against God. In Oromo traditional belief, being human alone is reason enough for treating another human being morally."[89]

The deeply rooted concept of peace in the Oromo religion, according to Phillipson, "teaches them to care for strangers bound on an errand of peace, so that their existence in the land of shadows may be the brighter for a record of good deeds."[90] The religious practices are part of the *gadaa* system, which on its own teaches the people to be open and welcoming to all. According to the *gadaa* system, group interactions follow a pattern of egalitarianism without domineering powers. In the words of Levine: "Important decisions in the traditional Oromo system are made not by domineering authorities but through the respectful interchange of views among men whose inequalities of status are not stressed."[91] From the lowest task to the biggest job, "important activities in Oromo society are carried out not by individualistic competition and bartering but on a highly cooperative basis."[92]

The Oromo believe that all human beings have the same root in spite of differences. They believe that Waaqa is the creator of all, and thus, all are His children. They do not emphasize natural differences. "The Oromo traditional perception of human differences, in essence, is the same as the difference between identical twins, that is, the difference within the same human family. Because this kind of difference is one of diversity within unity, the fact that difference exists is not a source of conflict. But unity and diversity become bases for conflict when humans abuse them."[93]

Traditional beliefs require every Oromo to not make distinctions, such as superiority and inferiority between human beings, but, rather,

to consider everyone as equal brothers and sisters so that peace will prevail. The Oromo want to be treated fairly by others. To get fair treatment, they first extend fair treatment, and they expect the same from others. This has become the norm, to the extent that "Ill treatment does not exist in the language of our *gadaa*. We want everything to remain in peace."[94] Almost all Oromo indigenous institutions—including women's institutions—are inclusive of other groups, regardless of background.

One such gender-specific institution is *addooyyee,* which is a friendship institution that starts at puberty. When girls mature, they make arrangements for mates, attend to their physical appearance and hairdos, and prepare for their eventual weddings, such as decorating *qabee* (special utensils for carrying roasted and buttered barley) and selecting types of cloth to wear during special occasions. *Addooyyee* involves oath-taking between two girls. The main part of the oath is not to say this special friend's proper name until death; instead, they only call each other *addooyyee.* Whether in each other's presence or not, it is forbidden under their oath to use the proper name of the other. If they do, the oath is broken; therefore, women take considerable precautions to keep the oath. By breaking the oath, they would also be degrading the friendship.

The oath is to be kept a secret. In this way, the Oromo *addooyyee* ritual is related to secret societies of West Africa, whose rituals are not open to the public.[95] Before two girls become *addooyyee*, they hold various meetings with each other and sometimes with other girls. They do each other's hair, give each other advice, discuss their mate selections, and do chores together. They also shop together, and share advice about things like hair ointments and the usefulness of *ilkaan tumachuu. Ilkaan tumachuu* refers to the traditional practice of beautification of the gums. Gums that are brownish in color are generally regarded as more attractive, so girls whose gums are pale seek to darken them. *Addooyyee* share friendship, accompany one another on holidays, and help each other in times of illness or if something happens to their parents. They arrange food *buddeen baalaa* (thick bread) and visit each other. This useful institution promotes peace among Oromo women. *Addooyyee* could be two related girls, but they could also be non-related Oromo. After marrying, they continue to call each other *addooyyee* and arrange to see each other when it is appropriate.[96]

The *addooyyee* girls decorate each others' clothes and discuss what type of outfits to wear at public occasions, on holidays, and so on. According to Plowden, who saw western Oromo girls, writes that their dress includes "a skirt studiously ornamented, and fringed

with the blue cloth, and by way of petticoat, a hide, by butter and assiduity rendered as soft as velvet; this is ornamented with broken beads of various colours, tastefully sewn in round the skirt, and being arranged so as to fall in graceful folds, it exceedingly becomes a good figure."[97]

After marriage, women also wear various decorations. Plowden continues: "The women, according to the wealth of their husbands, also wear rows of beads round the loins, sometimes as many as fourteen or fifteen, and three or four of a more precious kind round the neck. They also wear large and massive ivory rings on the arms and ankles; on the latter, also silver bangles, and in the hair a species of ivory comb, inlaid with black wood."[98]All of these items need to be locally made or bought. The Oromo are known for their work in brass. According to Richard Pankhurst: "Some of the finest workers in brass were to be found among the [Oromos], as [Henry] Salt noticed early in the nineteenth century. Three-quarters of a century later, Charles Michel confirmed that the [Oromos] of Kaffa and Mecha made chains of copper as well as bracelets and other ornaments, while Mérab later observed that [Oromo] craftsmen were renowned for their massive copper bracelets."[99] The *addooyyees* used to discuss where to find them locally or purchase them; they also deliberated together over which were of good quality.

An Oromo woman needs to have a container, called a *qabee,* filled with roasted and buttered barley beans to serve after her wedding ceremony. Sometimes she may take with her two *qabees* so that she can serve guests right after the wedding as well as later. Because *qabees* are culturally important, a girl should have at least one during her marriage. *Addooyyees* help each other determine what type of *qabee* to get, what type of decoration it should have, and the number of *qabees* they may need. One may inform the other about the type of decoration she wants, or they may also decorate them themselves. Speaking of the Kenya Oromo, Hobley writes: "The women are very clever at all sorts of plaiting work. Amongst other things, they turn out beautifully made vessels for holding milk; these are flask-shaped, and entirely constructed of plaited fiber, and yet are perfectly watertight."[100]

Oromo women also decorated themselves beautifully. When he visited them in the nineteenth century, Gleichen saw that many Oromo women "wear large bangles of zinc, copper, iron, or ivory, and quantities of glass beads, the usual necklaces of large coral-red beads harmonising well with their bronze skins."[101] The decorative items were either imported (see chapter 4) or locally made. Most travelers in nineteenth-century Oromia described the Oromo as good makers of various ornaments. Gleichen continues: "The good spears, like many

other good things in the country, are made in Leka or Jimma. The making of swords and spears, by the way, is the only trade at which the Abyssinians condescend to work. All other articles are made by the [Oromos], including leather and wickerwork ornamented with beads, baskets, leather water-jugs, etc. etc."[102]

The *addooyyees'* most common and simple task is to arrange their hair. There are various hair styles, many of which require specific items to arrange them. According to Plowden, "The hair is tressed by winding it dexterously round a straw, each ringlet of that thickness, and falling equally from the centre all round-those over the forehead being cut, so as to reach the eyebrows."[103] In general, Oromo girls as well as married women have used many types of beautiful items for hairstyles, outfits, and other personal decoration. Alexander Bulatovich, who visited Oromia in the mid-1890s writes: "[Oromo] love all kinds of decoration: bracelets and rings are in wide use among them. These are made out of copper, lead, ivory and iron. They even wear rings on their toes. They put bracelets in bunches on their arms, on the arm above the elbow and on their feet. You sometimes come across such large and heavy bracelets that you are amazed at how they can work with them."[104]

On the little Oromo girls and married women, Gleichen confirms: "Little girls have, strangely enough, the top of their heads shaved, with the hair hanging bushily round the tonsure . . . As they grow up, the hair is frizzed out in a variety of artistic forms."[105] Waugh, another explorer, also reports on hairstyles: "[Oromo] girls came out to wave to us, tossing their bundles of plaited hair."[106]

At the time of their weddings and afterward, women need useful information on how to manage their marriages. If a man can afford to marry more than one wife, an Oromo man has to give each of his wives a certain number of beads, a separate house, cows, and other items. "Each wife in turn, in her own house, prepares her husband's breakfast, supper, mead, and butter; she also brings water for washing his feet, the most indispensable of all, and prepares his bed, and if the cry of war arises, she saddles his horse for him while he puts on his belt and knife."[107] Plowden mentions that he lived with Oromo wives in Guduruu for a while and developed an intimate but not a sexual relationship with some of them. They were open and hospitable to him, and in turn, he gave the women beads and other items. It is also interesting to note that Oromo dress in Guduruu and Raayyaa in Tigray are basically similar.[108]

Indeed, Oromo women were considered the most beautiful in Africa. Traversing Oromia in the 1890s, Alexander Bulatovich

confirms that Oromo women are "very beautifully built."[109] In addition, Oromo women were described as very attractive and slender, as Ronald Segal put it: "They were sought for their commonly slim shape, regular features, celebrated gazelle-like eyes, and long, straight, or slightly curled hair. Market convention ascribed peculiar beauty to Oromo girls and peculiar intelligence to Oromo boys."[110]

In most Ethiopian communities, women are considered subordinate and expected to be always submissive to men. But among the Oromo, women are extended more equal regard. According to Timothy Fernyhough: "The non-Muslim Oromo, for example, have a 'relatively benign view of women' and may have a somewhat different view of female sexuality than prevails elsewhere in Ethiopia. A recent survey of eleven major national groups suggests that the Oromo lie at one end of a spectrum by according women high social status, while the Afar and Anuak accord them low status, with the Amhara falling somewhere in between."[111] It seems that the Oromo regard for their women makes them more equal to men than women in other groups in this part of Africa. In the words of R. W. Beachey: "The [Oromo] were distinctive in that they assigned a higher place to their women than was usual among African [groups], and they tended to monogamy."[112]

In *gadaa* government, Oromo women would not have been appointed to high positions, but had parallel organizations with which they defended their rights. They also were active in many aspects of Oromo culture.[113] As we have seen in the chapter 1, Oromo women also participated in military campaigns since their early expansion by digging trenches, raising ramparts, fortifying camps, and providing supplies to soldiers using pack animals.[114] Johann L. Krapf also confirms their role in fighting: "The weapons of the [Oromos] are a spear, sword, and shield, and they all ride on horseback; even the women gallop beside or behind their husbands."[115]

The *gadaa* government pays attention to protecting human rights, and crimes, particularly against pregnant women, are not tolerated. According to John Trimingham: "The wife has few rights in [Oromo] law, she may not inherit, but her social position is good, she goes about freely, has considerable influence, and travellers have contrasted her position with that of Afar and Somali women."[116] High-ranking *gadaa* officials could be removed from power if they mistreated women, as in the case of *abbaa gadaa* Wale Wacch'u of Boorana (1722 to 1730). Asmarom Legesse writes:

> But the final incident that provoked his dismissal was that a pregnant woman had come to his council and asked for water. He and his

> councilors told her that pregnant cows drink water on all fours and that she should do likewise—hands and knees on the ground. Denying a Borana, who committed no crime, access to water is a crime. Denying a pregnant woman such help is an even bigger crime, because she carries a gift of God. The Gumi of Wale Wacch'u (1722–30) decided to have these *hayyus*, including the Abba Gada, chased out of the seat of luba government. They were exiled. They said to Wale Wacch'u *Warri ch'uf sitti orme*! "All the people have banished you!"[117]

NATURAL RESOURCES AND NAGAA OROMOO

Another important reason that the Oromo treat others equally, as themselves, is that Oromo do not classify territory as a material resource under someone's specific control, but rather believe that "water and grazing should be open to all, even to foreigners."[118] Natural resources should be utilized in agreement with neighbors, regardless of background. As Baxter writes:

> In normal times, water, browse and grazing also form parts of a cosmological system which requires them to be conserved and shared equitably. Water, grazing and soil are there for use by people only for so long as they pray to and offer sacrifices to God (Waaka) and keep his Peace among themselves. This value is not limited to pastoralists, throughout Oromo the utilisation of all natural resources has a religious dimension because Waaka is involved. To ignore the triple stranded relationship between Waaka, natural resources and people is to invite retribution. In practice this means that the proper allocation and use of natural resources requires the prayers, blessings and sacrifices; that is activities by a ritually bounded congregation not a politically or territorially bounded group. It is in such congregations, I have urged, that ethnic identities are nurtured.[119]

The government and political authorities alone cannot maintain peace in a country. "Peace can be maintained not only by administrative activities and legal procedures but also by raising the awareness of people about its importance. Through blessing, prayer, ritual gathering, ceremonial undertaking and meetings, assemblies, work places, and occasional performances, the Oromo reinforce values that promote peace."[120] This philosophy contributed to ethnic solidarity and lessened conflict in East Africa. Dewo continues: "The lesson to be learned from the discussion of the Oromo conception of peace, its mechanism of peacemaking, and exploration of its practical application is that not everything traditional is useless and irrelevant, and not everything modern should be embraced as morally desirable and

practical. In the current context, both must be considered in terms of what problems they solve, and to what extent they make life worth living."[121]

In the *gadaa* governance structure of the Oromo, everybody participated, and everyone contributed to peace. As an all-encompassing democratic institution, the system provided:

> 1, the institutions for self-rule at central and local levels; 2, the right and the mechanism to participate in public affairs; 3, enjoyment of basic rights and liberties including freedom of speech, the right to own private property, and the right to debate freely public issues and reach compromise solutions; 4, the procedures for selection and peaceful change of leaders every eight years; 5, accountability of leaders and the right of recall (called *buqisu*) of those who fail in their responsibilities; 6, the concept of supremacy of law (*seraa-tuma chaffe*); 7, balanced representation of clans, lineages and groups in *Gada* offices; 8, the right to make and obey their own laws and regulations through their own elected officials; 9, the settlement of disputes according to the law through neutral and impartial judges; 10, the concept of pluralism in participating in politics through the five *missensa* or parties; 11, the concept of *nagaa* and *araraa* (peace and reconciliation) for solving conflicts instead of resorting to force; 12, the concept of popular sovereignty where periodically the general assembly decided the most important issues affecting the people.[122]

To sum up, "Oromo society is very rich and diverse in culture, history and legal traditions. Many types of CDR [Customary Dispute Resolutions] abound in the society."[123]

Ethnic Integration in East Africa: An Overview

In the first two chapters, we have seen considerable integration of Oromo and other groups in Wanbara, Gojjam, Gondar, Wallo, and Raayya, beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing today. "It is extremely difficult to give an intelligible account of the physical differences between the Abyssinian and the [Oromo], because by now, owing to intermarriage, many Abyssinian families have nearly as much [Oromo] blood in them as the [Oromo] themselves."[124]

In this section, we will briefly examine cases of integration elsewhere in East Africa. Their practice of welcoming strangers led to the Oromos' intermingling with and adopting other cultures. As outlined in the introduction, in northern Kenya, for instance, the Garre

are a mixture of the Oromo and Ogaden Somali groups. Another Somali group called Sab or Rahanwin, who live in southern Somalia, are also a mixture of Oromo. The Somali in the Ogaden, Juba, and Wabe Shabelle regions have been in close contact with the Oromo for more than four centuries.

The Oromo may have been influenced by the Somali and Afar settlers of the region to embrace Islam. Levine writes: "Indeed, some of the eastern, Barentu [Oromo clan] have so acculturated to their Somali neighbors that they have assumed a Somali genealogy and are counted as members of the Ogaden Somali family by the Somali themselves. The Kereyu [clan] of the [Oromo] is likewise reported to have adopted many aspects of the culture of their Afar neighbors."[125] The Rendille also adopted the Oromo language and culture. They might have come from the east under pressure from Ogadenis into their present habitat. "In face and habits they resemble the [Oromos] so closely that it seems impossible to doubt that they are an offshoot of this [nation]."[126]

As well, many of the ethnic groups in today's eastern Kenya and southern Somalia speak and understand the Oromo language. They also have assimilated into Oromo society, accepting their institutions, *gadaa* government, and religion. It is worthy to note that the Oromo did not conquer these groups, but lived and continue to live with them in harmony, even though there was occasional friction among them. This dynamic shows that the Oromo people are welcoming and on friendly terms with their neighbors, regardless of background. Some of these groups in Kenya are of Bantu origin, unlike the Cushitic Oromo, but they continued to have good relations with them. All are human beings, after all.

In the south, the Ottu section of the Gujii Oromo also adopted the Sidama cultural way of life and language, to the extent that the other section of the Oromo call them "half-Sidama," and those who were assimilated to Derasa, "half-Derasa." The same dynamic is at work in Oromo-Gurage relations, particularly in the Soddo region. Many speak Gurage, while many Gurage have Oromo names and speak Oromo. The Oromo adopted the *enset* culture, which was widely attributed to the Gurage.[127] As Donald Levine writes: "Their [Oromo] penchant for affiliating with others disposed them to adopt the cultures of other as well as to share their own culture with outsiders."[128] We have seen in chapter 2 how the Oromo were assimilated into the Agaw and Amhara culture north of the Abbay River. Everywhere the Oromo settled, they have essentially assimilated others, eventually leading to the intermingling of peoples. Many have adopted Oromo culture,

language, and institutions. As Legesse described: "It is clear that the Oromo introduced to Ethiopia the strategy of *mass incorporation of aliens*, a strategy that emperors Susenyos and Menelik attempted to use occasionally."[129]

They were also assimilated into various groups. Bassi summarizes:

> Being in contact with different peoples, interacting with different political structures, and having to cope with different physical environments, the various Oromo groups developed different responses to the new situations. On the ethnic level, many different autochthonous peoples were integrated into the Oromo kinship system. In the sphere of political organization there was, in some cases, the emergence of crystallized roles of power, sometimes developing into centralized monarchies. On the religious level, the Christian and Muslim faiths replaced, in different measures, the traditional religion. In the economic sphere the traditional pastoral economy became integrated, to greater or lesser extents, with agriculture and commerce. And a considerable number of Oromo groups became assimilated into the Abyssinian kingdom by the process of acculturation that continues to this day.[130]

Integration is a universal feature across the globe characterized by a two-way, rather than a unidirectional, process. The Oromo case is remarkable because they treat others as equals and as brothers and sisters. Assimilation is a bidirectional process. Kent writes, "In order for individuals to feel as if they belong to, and are accepted by, a specific ethnic group, there has to be an emic-etic two-way interplay. If both emic and etic perspectives are the same, a person can assimilate, even as an adult."[131] Interethnic integration is, therefore, one of the major aspects of modern ethnic processes in many African countries. These integrations form parts of the shrinking ethnic boundaries and considerable intergroup assimilations around the world.[132]

4

A Commercial Hub

Oromia in Nineteenth-Century East Africa

At the opening of the nineteenth century, significant developments along the Red Sea began to make a considerable impact on Oromia. The invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798 heralded a new chapter in the region's history. Following the French occupation of Egypt, British interests and activities in the region grew considerably. As Mordechai Abir writes: "Boats of the Indian Navy occasionally visited the ports of Yemen, Hijaz, Egypt and Ethiopia; and the Factory of the Bombay government in Mokha and its representative in Jedda, together with the British consul-general in Egypt, consistently kept an eye on developments."[1]

As the Red Sea basin began opening up to Europeans, an increasing number of British, German, Italian, Austrian, and French travelers as well as missionaries flocked to the region. After the British occupied Aden, Yemen, in 1839, the French began to observe British activity in the region and sought to acquire a base on the coast for themselves. British and French nationals thus began to vie for control along the Red Sea coast and in the Gulf of Aden.

French occupation of Egypt was short-lived (1798 to 1801), but it, too, had a lasting impact: the rise of Muhammad Ali to power in Egypt. Soon after consolidating his power, Muhammad Ali embarked upon territorial expansions. Turning his interest to the south, he occupied Sudan in 1821 and began to sponsor travelers farther down the White Nile. Moving into Ethiopia, his advances were cut short by two defeats when confronting Emperor Yohannes IV (1872 to 1889), but he managed to hold onto the Red Sea coast and Arabia, where he ousted the moribund Ottoman Empire. This Egyptian occupation of

the Red Sea coast had a considerable effect on the revival of trade on the Red Sea.[2]

These political and economic developments in the Red Sea basin increased the demand for Oromo items of trade. As external as well as internal trade gained momentum, the merchant class flourished in Ethiopia, and several chiefs benefited from the taxation of passing caravans.[3] However, as Abir notes: "As most of the exportable products of Ethiopia came from the [Oromo] and Sidama areas of the south-west and south, the mass of the Ethiopian people were hardly touched by the new prosperity and remained just as poor as they had been in the past."[4]

Nevertheless, the nineteenth century became a time of flourishing commerce throughout Oromia. Oromo caravans traversed long distances as far as Darfur in the west and to the coast of the Indian Ocean in the east. Oromo crews dominated the dhows traveling along the Indian Ocean coast, and there were considerable commercial networks throughout Oromia. All the way from the Guduruu region to the Gibee Oromo states in the southwest, and from central to eastern Oromia, the Oromo were interconnected through trade. Pan-Oromo relations and communications, as well as relations with other groups, expanded considerably. Several market centers served as a forum for intra-Oromo relations and also with other groups. "In Ethiopia the [Oromo] have many traditional markets which when first described were found to contain European and other foreign goods as well as local produce; and the [Oromo] are known to have had 'direct contact with neighbouring kingdoms and trade connections with the Somali coast.' "[5]

Markets were held weekly near villages and towns, bringing various Oromo clans together. While traveling to Lake Rudolph (also spelled Rudolf; now known as Lake Turkana) across Ethiopia in 1898, a British traveler M. S. Wellby noted: "Throughout the whole of this [Oromo] country, we constantly passed through markets, or gobiyehs, many of which are held in each district on certain days."[6] Commercial centers were indeed considered institutions, where political, economic, and social functions were actively implemented, and where people obtained the latest information, shared ideas, sold their products, and made friends. As Abir writes: "The rural population attended the markets not only to sell their surpluses and satisfy their limited needs, but also to meet their neighbours, inspect their produce and livestock, and hear the latest news and announcements made by the governor."[7] Public announcements were usually made by the governors in the marketplaces. Every day, there would be a meeting in every

district, and traders could attend them and return home with information to share. The Oromo updated themselves on every aspect of life in this way. They learned what was going on in other parts of the region, from political and economic changes to religious practices and items of trade, as well as gaining information that allowed them to help each other in times of attack from the outside. During his visit to Oromia and Ethiopia in the mid-1890s, the Russian explorer Alexander Bulatovich observed the commerce of Oromia:

> [The Oromo] have great love for commerce and exchange. In each little area there is at least one marketplace, where they gather once a week, and there is hardly an area which is relatively larger and populated which does not have marketplaces strewn throughout. Usually the marketplace is a clearing near a big road in the center of [Oromo] settlements . . . Rarely does any [Oromo] man or woman skip market day. They come, even with empty arms or with a handful of barley or peas, with a few coffee beans or little bundles of cotton, in order to chat, to hear news, to visit with neighbors and to smoke a pipe in their company. But besides this petty bargaining, the main commerce of the country is in the hands of the [Oromo], and they retain it despite the rivalry of the Abyssinians . . . They export coffee, gold, musk, ivory, and leather; and they import salt, paper materials, and small manufactured articles. They are very enterprising and have commercial relations with the Sudan, Kaffa, and the [African groups].[8]

All Roads Lead to Oromia: The Western and Southwestern Regions

As the Muslim world reawakened its interest in Oromo products, several Muslim traders (*jabarti*) flocked to the western, southern, and southwestern parts of Oromia. Massawa was an important outlet for Ethiopian commerce in general and in Oromia in particular. Indeed, according to Hotten: "Whoever possesses Massowah can command the whole commerce of Abyssinia and [Oromia], in the Red Sea."[9] Merchants had to negotiate, pay taxes, and hire guides all the way from Massawa to Basso, the last mercantile station in Ethiopia.[10] If they wanted to cross the Abbay River into Oromia, they had to do the same with the Oromo. Then merchants from Gondar, Warra Himano, and elsewhere from the north began to arrive in Basso and to arrange with the Basso chiefs and Oromo guides for their departure farther to the south.[11]

The merchant class in Ethiopia was not very large, but was patronized by the Christian ruling chiefs, to whom the traders

offered gifts in addition to paying taxes. Three-fourths of trade at this time was in the hands of Muslims; Christian merchants were in the minority. The Muslims were able to monopolize trade on the Ethiopian plateau because they had cultivated good commercial networks in the region and also throughout the Muslim world. Thus, most of the caravan traders were the *jallaba* (Sudanese Muslims), the Afar, Somali, and Arabs. But the indigenous rulers themselves were also involved; the Ethiopian emperors and the monarchical rulers of the Oromo states actively participated in trade. As George Huntingford observed, "Though [Oromo] who lived anywhere near a trade route used to trade in a small way, it was in the Gibē States that [Oromo] trading developed to the fullest, under the influence mainly of Moslem traders."[12] Caravans of traders were well-armed and well-guarded, especially those venturing as far as Enarya, and they traveled in large numbers. They were used to hard fights and to carrying logistics as the soldiery. "They have no traits which distinguish them from any other class of the community; and the merchant must stuff his followers with meat and mead like the military chief, paying, in addition, regular wages."[13]

Oromia was the country richest in commercial products in East Africa. Its products found a path through Shawa to the Gulf of Aden and Somalia to the Indian Ocean; via various channels in Ethiopia to Sudan and Egypt; and via Wallo to Afar country and on to the Red Sea; as well as via Tigre to Massawa. Another route went to the White Nile, Kordofan, and Darfur. Darfurian traders preferred to go to Ethiopia for Oromo products rather than traveling to Egypt. The famous "forty-days road" from Kobbe, capital of Darfur, to Asyut in Egypt for the Darfurian caravans was a trip of about 1,450 kilometers (900 miles). According to George Valentia: "On the other hand, Cobbé is only distant from Gondar between five and six hundred miles [800 and 965 kilometers], and the greater part of the road is through a fertile country, instead of the inhospitable deserts of the interior of Africa. Even in the present [1804] disturbed state of Abyssinia, caravans still make their way to Darfur unattached, and find a safer passage than among the predatory [groups] of wandering Arabs."[14]

The caravans moved slowly, packing everything on transport animals, and it would often take a year to travel from Enarya to Massawa, a distance of about 1,210 kilometers (750 miles). The Gibee Oromo states in Oromia were the great market for this part of Africa. "The countries richest in commercial produce are the [Oromo] provinces of Enarea, Djimma and those adjacent. They abound in ivory, zibbad,

excellent coffee, wax, and spices; gold is found in the sands, and these districts are accustomed to trade with the Abyssinian caravans."[15] Traders from all directions in this part of Africa converged there to buy luxury products. Merchants from as far away as Zanzibar in the south and even Timbuktu in the west, in addition to regular Arab merchants coming by way of Sudanese, Red Sea, and Somali coastal ports, visited the region. In the words of John Hotten: "Enarea is frequented by traders from Zanzibar and Sajoora, from Massowah and Khartoom, from Darfoor and Khoordoofan, and, it is said, even from Darsala and Timbuctoo."[16] Darsala was formerly a kingdom west of Darfur in what is known today as Chad. These caravans set up commercial networks within each group; along the trading routes, they were received by their friends, who escorted them to the next site.

Along the routes, the caravans had encampments where they could rest overnight. The travelers would erect temporary huts and tie their pack animals during the night. While taking respite, some travelers were sent out to cut grass to feed animals, while others would trade with nearby villagers for supplies. Thus, although they were traveling to and from large established marketplaces, the traders would also make commercial transactions along the way. This interaction fostered cultural exchanges, ethnic relations, and even marriages. Some trading groups, especially smaller ones, had cultivated friendships with the local people. As Hotten explains it: "The small traders who carry goods from market to market, disperse themselves at night in the villages amongst their friends, as also do those who carry salt."[17]

The Dubbisa Institution

Commerce was a well-organized activity throughout much of the nineteenth century, planned according to established trade routes and favorable seasons of the year. Travel arrangements facilitated movements by the caravans as well as by foreigners wanting to travel to western and southwestern Oromia. As mentioned above, Basso was the last big market center in Ethiopia, and it was common for talks regarding protection for caravans to be arranged in advance with the chiefs of Basso, as well as representatives of the Oromo chiefs south of the Abbay River. Basso chiefs, as well as the caravan leaders, met every August with Oromo representatives at the Abbay River to discuss the general political, economic, and climatic conditions in Oromia. This institution is known as *dubbisa;* literally, "greeting," or

"conversation." According to Charles Beke, who personally observed the practice of *dubbisa* in the 1840s:

> On Naásie Máriam (the Feast of the Holy Virgin in the month of Naásie, being the 21st of the month, and corresponding with our 26th of August), the *shums* (authorities) of Baso go down to the river, where they are met by the people of Gúderu; and mutual enquiries take place from the opposite banks of the river, which is not yet passable, as to how they have respectively passed the rains, what political or other changes have occurred, whether there has been plenty or scarcity, what are the prospects, &c. This, in the [Oromo] language, is called *dubissa*, meaning "conversation" or "talk"—"palaver."[18]

Dubbisa was considered an icebreaker for the resumption of trade into western Oromia. Before a caravan could venture to the south, its travelers would need general information about the political conditions, security, and so on. They might also arrange logistics, such as where they would stay overnight, as well as sending notice to friends to be ready for their arrival, and to indicate what items of trade they were bringing to the markets. Political information would have been particularly important to obtain; in the case of a governor's replacement, for example, the traders would want to send emissaries to the new chief in order to cultivate a relationship. Before a caravan could cross the Abbay River, particularly to the south where they would have to traverse difficult territories ruled by competing governors, such advance notice would have been essential.

A mutual arrangement on both sides of the river was needed for trade to flow. When the Oromo attended the Basso market and other markets north of the river, they needed protection, as well as information; for instance, on where to stay overnight, or the conditions of transactions. The northern caravans needed the same when traveling to the south. Among other concerns, security for themselves and their goods was crucial. They could be stopped in their path by the Oromo chiefs. In one such incident, in 1845, a guide named Gobana Lagas had a long and stormy discussion with a party of the Oromo in Guduruu when British Consul Walter Plowden accompanied them to the south. In contrast, after moving away from the bank of the river well into the Oromo areas, Plowden was astonished by the manly and welcoming behavior of the Oromo.[19] The merchants were provided with food and drinks on their way. The Oromo chiefs in each district provided the logistics; Plowden informs us that on one occasion, the merchants were drunk and were singing or howling Oromo songs furiously.[20]

Caravan Songs

Indeed, merchants were known to perform Oromo songs and dances during their travels. While moving into and out of the Gibee region, they would sing songs in praise of commerce, such as this:

Afaan Oromoo:

> *Sia arfaasa yo awwaara saaqan malee, sia gannaa yo dhoqqee dhiitan malee attamin deegaa ba'u, amma deegni hamaadha. Nama dheeraa gabaabsa, gabaabaa badduu baasa taa'umsa doombii godha, uffannaa moofaa godha, waamicha badde godha. Niitii nama deegaadha waamicha malee dhaqxxe as ta'ii malee galtee, galtee dhirsashe nokkortee akka waan dhirsa dhaane.*

English:

> Even in the autumn season they walk on the dust! Even in the winter season they trample the mud! How can one escape from poverty? For poverty is a misfortune. Tall men it shortens; short ones it destroys wholly. Of the chairs it makes little stools; of clothes it makes rags. It sends away invitations. The wife of the poor man goes away without invitations. Without "sit down here," she returns to her house. She goes home and quarrels with her husband, as if he had beaten her.[21]

The Oromo made their first appearance in the Gojjam markets toward the end of the rainy season, usually in September. This would have been a sign that the roads south of the Abbay River had opened up and that conditions were conducive for the northern caravan to cross the river. They would cross the Abbay depending on the height of the river. In the words of Charles Beke:

> About Máskal, or the Invention of the Cross (17th of Maskarrem = 26th September), the first [Oromos] make their appearance at market, bringing cotton, cloths, and leather-bags, and taking back butter. Last season (1842–43) I was at market on the 3rd of October, when there were about fifty of these [Oromos] there, and I was told that a few had crossed over on the previous Monday (September 26th). They now see how the river is, and then begin bringing over slaves—at first only three or four, but gradually increasing in number, till Hedár Mikael (12th of Hedár = 20th November), on which day the *full* season is said to commence; the merchants being then able to cross the river with cattle, ass-loads of goods, &c. It thus continues till Sénie Mikael (12th of Sénie = 18th June), a period of seven months; after which date the commencement of the rains puts a stop to the regular trade. But

> merchandise and slaves still continue to be brought over, according to the demand, till Hámlie Abbo (5th of Hámlie = 11th July), when all communication between the two banks of the river ceases till it is renewed at the following *Dubissa*.[22]

Every Saturday, the chiefs of Basso guided the caravan to the banks of the Abbay with an armed force. Taken together, the returning Oromo, members of the northern caravans, the travelers, servants, and soldiers could number in the thousands. They would start the trip on Saturday and, after crossing the river, would reach Icaaraa on the south side of the Abbay River on Sunday, arriving on the Guduruu plateau by Monday morning, which was Assandabo's market day. Assandabo, in addition to being the main market of the Guduruu region, was the place where goods were counted and customs levied. It also served as a resting place for traders before the market got busy.

The guides not only were related to the Oromo of Guduruu, but they also worked with Oromo dealers to arrange the peaceful arrival and passage of the caravans. For example, in 1845, when Walter Plowden accompanied the caravan to Guduruu, he observed: "This chief of Basso was a man related to, and with great influence amongst, the chiefs of Goodroo."[23] The particular chief to whom Plowden referred had introduced him to an Oromo guide named Gobana, with whom he performed a friendship ritual for protection. The chief of Basso, whose duty it was to arrange peaceful travel to western Oromia, was sometimes offered gifts. Plowden offered him a matchlock and a turban. The guides were also accompanied by their brothers or relatives on the most dangerous roads.[24]

Plowden observed that in different regions of Guduruu, there was a market on each day of the week, and the numbers present at each could range from 3,000 to 5,000.[25] From the Assandabo market day on Monday, traders could reach Embabo's Thursday market in half a day's journey, or they could move on to Kombolcha, from where they could branch off westward to the markets of Horroo, Amuruu, and Giddaa. Toward the direction of Leeqaa, they could also attend the Friday market at Watiyyo. From there, they would stay overnight at Burqaa Abbo and Tulluu Amara, and then reach the Sobboqa market on Sunday. Next, after two days' journey across Tiibbe, traders could reach the big Leeqaa market of Billo, held on Tuesdays. Spending several days at Billo, traders could proceed to the Gibee valley[26] or to the Gullisoo, Najjoo, or Sayyoo commercial centers in western Wallaggaa.

The districts of Horroo, Guduruu, and Jimmaa-Raare comprised the most important trade network, connecting western Oromia to Gondar, Gojjam, Sudan, Wallo, and beyond. Basso in Gojjam and Billo in the Leeqaa region were the two most important commercial centers, but lesser markets were also in between. Sobboqa was the most important market of Jimmaa-Raare, and Watiyyo, Qobboo, and especially Assandabo/Qawo were the most significant in Guduruu. Assandabo was by far the biggest market center between Basso and Jiren or the Gibee states. The Oromo of Wallaggaa, Jimmaa, and possibly Calliya converged here on market days. Assandabo was a small town of about 1,000 inhabitants when Guglielmo Massaja visited it in 1852, but on market days 100,000 could be present.[27]

The Oromo of Wallaggaa and Jimmaa brought various items of trade to the Assandabo market. Gold was brought from Wallaggaa, ivory from the Gibee states, the Sibu region, and Sayyoo; and coffee was brought from Wallaggaa, Enarya, and Jimmaa. On market days, some 100,000 kilos of coffee were sold at the Billo market. Also from the Gibee valley, traders brought to the Horroo markets such items as hides, tobacco, cotton, honey, and civet. Other items included "daggers with well-wrought blades and ivory handles very elegantly inlaid with silver, as well as cloths with ornamented borders."[28] Such items were manufactured in Limmuu-Enarya and, according to Charles Beke, they indicated that "manufactures flourish here in a higher degree than anywhere else in this quarter of Africa."[29] Enarya was the main source of trade attracting caravans from elsewhere, including foreign travelers. Charles Beke continued, "Enárya is of most importance to Europeans as the main source of the trade of Abyssinia; almost all the coffee, and a large proportion of the ivory and slaves brought to Baso market, and thence carried by the Kafilahs . . . northward and eastward, being the produce of this country."[30] Traders from Wallo, Tigre, and Gojjam frequented markets in the Oromo areas south of the Abbay. They brought incense, *sogidda* (bars of salt), and foreign imports such as beads, colored cloth, cotton thread, porcelain cups, glass flasks, and several hard metals.

Although caravan traders were predominantly male, women also played a significant role in the local commercial transactions of Oromia. Women carried most of the goods to the market centers, particularly in times of war. In the Nonno region within Jimmaa-Raare, for instance, they were even said to have accompanied traders from one marketplace to another, because it was difficult for males to travel in times of hostility. "The women of Jimma and Horro attend these markets unmolested, and women at all times are permitted to

pass to and fro between these inimical [clans], sending notice previously to their friends to receive them."[31] Traders, as well as women, were too valued to be attacked, and heavy penalties could be applied in cases where they were robbed or harmed.[32]

In turn, it was expected that the traders would conduct their transactions carefully and peacefully without inciting friction:

> "The traders on the road," Beke was told at Basso, encamp in a meadow near some village the inhabitants of which supply them with any little necessaries in payment for which they receive kuhl [. . . antimony in powder used by women for their eyes] or some other trifle. They take their own flour with them which they bake; and when their stock is out they buy a fresh supply of grain and get it ground by the villagers. They are scrupolous in not giving offence such as by robbing the grain fields and paying for what they take, and thus they are looked on as friends by any one on the road.[33]

Commercial connections became important mechanisms for ethnic relations. The Oromo traders had an institution of commerce known to the south of the Abbay as the *dhibantaa* institution, through which along their route they made friendships with families whether they were Oromo or not. *Dhibantaa* was a reciprocal institution in which the caravan traders would stay overnight or set up camp in a family's yard, where they would graze their animals, prepare meals, etc. They would have also presented gifts to the host family or sold their items of trade to them. The hosts would provide everything, including water, firewood, bedding, and particularly, security for the caravan and its products. They might also find out market conditions in the host territory and advise the caravan traders of their prospects for prosperity in selling their products. They would also gather information regarding the general political and security conditions farther along the route. *Dhibantaa* was an important institution, fostering friendship and peace not only among the Oromo, but also between them and other ethnic groups. The close friendships that developed were considered almost equivalent to family relations. As part of the *dhibantaa* ritual, the participants would take an oath not to break their friendship.

In addition to Basso, there was a trade route from the Sudan, by way of Guba to south of the Abbay. The Guduruu region, in addition to being a crucial transit to the Gibee states, was connected through trade to Amuruu and Hebantuu farther to the west and across the Abbay River to Wanbara in the north. Caravan traders played a significant role in the development of commerce in Wanbara

north of the river and to Hebantuu and Guduruu. The Oromo of Wanbara had their own marketplaces that supplied important items for the regional trade network. In Dangab, for example, the Kokko market made major transactions with similar markets all over Gojjam and Wallaggaa. According to tradition, Kokko owed its origins to early exchanges of mainly agricultural tools and natural products between the Oromo settlers in Dangab and different communities in Wallaggaa. Agricultural tools were in great demand in Dangab at that time; traders from Wallaggaa brought them into the Kokko market in exchange for cotton and root crops like onions. Gradually, trade contacts also emerged with Gojjame traders operating in the market centers of Kilaj, Zigam, Bure, and even Basso, and in the Sudan along the Wanbara-Guba-Bambudi-Rosaries route.

In western Wanbara, the earlier major market center was reported to be Gaabbacha, today called Hebbacha, near the present-day town of Dabra Zayt. Before the founding of Dabra Zayt in 1898, Gaabbacha was said to have already played an important role in the commercial transactions of the region; however, once Dabra Zayt was established, the Gaabbacha market center was overshadowed by Dabra Zayt's newly developed Saturday market. Throughout Wanbara, the main items of trade were gold, slaves, coffee, ivory, and civet. The region's gold riches seem to have been considerable, the gold being traditionally panned from the numerous streams of the Abbay basin. Wanbara merchants frequently smuggled gold into Gojjam and the Sudan. They took gold to Bure and even to Basso in eastern Gojjam in exchange for *sogidda* and other imported items. At Bure, gold was also sold by merchants who brought it from south of the Abbay.

The other main item of trade was slaves, who were captured during organized raids both in Wanbara and south of the Abbay. After the introduction of firearms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, slave raids increased. The areas south of the Abbay, as well as Gofa, Konta, Maji, Mocha, and northeastern Wallaggaa, were the major sources of slaves. In eastern Wanbara, most slaves were brought from south of the Abbay and sold either locally or to the famous slave market of Dangla. Moreover, slaves from Horroo Guduruu were sent across the Abbay to the slave market at Gumar, and from there they proceeded to Bure or Dangla. The Gojjame raiders are said to have bought slaves at low prices from the Wanbara merchants, who got them either from the north or south of the Abbay.[34] In addition, Wanbara provided the market with good quality horses, mules, hides, skins, grains, and other food items. Because Wanbara mules were considered to be of good quality, in

1903 Colonel Lewis, a Sudanese political officer, moved to Wanbara to buy mules. Various types of rifles were also sold at the Wanbara market. The Se Se Gumuz people from the Wallaggaa side of the Abbay River moved to Wanbara to purchase rifles of all kinds; they were known to pay more than 100 Birr for a gun. The rifles were brought to Wanbara either by the northern traders or by Wanbara merchants themselves from the north. The northern traders moved to Wanbara and crossed the Abbay up to the town of Said in Beni Shangul. They took with them *sogidda* in exchange for gold, slaves, cattle, civet, coffee, ivory, honey, and other items. They also brought luxury items like Sudanese cloth.

Wanbara traders going to Gojjam followed the Dabra Zayt-Mora-Zigam-Gimjabet-Bure route. The same route was frequented by the Gojjame traders going to Wanbara. They were taxed at Dabra Zayt and Bure, for instance, one *amolé* for a mule loaded with coffee. Wanbara merchants followed the Dabra Zayt-Guba-Bambudi-Roseires route to go to Guba and the Sudan. From Guba the route went to Omedla and across other minor routes, farther on to Matamma in the north. This route was used by the northern traders to go to Wanbara and to cross to Said town in Beni Shangul. Crossing the Abbay River at the Aancho ford, traders from Wanbara went to Najjoo, Mandii, Biilaa, and other market stations in Wallaggaa. Those of the Dangab region crossed at *Malkaa* Limmuu and *Malkaa* Hebantuu to go to Limmuu, Giddaa, and beyond. Merchants from Gojjam frequently used the Chagni-Mambuk-Gulbak-Mankush-Bambudi-Roseires route to go to the Sudan. This long-distance trade naturally brought about strong socioeconomic and cultural interactions among the various ethnic groups living in these areas.[35]

From the Guduruu to Gibee States

As noted above, for traders wanting to go to the Gibee region, the road from Basso up to Billo was the most difficult route. In addition to encountering wars between the various Oromo groups, each group strove to impose customs fees, forcing the traders to make various stops, during which they were sometimes robbed. According to Walter Plowden: "Each man on his father's land is master; the public road even is thus private property, and the merchant may be stopped at the door of every hut, till he makes terms with the proprietor. The limit to this is as follows: each merchant places himself under the protection of some [Oromo] of influence, who pleads and answers for him in every case that may arise."[36] Essentially, the

traders had to negotiate with the residents of every hut on the way to the Gibee region.

It could take from two to four months to reach Enarya from Basso, a distance of about 240 kilometers (150 miles). According to Plowden:

> The caravan, having crossed the Nile, remains at Assandabo for, perhaps, a month or two, during which period, the number of loaded mules being counted, an agreement is made with each landed proprietor, up to the frontier, either for the whole caravan, or the individuals composing it; which being paid, they proceed at once to that point, and are received on the frontiers of Jimma by neutral [Oromos]. This process is repeated till they arrive at the more monarchical [Oromos], such as the chief of Enarea, who alone takes the whole tribute of Limmoo.[37]

In each district there was a toll station, such as at Assandabo/ Qawo, Kombolcha, and Watiyyo. For incoming goods, Qawo was the most important customs station, while Kombolcha was the main station for outgoing goods. Watiyyo was just a checkpoint, and no taxes were paid there if they had already been paid at the Kombolcha market. "Trade taxes varied according to the different districts. In Gudru, one amolé was taken for every ten imported. Coffee was less taxed, one thaler for every loaded animal being the rule. Besides customs dues, traders had also to pay the bärri [gate] head one or two amolé for the right to use the compound as a camping ground for the night and no trader would risk exposing his goods at night for robbers by staying outside the bärri enclosures."[38]

The money collected at the various gates went to the central treasury of the *gadaa* government of the Oromo republics. Later, however, it seems that this practice shifted in favor of the gatekeepers. Continued warfare between competing states affected the collection of customs fees; the *barri* served not only as outposts and refreshment centers, but primarily as frontier gates. As gates, they were under the supervision as well as the absolute command of the *abbaa duulaa*, the war leader of the *gadaa* government. The *abbaa duulaa*, who had eventually become the rulers of the district (*abbaa biyyaa*), started to keep an increasing share, allegedly for defense purposes. The taxes became a source of self-aggrandizement, and thereby, a challenge by the *abbaa biyyaa* to the *abbaa gadaa* (president). The *abbaa biyyaa* increased their power and wealth and tended to exercise in time of peace the prerogatives entrusted to them in times of war. These sociopolitical structures and the growing importance of commerce in the

southwestern regions seem to have been the most important factors behind the formation of Oromo monarchies in the Wallaggaa and the Gibee regions.[39]

The most successful way out of the overtaxation problem for the trader was to seek the protection of influential Oromo men who mediated the trader's passage and that of his goods with the local landlords. Mediation could be a lengthy and costly process. The Oromo protectors of the traders were called *abbaa biyyaa* or *goftaa*. "The passage of caravans through [Oromo] territories necessitated infinite patience and long months of haggling over presents which were to be given to different protectors (*mogassa* or *gofta*) and to the different clans along the route."[40] Such protections were required on the return route as well. Hotten also remarks that:

> Constant as are the wars between [clan] and [clan], the merchants are protected by all, and escorted to the limits of each province, where they are received under a temporary truce by their friends in the other. Should there be an intervening wilderness, the trader must trust to his own weapons and a stout heart. When the caravans having left the dominions of the king of Enarea, on the road for Massowah, which most concerns us at present, enter the territories of republican [Oromos], not only each [clan], but each influential individual, and each one who has a hut on the line of march, must be paid and caressed. As the best way of effecting this, the merchants camp on the frontier of each district, under the protection of some influential inhabitant, and there make their bargain with all those who have claims along the line of road. These claims being all settled which may occupy a month or six weeks, they make a stretch into the next district, and with each [clan] the same operation must be repeated. This system continues until they reach Basso, the southern province of Abyssinia on that road.[41]

Because of these difficulties, only those much determined to reach those areas would join the small caravans to the south; however, profits were so great that the number of Muslim traders eventually grew. Those able to reach the Gibee states found favorable trading conditions and lower taxation. In the words of Mordechai Abir, "Some rulers went out of their way to attract merchants, and it was not long before merchant villages (*mander*) sprang up near the most important market-places in south-western Ethiopia. From centres such as Bonga in Kaffa, Sakka in Enarea, and Jiren in Jimma, the caravan merchants tapped the trade of the whole region."[42] Overall, the foreign traders were well treated in the Gibee region, which began, then, to attract traders from elsewhere as well.

The growth of trade in the nineteenth century and the presence of foreign merchants in the Gibee region farther increased the demand for the products of the region and thereby intensified the production and collection of items of trade. More people were employed in panning gold from the streams, and with the introduction of firearms, the hunting of elephants, which had in the past been carried out as an act of bravery, became more of a profession to collect and sell ivory.

> Plants such as coffee and coriander which grew wild in some areas, were now cultivated and their fruits sold to passing merchants. The musk of the civet cat, which had been gathered sporadically from among the rocks inhabited by the civet cats, now became the basis for an 'industry'. Hunters captured male cats for growers who set up civet cat farms. In these farms the cats were kept in specially constructed cages, with attendants who fed and milked them daily by a special method which yielded a few drops of precious musk.[43]

John Hotten also adds that the king of Enarea monopolized the *zibbad* (African civet, or *Civetticus civetta*) trade by domesticating them. "The valuable *zibbad*, now monopolized by the king of Enarea, might be reared all over Abyssinia, where, though the cat exists in a wild state, no one has ever thought of domesticating it, which would be an innovation."[44] Through this lucrative trade, the Oromo rulers accumulated wealth that helped them strengthen relations with neighbors, local dignitaries, and famous warriors. It also helped them to establish a standing army, to enlarge the ruler's palaces and courts, and to produce goods.

Jiren

In the Gibee states, Jiren, the capital of the kingdom of Jimmaa, was the most important commercial center, particularly known for the export of coffee. When the traveler Oscar Neumann visited it in 1900, he remarked:

> Jimma is almost the richest land of Abyssinia . . . The capital of Jimma is Jiren, the most important market-place in Abyssinia. I estimate that the Thursday market in Jiren is visited by nearly twenty to thirty thousand persons. From all the countries bordering the river Omo, and even from Adis Abeba, and other lands in Southern Ethiopia, the Nagadis or Abyssinian merchants meet in Jiren to sell their wares. All the products of Southern Ethiopian are sold there, in many double rows of stalls about a third of a mile [0.53 kilometer] long.[45]

The annual production of coffee in Jimmaa in the 1880s was estimated at 50,000 to 60,000 kilos.[46]

In addition to Jiren, the nearby market town of Hirmaataa was a great commercial center, attracting merchants from all over Oromia and neighboring countries. Travelers writing in the 1880s mention merchants coming from Tigre, Gondar, Gojjam, Shoa, Massawa, Harar, and from the closest regions of Kullo, Konta, Kafa, Yam, Walayta, Gera, Guma, and Gomma. At Jiren, the estimated crowd attending a nineteenth-century market day was 20,000 to 30,000. Jimmaa was a significant commercial entrepôt for East Africa that owed much of its prosperity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the leader of the kingdom, *Abbaa* Jiffar, who appears to have possessed significant commercial acumen. He tolerated, even encouraged, trade, and foreign merchants were given special privileges in taxation. The king followed a liberal trading policy, and the tax rates were the lowest of any in the region. As the British traveler L. F. I. Athill remarked: "He even goes so far as to remit, partially or even wholly, the taxes of such of his subjects who have been incapacitated for any length of time by accident or disease."[47]

Several lesser commercial towns were also near Jiren. In the 1880s, Mandera was the most important commercial town next to Jiren, attended more by locals than by foreign traders. Another, Giiftii, held a Thursday market day that was attended by some 15,000 to 20,000 people who exchanged various items.[48] Omo was another lesser market town, located at the junction of the Omo and Gojeb Rivers, and frequented by the Oromo as well as by the Kafa, Sidama, Walayta, and others. Kombi was another relatively large market center, attracting merchants from Jimmaa, Gurage, Ammayya, and nearby provinces.[49] Initially, traders intent on going to Kafa had been discouraged from heading there by the rulers in the Gibee states, who were eager to monopolize trade. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, however, relations improved, paving the way for new commercial connections. When Kayi Yerotsh, king of Kafa (1845 to 1854), married his daughter Shashe to King *Abbaa* Bogibo of Gera, the trade route farther to the north opened up.[50]

Goree

The town of Goree grew in importance during the late nineteenth century; it "has been called the Harar of western Ethiopia." Following the opening up of the Gambella and Baro River route to the Sudan, the town became commercially significant. It had two market days,

on Tuesdays and Fridays. Throughout much of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the most important trade routes passing through Goree led mainly to Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) and, a few years into the twentieth century, to Gambella. Most of the ivory and rubber of the town was transported to the capital, while coffee and wax found their way to Gambella. Goree's marketeers had commercial relations with other groups, such as the Anuaks, who traded in cotton, as well as with groups from the White Nile, who dealt in ivory. To the west of Goree lay the significant commercial town of Buree, located at an important trading route between Jimmaa and the Abbay River. Buree's market on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Mondays enjoyed considerable trade in ivory, civet, wax, honey, coffee, raw cotton, local cloth, hides, sorghum, maize, teff, and beads of various kinds. The importance of the town, however, grew later in the 1920s and 1930s.[51]

Slave Trade

Some rulers of the Gibee Oromo states seem to have also participated in the slave trade, as reported by Hotten: "The [Oromos] are sold by their despotic kings in the territories of Enarea and Djimma; but amongst the Republican [Oromos] no trade is carried on, save when poverty accepts the gold of the merchant; and even this is unheard of amongst the proud [Oromos] of Azobo, though so near to Massowah."[52] De Salviac also mentions that the Oromo do not keep slaves and do not sell their children into slavery.[53] Slavery as an institution was less common in Oromo areas, except in the Gibee region, and other than those taken during wartime, slaves were not captured (for example, in organized raids) as they were in other regions. Even in the Gibee region, it is unlikely that slavery had been developed there until Muslim traders began commercial activity in the area. John Hotten describes "the [Oromo] in general looking on this practice with disgust, and being seldom guilty of it, though very lucrative."[54] Therefore, it may have been Muslim traders who initiated slave activity there. The missionary C. W. Isenberg, whose work is discussed in detail in chapter 5, also suggested that the "Oromo seem to value their liberty higher; those that are carried away from among them as slaves being generally taken, I believe, by force."[55]

The Muslim traders, who were well armed, undertook raiding expeditions against defenseless and weaker villages. In areas where slavery began to be practiced in Oromia, it is possible that chiefs of the region had joined the Muslims because they found it lucrative.

Otherwise, in general terms, the Oromo did not participate in the institution of slavery. Rather than 'slaves', the Oromo owned servants who had the right to complain if their rights were breached, as well as the rights to marry and to own land, and they were essentially considered part of an owner's lineage. The servants, who were considered not much different from the other relatives or members of the family, were obtained through various means, including agreements with parents of children as compensation in return for something. Oromo servants were also allowed to go to school and to further their careers. Occasionally, people from groups of weaker status would join strong Oromo families as servants, staying with them to work and accumulate wealth in order to help their parents back home.

Thus, most Oromo slaves were acquired by Muslim traders in the Gibee region. Although there were a large number of Oromo slaves, people of other ethnic groups were also designated 'Oromo slaves' in the Middle East, which was where the majority were sent. The Kafa, Hadiya, Walayta, Yama, Kullo, Amhara, Tigre, Gurage, and others were enslaved, but, of all, Oromo boys and girls were most welcomed and valued—"the boys for their intelligence, and the girls for their beauty."[56]

Local trading networks called *afkala* also emerged as a result of the growing trade in southwest Oromia. This group was composed mainly of the ex-servants or ex-slaves of northern merchants, as well as younger sons of locals who did not share their fathers' properties. According to the *gadaa* system of the Oromo, only the eldest sons were eligible to inherit their fathers' properties. All other sons were required to go out to look for suitable places to settle. Even though the resources of the *afkala* were limited, they formed a strong commercial network in the region. They belonged to the region and could travel peacefully into remote areas; they could also stay with their kinsmen along the route, which would minimize their expenses. This group was comparable to the *Jula* of West Africa. They could travel more readily into the south or north, unlike the *jabarti* (Muslim traders), who could afford only one trip each season. The *jabarti* merchants met stiff competition from the *afkala* and were forced to limit their activities to the big commercial center in the region. The *afkala* seem to have dominated the trade of the region by the mid-nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the *jabarti* continued to organize the most important caravan travels and to dominate much of the larger-scale trade in most commercial centers where they had settled.[57]

Thus, the Gibee region was strongly tied in commerce in the northerly direction, and to western Oromia, Gojjam, Wallo, Afar, and

the Red Sea coast. The following story, of a slave named Seggo Oria, vividly illuminates the commercial networks in this direction:

> He had one brother and three sisters. His father was a farmer in a small way. According to his story, he was given away by his father to a neighbour, who had no child of his own and offered to adopt him. This man took him to the Sidama country, and after staying there one year, he was stolen by a man who came out of a forest near to which he was playing. They both stayed in the forest over night and next morning he was taken to a place called Kelem. After staying here for one week, he was taken to Leka and sold in the market there. His new master did not keep him long and he was soon after sold at Gulisso. He then passed from one merchant to another, being sold at the markets in Gudru, Luma, and Yajubi. He ultimately fell into the hands of Atari merchants, and take[n] *via* Warakallu to Bofa where he was sold to the Adal merchants and taken to Araito.[58]

Seggo was one of the Oromo slaves rescued by the British warship in September 1888 along the Red Sea coast and taken to South Africa.[59] (This will be explained more fully in chapter 5.)

Oromo women in particular were captured and sold as slaves in the Sudan, Egypt, and Arabia in the nineteenth century. Some were married to Europeans serving in the region. One of the Oromo women who married Europeans in the Sudan was Marie Peney. Santi and Hill describe her: "Mme Marie Peney was a [Oromo] lady from Western Abyssinia, the mother of a large family. Her husband, Alfred Peney, chief medical officer of the Sudan, took her as a concubine soon after his appointment in 1850 and married her in 1855. Peney died not far from Gondokoro in 1861 while preparing to attempt the discovery of the White Nile's source. Adolfo Antognoli . . . was with him when he died and accompanied the widow back to Khartoum. In 1864 he married her. On Antognoli's death Marie married his business partner, Flaminio Finzi Magrini, a Ferrarese Jew (died 1875) and left the Catholic Church to which she later returned. She died in Cairo in 1891."[60] Peney had several children from his Oromo wife.

Another European, the Belgian explorer Eugène de Pruyssenaere de las Wostyne (1826–1864), also married an Oromo girl, in Khartoum in 1864 after initially acquiring her as a slave from an Arab sheikh from al-Massalamiyya (Sennar) two years earlier. She was christened Amina Mariam. After he died exploring the Blue Nile and was buried at Karkoj, his Oromo wife remarried the Austrian vice-consul Martin Ludwig Hansal, with whom she had a son. Hansal

died during Mahdist attack on Khartoum in 1885, while she died earlier, in 1867.[61]

Another Oromo girl who married a European man was Birille, also called Ajiamé. Her parents and six of her brothers were killed in a local fight, and she was captured along with her sister by slave raiders from Gumma in southwestern Oromia and given the Islamic name Muhbuba (my beloved). She recalls how she was captured: "I was so young when I was snatched away from my fatherland . . . I remember the flames around us when the town was burning, and how my father and brothers were killed, and my sister and I were dragged away bound."[62] Her sister was sold in Gondar, while Birille was taken to Sudan and then to Egypt.

She was bought in Cairo in February 1837 by the eccentric German traveler, Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, who was moved by her charm and pleasant appearance. "He paid a large sum for her—fearing to lose her to another buyer—, being thrilled by the beauty of her face and body." By way of the Middle East, she accompanied him to Europe and in "Vienna Ajiamé was treated with respect as the prince's favourite." In Vienna she met Ostchu Aaga, an Oromo language informant of Tutschek in Germany, and she taught him some Oromo songs. The German prince loved her very much; in his words, "the being I loved most in the world." Upon her death of tuberculosis on October 27, 1840, he was much stricken.[63]

Central and Eastern Oromia

Throughout the nineteenth century, central Oromia hosted a major commercial network of trade routes coming from all major directions (see map 3). With the founding of Finfinnee as capital of the Ethiopian Empire by the late nineteenth century, the region became the nerve center of the whole empire. Aliyu Amba, Ankober, Angolola, and Roge were some of the major centers. For the first half of the nineteenth century, Aliyu Amba was indeed the intersection of various trade routes and was attended by Oromo, Amhara, Gurage, Somali, Afar, and Harari traders. Other lesser markets included Boollo Worqee near Angolola, where items such as horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, and agricultural products were supplied by the Oromo.[64]

Immediately to the south of Shawa, in the Soddo Oromo region, was the Tole commercial center. It served the Tuulama and Maccaa Oromo groups as well as the Arsi, and brought both the Boorana and Barentu Oromo groups together. Moreover, Tole served as a trading stop to and from far-off destinations, such as the Enarya,

Kafa, Jimmaa, Yam, and Gurage regions.[65] Another route to central Oromia, from the west by way of Naqamtee town, included the caravans that originated from the rich gold-producing region of Beni Shangul. "The journey took 16 days from Addis Ababa to Bilo in Lega province where coffee and wax were sold, 2 more days to Lekemti, a major market for gold, ivory and coffee, 5 days more to Neju, 5 to Chellum and 12 to Kemis, another market for gold. The whole journey thus took 40 days."[66]

To the north, there were also strong commercial relations between the Oromo of Shawa and Wallo. Farther north, the Raya and Azebo Oromo purchased horses and other items from the Warra Himano in Wallo, who were known for their large numbers of horses and cavalry.[67] To the east, the Oromo of Shawa had strong commercial connections with those of the Harar region. Harar served as the principal commercial center for the eastern region. Caravans arrived at and departed from Harar in various directions; the majority heading to Zeila, Berbera, Carcar, and Arsi, and smaller ones traveling to Ogaden and other parts of the Somali territory. It is important to note that there were good commercial connections with the Arsi and Tuulama regions.

According to the British traveler W. Barker, three caravans traveled to Berbera every year from October to March, which could take from 30 to 40 days on the road. The caravans from Enarya and central Oromia could join those of Harar and arrive at Zeila or Berbera. They exported coffee, ghee, gum, myrrh, ostrich feathers, slaves, and other items to Arabia while importing clothes, Indian goods, European prints, silks, silk thread, shawls, beads, zinc, copper wire, frankincense, and other items. The trade between Shawa and Harar was constant except during the rainy season. Small caravan traders could trade almost every month during the dry season. Exports from Harar to Shawa included blue cloth and red cotton yarns, while the export from Shawa included slaves, mules, and horses.[68]

These marketeers traveled freely among the people and introduced various ideas that made a considerable impact on the people. Even though there were regular Shawan military expeditions against the Oromo, traders could freely move and actively engage in transactions. As eyewitness W. Baker describes: "It is worthy of remark that though the [Oromo] are mostly hostile to Sahela Selassie, yet they never molest the traders; persons can proceed singly from hence to any of the surrounding countries of the [Oromo], and even to Massowa, a journey of about thirty days for a messenger, without fear."[69]

Commerce helped change the lifestyles of people. Foreign goods such as colored cloths, silks, velvets, utensils, shawls, beads, needles, and mirrors considerably influenced the people. "Important persons wore 'adornments of silk, velvet, or satin; they adorn themselves with armlets and bracelets; and several have necklaces composed of ivory and glass beads.' "[70]

Harar and Arsi

Harar's commercial center was monopolized by the emirs of the Harari people, particularly in the coffee and ivory trade. They were averse to the caravans crossing over to Oromia without entering the city, but rather, wanted them to pass via Harar to the interior or the coast. Harar was a walled city with gates through which traders moved in and out. The city's markets were frequented by the Oromo who lived in the immediate neighborhood. The Ittuu and Ala Oromo brought coffee daily, while the Jaarsoo, Abbaadho, Noolee, and others sold agricultural produce including maize, oats, sesame, lentils, wheat, linseed, beans, and others.[71] This commercial activity brought various *Afran qalloo* Oromo groups together. In addition to the *gadaa* rituals, trade provided another forum for daily relations and information on politics and other matters of interest. The Oromo also traded, not only with the Harari, but also with the Afar and Somali people, which strengthened interethnic relations. Also, Arabs, Indians, and some European travelers and missionaries in the city or other commercial centers introduced new ideas and information.

Active commercial networks also existed between the Oromo of Arsi and the Harar region. The principal exports to Arsi included beads, copper wire, and blue and white cotton cloth, while imports included cattle and other items from the Harar market. "With the Arusie [Oromo] the people of Harrar have also considerable trade. My informant resided there for five months. It is situated 10 days from a kafila, to S.W. of Harrar. Arusie is a large town, or rather encampment of the [Oromo], whither the several [clans] resort, each governed by its own chieftain."[72] W. Barker's informant had traveled across all three Oromo regions (Shawa, Harar, and Arsi) and provided valuable information (see below). It is interesting to note that the Oromo of this area kept their relations active, as was also the case in the western and southern parts of Oromia. This indicates that there were considerable commercial networks between the Oromo of Tuulama, Harar, and Arsi. The south gate of the

walled city's five gates was used by merchants visiting the Arsi and Ala Oromo clans. In addition, the southeast gate was used by Arsi caravans and by other caravans going to Enarya. There were trade routes of considerable commercial importance from Harar to the Enarya region.[73]

These activities indicate that the Oromo of the Gibee region maintained significant commercial connections with those of the Arsi and Harar regions. In all directions, the Oromo were in contact with each other, including those coming from the west and central regions. For the most part, scholars pay attention to the principal commercial centers along the route, yet at several other resting places the caravans would stay overnight, feed their animals, buy food from local villagers, and hire assistants, such as horse and donkey keepers. This activity greatly contributed to pan-Oromo relations as well as to relations between Oromo and other groups.

The story of the Oromo slave Dilbo clearly shows the link between the Gibee states and central Oromia. Dilbo was a young boy from Limmuu-Enarya when he accompanied slave-hunters to the Omo River in Kafa. Upon returning home, Dilbo himself was captured and sold as a slave. The missionary Krapf, who met Dilbo in Shawa and used him as an informant (the informant's role will be discussed later in this chapter), describes his capture:

> Afterwards, when in his eighteenth year, during an attack on Sabba he was made a prisoner, and passed from Enarea into slavery at Nono, whence he was taken by the slave-dealers to Migra, and thence to Agabja, where he was sold for forty pieces of salt. From Agabja he was taken to Gonan, in the country of the Soddo-[Oromos], where he was sold again for sixty pieces of salt. From Gonan he was conveyed to Roggie, where his value was raised to eighty pieces of salt, and he was then marched to Golba, in the [Oromo] district of Abeju, and there sold for one hundred pieces. At last he reached Aliwamba, where a Mohammedan bought him for twelve dollars. Next a widow in Ankober purchased him for fourteen dollars, and at her death he passed into the hands of her brother, who, however, was disinherited by the King of Shoa for some offence, and in this way Dilbo became the property of the king.[74]

Dilbo's story shows the strong commercial links throughout the region, from Enarya all the way up to Ankober in Shawa. The Oromo of the Gibee region were interconnected to those of Soddo, Abbichuu, and others in Shawa. To the south, the Oromo of Gibee also kept strong links to the Boorana, to which we shall turn next.

Southern Oromia: Boorana

The Oromo living in southern Oromia also had strong commercial relations with those of the central and, particularly, southwestern regions. In fact, there were strong religious connections between Boorana and the rest of the Oromo for centuries. The Oromo still make annual pilgrimages to the *abbaa muudaa* in Boorana. Commercial relations were also significant. According to Richard Pankhurst: "Borana in the second half of the nineteenth century had commercial ties northwards with the central provinces of Ethiopia, eastwards with the Indian Ocean ports, and westwards with Kaffa."[75] The Boorana traded with the Gujii Oromo to the north and with the Konso people to the west. They provided the Konso with nitrate of soda (locally called *megada*), which was mixed with tobacco to give it a spicy flavor, as well as cattle, goats, and sheep in return for cloth and brass wire, which were in great demand in Boorana. The Konso people provided coffee, durra, beads, and iron, which were supplied from the north. The Gujii Oromo provided coffee, while Kafa provided cloth. Both Kafa and Gujii provided ivory, which was obtained from the north, in transit trade to Boorana.[76] Ivory was traded extensively throughout the area during the nineteenth century.

The Boorana had good relationships with the Konso and Amaro people. The latter facilitated the former's active involvement in the caravan trade from southern Oromia and neighboring countries to the coast. Boorana relationships with Konso and Amaro were an ancient tradition, and revealed an interdependency, particularly with the Konso, developing into more than simply an exchange of items of trade. "This special relationship, which still exists between the Borana and the Konso, may well have grown out of the need of the pastoral Borana for the services and products of the Konso, while the Borana for their part protected the Konso, supplied them with the much-needed salt, and diffused the Konso products."[77]

Among the Boorana and Konso, significant intermarriages took place. In addition, the two groups helped one another in times of economic difficulty, during natural catastrophes, and so on. "Borana tradition claims that in times of famine the Konso would exchange their children for meat and animal products, these children being adopted into Borana society. Many Borana took Konso wives and Konso artisans live among the Borana."[78] Konso blacksmiths provided various iron utensils and weapons to the Boorana, and Konso cloth made from Konso-grown cotton was preferred in Boorana, particularly for ritual wear. According to Donaldson Smith, who visited the region

in the 1890s: "The Konso people inhabiting the western part of this range are the great weavers of this country, supplying their cloth to the Borans, and all the [groups] of this district."[79]

Along the coast of the Indian Ocean, the Boorana also developed greater commercial relations with the Somali throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Travelers Cornwallis Harris and Johann L. Krapf reported during the mid-nineteenth century that the Oromo of the interior traveled down to the Juba River. The Arabs and Somalis also moved from Brava, Marka, Mogadishu, and other coastal ports into the Oromo lands as well as Kafa and the Gojeb River region. According to Donaldson Smith, the Somali traders made regular trips to Boorana, bringing imported items via Marka and Mogadishu as well as Berbera. Also, Swahili caravans journeyed all the way from the coast to the eastern shores of Lake Rudolph (Lake Turkana).[80]

Oromia's Trade Along the Indian Ocean Coast: Lugh

The Boorana acted as middlemen between the Somali traders on the Indian Ocean coast and in the interior of Oromia, Kafa, and Konso. They brought various items of trade from the Gibee states, as well as Konso, Kafa, and other areas, to the Lugh market. Lugh (also spelled Luuq) was a commercial center about 645 kilometers (400 miles) up the Juba River, through which most of the Boorana trade passed on its way to the coast. A rich commercial town under the control of a Sultan, it was often described as a second Harar. The sultan was said to have made $10,000 out of the ivory and gum trade and to have possessed 250 slaves and 1,000 Maria Theresa thalers' (silver trade dollars) worth of ivory at the end of the nineteenth century.[81]

Lugh was an important outlet for Boorana items on the coast, just as Basso was for the Gibee states' items to the north. In 1893, Prince Eugenio Ruspoli of Italy visited it and was said to describe it thus: "Logh he describes as a real town, defended by mud walls, and the centre of much trade, caravans arriving almost daily. The imports include rice, sugar, dates, coconut-oil, and cotton stuffs from the coast; cattle from the Webi, and ivory from the country of the Borana [Oromo]."[82] The commercial center also served as a transit to Arsi, Gujii, and Ogaden. Traders from all these regions imported various items from the coast by way of Lugh, in addition to exports.

Although described as a second Harar, Lugh handled a lower volume of trade than Harar. Nevertheless, Lugh was an important

outlet for the Boorana and Arsi, and for items from the southwest, including the Konso region. It was also a major transit for Arabs and Somali traders coming from the Mogadishu, Brava, and Kismayu areas into Boorana country and the Lake Rudolph area. Trade helped the Boorana, Gujii, and Arsi Oromo to make good relations among themselves as well as with Somali and Arabs, in addition to the various groups and cultures along the coast. In the words of Mordechai Abir: "By the nineteenth century there is ample evidence that the Borana [Oromo] served as the link between the Somali caravan system and the trading systems which were then operating in present-day southern Ethiopia, while by the end of the nineteenth century Boran was the commercial lingua franca in Lugh."[83]

Trade in the Boorana region was mainly conducted by merchants from Lugh and Bardera and, to a lesser extent, from Berbera. These traders had cultivated cordial relations with the Boorana:

> It was customary, he [Baird, a British official] said, for the trader to give twenty or more pieces of cloth to one of the inhabitants of Borana who would in return provide him with milk—the sole food of the area,—act as his broker and supply him with transport. The merchant would then exchange his cloth for cattle at the rate of about a *tobe* for a cow or three or four *tobes* for a bullock. The cattle, which were in universal demand, would then be exchanged for ivory. Zaphiro [another British official], who confirmed much of this account, observed: "When I first visited the Borana country on the 25th December, 1905, I found in nearly every Borana hut traders from Lugh, Bardera, Benadir, etc." He added that goods were also imported from the Italian coast east of the Ganale River.[84]

As in the Basso-Gibee route, the traders established clients with Boorana families, who provided protection and facilitated transactions for them. The Somali traders were even given a Boorana name, *saffaar goolo* (after the name of the hide bags in which the traders carried their cloth), and were welcomed as *saffaarticha* of such-and-such Somali clan.[85] Various items including tusks, ivory, spices, coffee, gum, horses, hides, cattle, goats, camels, ostrich feathers, rhinoceros horn, salt, and sometimes slaves from Konso and Amaro were exported from Boorana to the Indian Ocean coasts. The Zanzibari traders traveled all the way to the Boorana region to import coffee, as Zaphiro stated: "The natives of the east and south as far as Zanzibar prefer the Abyssinian coffee to that of Aden."[86]

The Boorana, who imported items brought via the Indian Ocean ports, including textiles, beads, copper wire, cutlery, tobacco, pepper,

cloth, and manufactured goods, in the nineteenth century, continued to import in the early twentieth century. According to Zaphiro, about 20 percent of cloth imported by the Boorana came from Kismayu, and the rest from Brava, Mogadishu, and Marka to the east.[87] This shows that Boorana had active commercial relations with the Somali ports all the way from Berbera to Kismayu. Somali, Arab, and Boorana traders penetrated as far as Konso country and dominated the caravan trade in that area. The Oromo informant to Beke (see discussion later in this chapter) in the mid-nineteenth century even called the region south of Kafa "the country of the Arabs," a clear indication of the high volume of trade activity conducted by Arabs in the region to the south of Enarea.

Mogadishu

The Benadir Coast includes three major ports significant to trade for the Oromo: Mogadishu, Marka, and Brava. Johann L. Krapf stated in the mid-nineteenth century that those in Mogadishu's port traded with the people of Oromia. He writes: "On the 23d [November 1843] we passed the towns Mukdisha, the Magadoxo of the maps, and Marka, each of which has some 5,000 inhabitants, who trade with the [Oromo] countries in the interior, fetching from them chiefly gum, ivory, horses, slaves and hides."[88] The exports of the port came partly from Oromia and partly from the immediate Somali coastal area. The products of the interior included ivory, rhinoceros horns, hippopotamus teeth, slaves, and horses; hides, gum, and grain were the main commodities originating from the coastal area. These items were exported to Arabia and down to Zanzibar. The Mogadishu port had been in close contact commercially with the interior throughout the nineteenth century. Prior to the advent of the steamboat, Mogadishu was visited by dhows owned by Arabs.[89] J. Kirk, who also visited the port, observed: "I was much struck with the number of large dhows at anchor, and volunteered as interpreter to the boats sent to examine them. We found twenty vessels, from 50 to 200 tons, all filled with or taking in native grain, which I learnt is largely grown on the river behind, near Geledi."[90]

Like Mogadishu, Marka's traders exported such items as slaves, ivory, spices, gums, and hides, and they imported blue cloth, paper, tobacco, copper, coffee, petrol (gasoline), molasses, and sugar. To the south of Marka, Brava was a port of considerable importance. It handled much of the trade passing down the Juba River from the north, including that of Harar and much of Ogaden. As Johann L.

Krapf noted: "The people of Barava go northwards as far as Adari or Harrar, and make trading journeys also to the [Oromo clans], Wardai, Korei, Rendille, Boren, and Liban."[91] He also mentioned trade connections from Brava toward the west, where the Oromo traders and Swahili dealt in rhinoceros horns, ivory, hippopotamus hides, and cattle brought from Oromia. The Oromo traders received Kiama (today spelled Koyama or Kwayama, an island) clothes, copper wire, beads, and other goods in exchange. "The people of Kiama are Suahilis, and trade with the [Oromos], who bring rhinoceros horns, tusks of elephants, hippopotamus-hides, and cattle, receiving in Kiama clothes, copper-wire, beads, &c.; and here I saw and spoke to some [Oromos]."[92] Similar to Marka and Mogadishu, Brava exported such items as ivory, donkeys, cattle, camels, goats, butter, rhinoceros horn, slaves, skins, myrrh, and gum in the nineteenth century. Their imports included blue cloth, pepper, tobacco, copper, glass beads, and other items.[93] Philip H. Colomb, who was the captain of the British Navy in the Persian Gulf, also writes about a dhow coming from Zanzibar that shipped six Warra Daayya Oromo slaves at Brava.[94]

The trading pattern on the Benadir Coast gained greater precision with the conquest and establishment of Italian rule there, as annual trade records began to be kept. Italian customs posts were set up in Lugh, and in the early twentieth century, statistics were available regarding trade with southern Ethiopia in this region. The slave trade seems to have declined considerably, but other commerce continued to flourish through the early twentieth century. The greatest portion of exports began to be directed to Italy, although a significant amount of exports continued to find their way to Zanzibar and Aden.

With the consolidation of the British colony of Kenya by the end of the nineteenth century, the trade from Boorana toward Kenya via Moyale increased in importance. The road from Moyale to Nairobi was opened in 1907, which facilitated commerce southward. It seems that during the nineteenth century, the Imperial British East Africa Company could not effectively tap the rich reserves of the Oromo. The route from Moyale via Bardera to Kismayu (then under the control of the British East Africa Company) gained momentum mainly after the first decade of the twentieth century. To the British territory, such items as ivory, hides, coffee, wax, rubber, salt, and cattle were exported from Moyale via the Bardera route. Imports through British East Africa included textiles, cotton goods, Maria Theresa thalers, contraband arms, and ammunition. Cowrie shells, used for decorative purposes, were also imported into Boorana.[95]

Generally speaking, considerable items of trade in southern Oromia presented great promise for both British East Africa and Italian Somaliland. In the words of R. Beachey:

> Great trade opportunities lay in contacting the [Oromo] country, with its varied products: ivory, coffee berries, nitrate soda, ponies, cattle, donkeys, goats, glue, barley, indiarubber and hides. The kingdom of Boran was reputedly rich in ivory, gold and horses, a land where the houses of the wealthy were surrounded by ivory stockades; and at one place, Jan Jan [Jam Jam], white, red and dark green stones, much desired for decorative purposes and as a valuable trade commodity, were obtainable.[96]

To the coast, Lamu is an important entrepôt for the neighboring mainland and islands all the way to Zanzibar. Dhows, built at Lamu, were used to transport items. The Arabs owned most of the smaller dhows, while most of the larger seagoing ones increasingly came under Indian ownership. A wealthy owner might have owned as many as four seagoing vessels. "The masters and crews are Muslim Africans of mostly [Oromo] origin and their tribal designation is generally given as Waswahili (Coast people) or, if they come from Lamu and its surrounding islands, Bajuni."[97] It is interesting to note that Oromo crews dominated the dhows at the coast. The Somali caravan routes extended across all of southern Oromia and northern Kenya as far as Lake Rudolph. The Oromo dominated trade into the first half of the nineteenth century, but beginning in the 1860s, the Somali dominated the caravan trade until the end of the century.[98]

Zanzibar

Commercial relations took place from Sennar in the Sudan to Zanzibar across Oromia during the nineteenth century. According to Karisaa, an Oromo informant of Johnston's whose information was augmented by other sources, there was a constant route to Lamu and other coastal towns from Sudan. In the words of Johnston:

> On inquiring, however, what knowledge Karissa had of the Bahr ul Abiad, I found that he was entirely ignorant of such a river, and when I modified the name, by calling it the river of the Tokruree, or blacks, he instantly conceived I was speaking of Kalli, that is well known to flow to the south and east of Kuffah into the Indian Ocean, and by which caravans of slaves are constantly passing between [Yam] and the coast of Zanzibar. There must, in fact, exist in this situation a most

> available road into the very centre of the continent of Africa, for I have subsequently seen Nubian slaves who had been in the service of Zaid Zaid, Imaum of Zanzibar, that corroborated this statement of Karissa in every particular respecting the transit of slaves across the table land of Abyssinia, from Sennaar to Lamoo on the Indian Ocean, and so to the market of Zanzibar.[99]

Slaves were captured from the south of Kafa and sold at the markets of Enarea and Yam to the slave caravans that proceeded to Zanzibar,[100] "where the dealers dispose of them to the slave Kafilahs [caravans] that are proceeding to Zanzibar, or to northern Abyssinia."[101] It is interesting to note that the great caravan route connected Sudan to the Indian Ocean across Oromia; even though the Red Sea and Harar commercial networks saw heavy traffic, this route also played an important role.

Oromo Informants, Interpreters, and Guides

Johnston's reference to a man named Karisaa in his discussion of the river Bahr-ul-Abiad (the White Nile) brings up an important discussion point. Accounts of individuals such as Dilbo, Waare, Berkie, and Ulaa, as well as Karisaa, illustrate the activities of Oromo guides who assisted travelers and missionaries in nineteenth-century Oromia. Several European visitors published their memoirs based on the information drawn from these informants and guides. Had the informants themselves been literate enough to record their own accounts, their contributions would be much more appreciated today.

Dilbo (discussed earlier in this chapter) was one of the most important of Krapf's Oromo informants in terms of detailing the history, commerce, and geography of central and southwestern Oromia. When Charles Beke arrived at Angolola (Angolela, a town) in 1841, he gathered information from Dilbo, describing him as about twenty-seven to thirty years of age. Dilbo had a child before he was captured and brought to Shawa by way of central Oromia, where he was enslaved in the house of the King Sahle Sellassie of Shawa (1813 to 1847).[102] Dilbo provided detailed information on the history, geography, politics, and commerce of Kafa, Enarya, and neighboring states. In his description of the geography of Enarya, Krapf, wrote: "As it was difficult to ascertain the geographical positions of the countries spoken of by Dilbo, I made him attempt a map in the sand, which showed the source of the river towards the west,

to the north of Enarea."[103] Dilbo provided Krapf information about several mountains and towns in the Gibee region, as well as the name of the reigning ruler of Enarya, *Abbaa* Bogibo, "a brave warrior and good ruler, who administers justice publicly in his capital, and to whom every one has easy access."[104]

Around the same time that Dilbo was captured (c. 1830), another Oromo, Waaree, was captured from Limmuu, not of Limmuu-Enarya, but of a locality with the same name in Guduruu, and taken to the Sudan with other slaves. Waaree was the eldest son of Kilo (Gilo?), who was a famous warrior and rich in cattle. While they were hunting an elephant together, Kilo was wounded and Waaree was captured by slave raiders. With about thirty other slaves, Waaree was taken to Gondar and then to the Sudan. While more than twenty people died along the way, Waaree survived and was ransomed by an Englishman in Khartoum who was "struck by the nobility of the young [Oromo]."[105] Then, having been forced to leave his patron, Waaree was recommended by the French consul at Cairo to a French officer in Egypt, for whom he worked for two years. The officer, upon returning to France, took Waare with him and entrusted him to the French cartographer and archaeologist Edme-François Jomard, who published his account of the Oromo based on information drawn from Waaree. Jomard already had other Oromo assisting him, including the little-known Gabao, an Oromo from Limmuu-Enarya, who had been brought to France by Arnauld d'Abbadie. It seems that Gabao returned home. Although the records are unclear, a decade or so later, Antoine, the brother of Arnauld d'Abbdie, noted that he and his brother were in contact with Gabao, who appeared to be in Africa at the time. Arnauld was aware of Jomard's interest in African studies and put Gabao in contact with Jomard. Both Gabao and Waaree gave valuable information to Jomard, who later stated how much he liked the "affability" and "sweetness" of the two Oromo boys and compared them to the success of some Wolof men in France.[106]

The presence of Waaree and Gabao in Paris was significant to the beginnings of Oromo studies in Europe. Waaree was explicit and very detailed in the information that he shared, starting from Guduruu to the Gibee region, receiving admiration from Jomard, who observed him as "full of ability and intelligence."[107] Waaree's information produced "many very interesting consequences for the geography of this part of Africa."[108] The information Waaree provided, particularly about the rivers he crossed and his native locality, drew considerable interest. He mentioned the Habaya River and his native Limmuu, and various travelers tried to identify where exactly the river and Limmuu

were. It seems, finally, that the Limmuu he mentioned was that of Horroo Guduruu, rather than of Enarea. The Habaya River that Waaree mentioned was probably Dhidheessa (also spelled Didessa) River, a tributary of the Abbay River.[109]

Interestingly, Dilbo was well aware of the information that Waaree provided to Jomard. Dilbo also provided Beke with information on the Enarea region, the customs, trade, and items of trade, and even compared the Enarea market to that of Aliyu Amba in Shawa. He informed Beke that *amole* was used as currency brought from Gojjam and Tigre, but that in the retail dealings of daily life, barter prevailed. He also said that a good slave could be purchased for 30 *amole*. He also described how the caravans from the north arrived at Saqqa, the capital of Limmuu-Enarya, by way of Guduruu after crossing the Gibee River and other rivers.[110] In the words of Beke: "M. Krapf and I took every precaution, by repeating our questions in different forms, by making him draw the courses of the rivers on the ground, &c., to elicit the truth. He was uniformly consistent in his statements."[111]

Berkie, who was appointed by Krapf as an interpreter, was from Galaan Oromo. He helped to translate the first five chapters of the biblical book of John into Afaan Oromoo. He also provided important information for Isenberg's introduction to Krapf's book *An Imperfect Outline*. "The little information which have here given, was obtained chiefly from [Oromos] in Shoa; one of whom, called Berkiè, from the Gelan [clan], Mr. Krapf took into his service, in order to learn their language from him, and to use him as a guide and interpreter on his intended Missionary journeys into their countries . . . he had embraced the Christian profession about four years before, but was little changed in his [Oromo] habits."[112] It is likely that Berkie was a former slave who had been converted to Orthodox Christianity while in the service of King Sahle Sellassie, where he met the missionaries in the early 1840s. His service was considerable; Krapf was able to learn Oromo history, culture, and language from him and to translate the scriptures into Afaan Oromoo with his help.

Berkie provided detailed information on the Oromo religion, government, marriage practices, and justice system. He informed Krapf that the Oromo did not want a Christian Abyssinian governor because of fear of forced conversion, stating, "If they get a Christian Governor, they all cry together: 'Ha batu! ha batu!'—May he perish! May he perish!"[113]

The informant Karisaa, mentioned earlier, was also in the service of King Sahle Sellassie. He was captured some time during the 1830s near Kambata, east of Yam, and was first taken to Gurage as a slave,

where he lived for several years near Lake Zway. He later joined the service of the king, where he met Johnston and ended up becoming his informant in the early 1840s. Johnston describes Karisaa as a very intelligent Oromo. According to Johnston:

> He first told me that he was not a born slave of the Negoos, but had recommended himself to the notice of the monarch, by the dexterous manner in which he had conveyed messages to the Kings of Enarea, and of his own country, Cambat. For the fidelity which had marked his return to servitude, and for his bravery during the rebellion of Matoko he had been rewarded by being made a *nuftania*, or gunman, and would, were he to marry, have a house bestowed upon him, with as much land as two oxen could plough in the year.[114]

Although Karisaa had good information about the Gurage country as well as the Gibee River, he was unaware of Waaree, Jomard's informant. Karisaa was helpful but unaware of some rivers that Johnston wanted to know about. Karisaa was, however, informative about the caravan trade routes, particularly that of Sudanese traders crossing via Oromia all the way down to Zanzibar. As mentioned above, Karisaa's information about centuries-old trade routes from Sudan to Lamu on the Indian Ocean was also corroborated by the sultan of Zanzibar. This route has been much neglected in the study of commerce in East Africa. Some forty years later, the Dutch traveler Juan Maria Schuver also confirmed the existence of this route: "I gathered from this that 'it would be possible to make a journey from Egypt to Zanzibar, passing straight across the [Oromo] country to Zanzibar.' "[115] Unfortunately, he died before making the journey himself.

Karisaa provided to Johnston (in 1842) well-rounded information about the Oromo religion, the origin of the Oromo, and in fact, humankind, "for the traditions he related reached to the very remotest times."[116] He provided a detailed account of the ethnology of Ethiopian peoples, particularly of the Gurage, among whom he lived for years. Of the Oromo origins, Karisaa stated that they came from Bargamo, which was one of the most widely stated traditions among the Oromo. Johnston went on to relate Bargamo to Bagrimi kingdom (of today's Chad), which also corresponds to his idea of the Meroitic origin of the Oromo.

Another very important guide was a man called Ramat Ulaa, a native of a village close to Aliyu Amba in Shawa. Ulaa left his village and followed caravan traders to the coast sometime in the 1830s. This particular caravan was principally composed of natives of Harar,

who had many slaves with them; it is possible that Ulaa was one of them. He met W. Barker in the early 1840s in Tajura, Djibouti, and provided him with information about the groups living in that part of the region, and about the geography of Harar. In addition to becoming a principal informant, Ulaa became Barker's horse-keeper. He gave Barker detailed information about the routes leading to the coast, starting from central Oromia. He stayed in Harar for six years, possibly as a slave to the emir, and witnessed conflicts between the Oromo and Harari people, in which at one time he participated, on the side of the emir. He was wounded on the right cheek. A Muslim, he decided to make a hajj, and followed another caravan bound for Zeila to cross to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Having performed the hajj, he wanted to return to his native village in central Oromia by way of Tajura. He intended to become a small businessman in his hometown; however, it was on his return that he met Barker in Tajura and became his horse-keeper and informant.[117]

Barker published an account of Harar and its surroundings based on information largely drawn from Ulaa. The information Ulaa provided was further confirmed by a Somali trader called Mohammed Said, who met Barker at Ankober. Said was a Somali trader who had arrived there from Zeila. Barker was much satisfied by the information provided by Ulaa, especially when he confirmed the facts by traveling to Ankober himself. He writes: "I am inclined, however, to place much reliance on the information given me by Romeat Ullah [Ramat Ulaa?]. His route from Harrar to Kuldas is confirmed not only by Mahomed Said, but also by the arrival of the messengers from the emír to Saheli Selasse."[118] Ulaa had also lived in Arsi; therefore, he had a detailed account of the Oromo of central and eastern Oromia.

Another informant, Nasir Abbiyye, visited Krapf and Isenberg in 1839 and gave them valuable information about the Oromo to the north of Shawa. He took refuge with King Sahle Sellassie when his father's territory was annexed by Beru, the ruler of Argobba people. King Sahle Sellassie restored his father's territory to him, but made it tributary to Shawa. Krapf published an account of the various Oromo clans living to the north and east of Shawa, including the Dawe, Wucaalee, Jillee, Ittuu, Karrayyuu, and Arsi, which was provided to him by Nasir. Krapf's encounter with Nasir also produced a favorable impression for his evangelical activity; Nasir had a fourteen-year-old Christian servant called Gabre Giyorgis, who had good conversations with Krapf. In Krapf's words: "My first conversation with this lad gave me a favourable impression. He is the only

youth who seems to have a real desire of instruction; he has a good understanding."[119]

It is interesting to note that most of these guides, interpreters, and informants rose to such positions from slave backgrounds. Each changed hands among different masters along the way until ending up in the house of the King of Shawa, where they met the missionaries and travelers. Their accounts, confirmed by other merchants and personal observations, contributed to several publications, as we have briefly seen above. Specifically, they provided details about commercial transactions across Oromia and neighboring states, including the northern caravans, items of trade, and related political conditions. Although we lack detailed information about each of them, their contributions to Oromo studies must be acknowledged. More than even freed Oromo slaves who made it to Europe (see chapter 5), these native "scholars" accomplished a great deal and contributed significantly to Oromo studies. Due to lack of education, they were unable to publish their memoirs, but most of the published works of Jomard, Barker, Beke, Krapf, Isenberg, and Johnston were largely drawn from them.

5

The Indigenous and the Foreign

The Role of Religion in Nineteenth-Century Oromia

Oromo Religion as Expression of Pan-Oromo Identity

The Oromo believe in a supernatural being called Waaqa, "who is almighty, omniscient, all-good, all-wise, in short, possessing all the qualities which we Christians attribute to our God."[1] The belief in Waaqa is uniform throughout Oromia. Among the most southern Oromo, those of the Tana River in Kenya, the missionary Thomas Wakefield observed in the second half of the nineteenth century the belief in a Waaqa (God) who is good, wise, and righteous. He also observed that the Oromo believe in an afterlife in which the soul becomes *ekeraa* (a spirit of a dead person believed to appear on earth) after death.[2] The Oromo belief in Waaqa *tokkicha* (one God) is remarkable. As Daniel Kidder writes: "They have no idols; nor do they, as most of the African pagans do, make any use of those fetishes, or charms, supposed by the superstitious to be remedies against evil spirits and obstinate diseases."[3]

The worship of Waaqa includes offerings as well as prayers. Peace is the fundamental concept asked for in prayers; the Oromo religion is remarkable for the extent to which it preaches and encourages peace.[4] Every morning and evening, the Oromo pray for peace for the nation. According to Morgan Smeads: "With the [Oromo], religion enters into all the affairs of life; nothing of importance is undertaken without being preceded by ceremonies of prayer and sacrifice. Their prayers are characterized by great humility and submission to the Divine will; without, however, exhibiting any tincture of fatalism. They seem to rather believe in a special Providence."[5]

Prayer leaders and spiritual fathers called *qaalluu*, as well as female *qaallittii,* lead the people in their faith. As Smeads describes their practices, referencing the *Dictionary of the Galla Language* by Lawrence Tutschek:

> The [Oromo] have several sorts of priests; it is the office of some to teach, of others to sacrifice; one class inspects the entrails of the victim, another interprets dreams or the flights of birds, etc. Public worship is always performed under particular species of trees, which they regard as sacred. On this account some have supposed that they worshipped the trees themselves; but Mr. Tutschek rejected this opinion, which is, indeed, opposed to the whole tenor of their religious views. No trace of idolatry has otherwise been observed among them; and certainly . . . the idea of omnipresent, spiritual deity is too fully developed and too clearly defined to admit of their adoring anything material. It is on this account, principally, that many persons in England, as well as on the continent, have thought that the [Oromo] nation offered a field of unusual promise for missionary enterprizes.[6]

The Qaalluu Institution

The *qaalluus* (female *qaallittii*) are high priests and spiritual leaders of the Oromo religion; their most important roles are the interpretation of the laws of Waaqa (God) and Ayyaana (spirits). In the opinion of Melba: "A Qallu is like a Bishop in the Christian world and an Imam in the Muslim world. He is a religious ritual expert who has a special relationship with one of the Ayanas . . . It is believed that the first **Qallu** was sent from **Waaqa** and the **Qallus** who came after him were his descendants. The **Qallu** institution is believed to have existed since mythical times. It is a very important preserver and protector of Oromo culture."[7]

Originally, the *qaalluus* had been ritual and religious figures and symbols serving the whole society. In addition to performing prayers and acting as wise priests, they also served as judges maintaining peace in the *gadaa* government. Among the eastern Oromo, a *qaalluu* is a saintly person. He is a Muslim who moves from shrine to shrine carrying a prayer stick, beads, and a gourd of water. He is a religious man not connected to witchcraft, as is the case in most parts of modern Oromia. He is much sought after by people who wish to receive blessings. People were careful not to offend the *qaalluus.* Among the Boorana in southern Oromia and northern Kenya, a *qaalluu* is also a ruler, while a *qaallittii* is a queen.[8]

Over the course of the Oromo expansion and contacts with other groups, and in response to social transformations within Oromo society, the role of the *qaalluus* changed. The *qaalluu* began to show disrespect toward the *gadaa* system and to perform rituals on their own. For example, in the past, *qaalluus* had performed rituals such as the *buttaa* and *muudaa* (anointing) ceremonies in Boorana together with *gadaa* practices. But as the *qaalluus* became ritual experts, who had special relationships with *ayyaana* spirits, they became associated with spirit possession. Gradually, that role faded out and the *qaalluus* started to exercise absolute power and enjoy economic benefit at the expense of the masses. In order to gain such aims, they started to use *qaalluu*-ship as a means to an end.[9]

The growth of the ideas and activities associated with the *ayyaana* spirits strengthened the need for an intermediary role for the *qaalluus* elsewhere. They started to lead annual celebrations and conducted prayers in halls called *galma* (temples). During the late nineteenth-century Ethiopian incorporation of Oromia, and the subsequent decline of the *gadaa* system, the role of the *qaalluus* strengthened.[10] The *qaalluus* started to play an important role not only in the religious sphere, but also in local organizations of authority as judges, experts on customs, and problem-solvers.

Among the Oromo, the role of the *qaalluu* is still significant. A *qaalluu* will be consulted on issues such as loss of property, conflicts, fertility, crop failure, and so on. The people bring all of their cases (whether spiritual, economic, or social), and they must respect the *qaalluus,* whose decisions are binding. It is believed that decisions are made by the *ayyaana* spirits, who work through the *qaalluu.* It is also believed that the spirit is powerful enough to harm an offender, his family, and his wealth. Therefore, people are afraid of the *qaalluus,* who may destroy their crops and cattle, or cause their families to become sick. Every two weeks, usually on Wednesdays, there are *qaalluu* ritual performances called *dalaga*. After performances of singing and dancing, the *ayyaana* appears and begins to speak through the mouth of the *qaalluu.* It is believed that the *qaalluus* are not speaking their own views, but those of Waaqa.

The rituals are similar across various parts of Oromia. In some areas, the *qaalluu* sits on a platform, separated from the people. "The *kalu* receives visitors in his house sitting on raised place, called a *mädäba*, separated from the people by a curtain. He wears huge brass bracelets on his arms and on his neck. Near the curtain on the side of the people stands the interpreter: the *kalu*, though he uses the same language, does not speak directly to the people but through

the interpreter. He hears the requests of the people. It is believed that his promise of health, prosperity or whatever they ask will be fulfilled."[11] The *qaalluus* were originally national Oromo priests, and they still are in locales such as Boorana. According to I. M. Lewis, "His [Waaqa] special agents on earth are the sacred dynasties of priests (*kallus*) who live among the Borana and to whom all the [Oromo] formerly sent emissaries on pilgrimage, this being one of the most significant traditional expressions of pan-[Oromo] identity."[12] The pilgrims (*jilaa*) are drawn from various groups of the Oromo nation, and they went there to receive blessings from the anointing fathers, as the *qaalluus* are called in Boorana. They freely traveled across various Oromo regions, "thereby keeping contact and flow of information between them."[13] This *muudaa* (anointing) ceremony played a considerable role in pan-Oromo relations and Oromo national identity. The anointing and blessings of the pilgrims "sacralized the whole traditional [Oromo] social system."[14]

The office of the *abbaa muudaa* is always available for citizens and pilgrims (*jilaa*) coming from elsewhere for the service in Boorana. The *abbaa muudaa* makes prayers for the prosperity and peace of the whole nation. The *jilaa* will return after being anointed, blessed, and advised to live according to the laws of the *gadaa* government.[15] Among the Maccaa and Tuulama, the *qaalluus*, as stated above, were eventually considered to be those possessed by spirits rather than part of the original pan-Oromo social and religious system.

The Ateetee Ceremony

Ateetee is a largely gender-specific Oromo religious institution. It is an indigenous ritual practiced by women in honor of *Ayyoo* (mother, fertility goddess) for enabling wives to conceive and bear children safely. A ceremony where neighborhood women gather and dance, invoking *Ayyoo* (also interchangeably, *Maram*, St. Mary) and Waaqa, it is also considered for the general well-being of their families, as well as to give thanks. It is exclusively a women's ritual, held on select days of the week, to pray for *Ayyoo* to grant them fecundity. In describing *ateetee* among the Arsi Oromo, Paul Baxter writes: "*Atete* is distinctive in that it is the only public ritual in which women are the principal organizers, the active participants, and the congregation and of which the timing and staging is determined by them and at which they may decide a case that they have laid against a man."[16]

In some situations, *ateetee* could also be invoked as a ceremony during which women villagers perform dances and make public in

their songs the grievances they have with their husbands. According to tradition, women could state their grievances publicly, and their husbands were expected to fulfill their aspirations positively. Striking a pregnant or nursing woman, endangering the fertility of a woman, and generally disturbing the peace in the neighborhood are among the most common offenses that provoke *ateetee*. A male offender would be brought to the *ateetee* ritual, where he would have to submit and apologize. "A man is not only made uneasy before a group of outraged vociferous women; he has no recourse from them and must either submit or flee."[17]

Among the Oromo of western Shawa, *ateetee* is also believed to be the mother of cattle—the ritual is held to ensure that cattle breed well and that oxen remain healthy and fit enough to plough well.[18] It is believed that, if they do not perform the ritual, cattle will not breed well and calves will not be able to grow. The ritual's details vary from place to place, but its symbolic significance is basically the same everywhere. In the words of Workineh Kelbessa: "In general, the *Ateetee* ritual has symbolic meanings. The anointment of sticks with butter, the planting of green poles, the shedding of old cows' blood, the splashing of the chest and the neck with butter are the symbols of fertility, procreation, and continuation of life on Earth. They symbolize that the survival of most Oromos depends on the survival of and rebirth of herds."[19]

Some writers have incorrectly argued on the basis of specious evidence that *ateetee* is a divinity and fertility goddess. For example, the missionary Johann L. Krapf wrote: "Under Wak, as the Most Supreme Being, stand two subordinate divinities, a masculine Oglie, and a feminine Atetie. They sacrifice cows and sheep to Oglie in the months of June and July; to Atetie they sacrifice in September. She is the goddess of fertility, and women are her especial votaries."[20] A more detailed examination of the living traditions of the people has made it clear that *ateetee* is, in fact, a ritual ceremony held in honor of the *Ayyoo* (or *Maram)* and Waaqa.[21] *Ayyoo* is the goddess of fertility, while *ateetee* is the name of the ceremony. The people pray to *Ayyoo* for progeny, peace, good harvests, victory against enemies, and their own well-being as well as that of cattle, land, and other things.

The use of the term *Maram* seems to have begun with the introduction of Christianity. *Ateetee*, however, is an ancient Oromo practice that originated long before Christianity was brought to the region and was gradually adopted by non-Oromo communities as well. During the *ateetee* ceremony, an animal is slaughtered and the blood poured on the host woman's breasts and belly in an effort

to invoke *Ayyoo* and successful conception.[22] It is generally believed that the *Ayyoo* will deliver what the woman aspires and prays for. Johann L. Krapf, for example, states: "It is evident that the procreative and fructifying power of nature is expressed by the idea of these two divinities, as was the case with the ancient Egyptians who had similar notions."[23]

Among the Amhara people, *ateetee* is also practiced with elaborate ceremony and ritual. The Amhara women believe that the spirit has the power to decide someone's fate and attribute all sorts of misfortune, such as a series of bereavements in the family, poor harvest, loss of fortune, and health problems, to the spirit. Thus, they say that propitiation of the spirit is useful for general well-being as well as a good harvest. They believe that the mother spirit was given power by God, and the practitioners are required to be loyal and faithful to her with annual and biannual ceremonies accompanied by lavish feasts. It is interesting that *ateetee* is not only limited to the followers of the Oromo religion; Christian Amhara women also worship with *chäle* (beads; also spelled *čäle*), which symbolize a spirit, and are sometimes strung into a necklace. As I. M. Lewis and Jewell observed: "Spirits of every origin and provenance are accepted within the Christian cosmology where they are naturalized in the continuous process of Amhara-ization and cultural exchange which takes place between the dominant culture and those of the subject peoples. So, for instance, the [Oromo] fertility spirit *Atete* is readily assimilated to the Virgin Mary, and vice versa."[24]

Among Amhara women, *ateetee* is celebrated on certain days of the week. The first day of the Ethiopian New Year (the 11th of September), a day in the second half of June, and toward the end of July are the most common times recommended by soothsayers. (Thursdays are the most common.) The practice differs slightly between the Amhara and Oromo areas. In the Amhara area, *ateetee* is celebrated as Fisseha Haile Maskal describes it:

> On the approach of the day, the woman takes about five kilos of scrupulously- chosen, pure-white barley in a straw sieve, and spreads over it about a handful of fresh green grass. The small straw basket is ceremoniously opened to take out the Čäle. The čäle is held in palms, wet with fresh butter and perfume. The woman moves the čäle tenderly over her face and breast, puts it back on her palms, gazes at it with unfathomably deep feeling of love and reverence, kisses it and utters a few words like: 'My mother, my mistress, there is nothing thou canst not do; please hear thou what I beg thee with my ignorant mouth.' Then she wraps the čäle in a fine piece of cloth and puts it

> back in the basket. Usually some aromatic leaves, incense or lemon, are put in with the čäle. The barley is then steeped in water.[25]

At the time of actual *ateetee* ceremony, women from the neighborhood attend the host woman's feast. Friends regardless of ethnic origin attend the ceremony, which indicates that ethnic interrelations are important. The host woman prepares everything required for the celebration. Most of the time, three cups of butter, three cooking pots representing three of the various spirits, eight pairs of coffee beans, a straw sieve, fragrant grass, and leaves are required. The host woman wears a special garment consisting of a blouse and a towel-sized sheet of cloth with stripes at the lower edge as a skirt. Some also wear bracelets and a horn ring on the left thumb. The woman bursts into joyous shrill shouting (ululation), calling on the spirits not to forget her children, husband, and cattle. Toward the evening, before sunset, the coarse flour of barley, which she has ground while wearing the special garment, is cooked in all three pots, and fresh grass is spread over the floor.

> In the early evening, the necessary articles are placed round the hearth which is now shifted towards the centre of the floor. Usually a woman helper, who must be an old widow, does the rest of the work. Invited guests begin to come from the neighbourhood. Then the ceremony starts. The *Atete* woman sits on the floor near the fire place with her legs stretched in front of her. Now wearing her special dress and with the chains of beads around her neck and down to her breast, the woman [sic] assumes a high and dignified position. She does not speak much but the people's attention is focussed towards her. With her air of deep meditation and silent contemplation she seems to be in direct contact with the spirit itself. In actual fact, she is regarded as an incarnation of *Atete*, for the food she eats is believed to be eaten by the spirit, and the words she utters are supposed to come from *Atete*. With the special dress and the fantastic decorations and the peculiar way of eating it is not difficult for people to regard her as a medium of the spirit. The most important part of the ceremony takes place in this atmosphere.[26]

The pairs of coffee beans are toasted with a cupful of butter added to them in the pot, and the concoction is turned out onto a plate. At this time, an older woman tries to read the future from the arrangement of the coffee beans on the plate. At the same time, a straw sieve holding fragrant grass and aromatic leaves is covered with a broad leaf of *enset* (false banana), on which is placed the plate containing

the toasted coffee beans. Then, the assisting woman brings the sieve closer to the legs of the host woman until it touches her toes; then in a ceremonious fashion, she moves it up and touches her knee-caps. Again she brings the sieve with all its contents farther up, close to her thighs. "Now the *Atete* woman picks up a pair of the fried coffee beans with each hand and utters the shrilling sound: '*Illi-li-li-li-li…*' and soothingly says '*Atete Dula, Atete Hara*, my mother, my mistress, please do accept my requests.' Then with an obvious feeling of joy and satisfaction she breaks into a loud voiced, *'Sifa! Wändäro Sifa!'* The people around follow her saying,—in the fashion of the English 'Hurrah!'—*'Sifa!' 'Sifa!',* meaning 'Good appetite.' "[27]

The participants also sing and dance, led by a drummer. Then they slaughter a goat for consumption, as well as for an offering. The host woman puts around her neck the fatty covering of the goat's entrails. In addition, she will wear the hoofs tied to her wrists for five days.[28] Although there are variations in the details of the ceremony between the Oromo and Amhara areas, most of the names and words used during the rituals still remain Oromo. *Ateetee duulaa* signifies the spirit for war, while *ateetee hara* refers to a lake, which signifies the spirit that comes from the unimaginably wide sea. They believe *hara* is as kind as a mother, while the *duulaa* spirit is the harshest of all and not easy to deal with. *Sifa* is also a common Oromo name; more than "good appetite," it refers to good wishes from people that the spirit will "let the food make you strong, well, healthy." Ululation is very common in both the Amhara and Oromo areas. After shouting, the host woman starts to eat the coffee beans two at a time. In the meantime, the assistant woman slathers her with a kind of grass dipped in melted butter all the way from her neck to her waist, until she is soaking wet. The dipping of grass in melted butter and the smearing, called *facaasaa* in Afaan Oromoo, signifies reverence to Waaqa. "Three *fäčasa* are required then a small portion of the thick barley porridge from one of the pots is put on the plate. A small depression is made in the centre of the thick porridge and a cup of molten butter is put in it. The woman in assistance dips the blades of särdo [the grass, *Agrotis semi verticalata*] in this butter and repeats the process of *fäčasa*. One *fäčasa* of eight butter smearings is done in the name of each *Atete*, The supposed incarnation of *Atete* is soon well smeared with butter."[29] *Facaasaa* is a common term widely used; today women say, "*Ateetee facaafatte,"* meaning, "She performed the *ateetee* ceremony."

The initiate then eats the porridge and next drinks a local brew prepared from durra while still sitting on the ground. Toward the end of the ceremony, old women bless her by saying, "Ayyo, make her fertile, watch her husband, and fulfill all her aspirations." She responds

with "Amen" after each blessing. Afterwards they put aside the sieve, which is to be kept for three days. The host woman stands up from the ground with much joy, and the rest disperse after bestowing a torrent of blessing upon the family. With that, the main ceremony comes to an end. In order to show her attachment to the spirit, the woman keeps the *chäle* on, will not change her clothing until the third day, and is not allowed to go beyond her compound. On the third day, she prepares a light meal, and again, women from the neighborhood will participate. When the guests depart, she cleans everything, takes off her *chäle*, holds it in her palms for a while, and while expressing deep love and devotion, she kisses the beads affectionately. The beads have an important meaning as representations of the spirit. She either sprinkles them with perfume or wraps them with aromatic leaves, and places them back in their basket. The *chäle* will be kept untouched until the next *ateetee* ceremony, unless she encounters problems in the meantime and wants to pray to the spirit not to forget her.[30]

In the Oromo areas, the initiate is expected to stay home for five days. On the fifth day, called *shanan*, the fat tied around her neck is removed and will be taken to a *qaalluu,* who is traditionally believed to be well-versed in interpreting the future, while the hoofs on her wrists are untied and buried in the floor under the pots containing the beer. It is believed that the *qaalluu* or *qaallittii* can read the linings of the parchment-like fat of the goat in order to prophesy.[31] This act reveals connections between the *ateetee* and *qaalluu* institutions. The practices in various parts of Oromia and Ethiopia are quite similar, with only variations in small details. Today, *ateetee* has been disappearing in many parts of Oromia and Ethiopia. In most Christian areas, it is considered a sinful ritual, and modern education has also had an impact on the practice. But it is still commonly practiced, mainly in rural areas but also close to the capital, Finfinnee (Addis Ababa).

Overall, *ateetee* is an important occasion for women to celebrate their womanliness independently of their husbands. It is a ceremony organized and performed by women. Although tough quarrels and conflicts arising from property ownerships are beyond its scope, the *ateetee* ceremony contributes to peaceful relations—most small disagreements and grievances are solved amicably at the ceremony. It focuses on "the primordial values of fecundity and peace."[32]

The Irreecha Festival

Irreecha is an ancient Oromo thanksgiving day celebrated on the shores of Hora Arsadi Lake, which is considered to be a holy place in the town of Bishoftuu, about 50 kilometers (31 miles) from

Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). It is observed every year on three consecutive Sundays by people from various backgrounds. Most live in the vicinity of the lake, but others travel from as far south as Boorana and as far north as Wallo to attend the celebration. *Irreecha* is, perhaps, the most colorful celebration of the Oromo religion. It includes giving thanks to Waaqa, as well as fervent prayers for peace in the nation, a good harvest, health, good leaders, and the like. In some ways, it is similar to the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States, but the *irreecha* festival is also the time to ask for forgiveness. Participants communicate with Waaqa to receive solutions to their pressing problems.[33]

The ritual starts in October with the blessing of the ritual leader. Then, participants place leaves, flowers, and grasses called *irreecha* under an Odaa tree or along the shore of the lake and pray to Waaqa. They also make offerings to Hora Lake. They believe that its water has a natural healing element, and they bring their belongings, such as cattle, to the lake to pray that Waaqa will keep them healthy and fertile.

Bishoftuu town is located amid several lakes, including Bishoftuu, Babbogaayaa, Kilolee, Kuruftuu, Hora Boto Hado, and Hora Arsadi. "These lakes and eight of the mountains, *Errer, Bericha, Dalota Adea, Babugaya, Boset, Kaliti, Zukala, and Katila* are sacred ritual grounds for many of the people living in and around the town. Collectively, these lakes are known as *Waka hara jani* (God's six lakes) and the mountains are *Waka tolu seditani* (God's eight mountains). Waka, for the worshipers of *Erecha*, is the great creator. Among the lakes, Hora Arsedi is the most sacred of them all and *Erecha* is celebrated on its shore."[34] Celebrants also bathe in the lake for healing purposes. Although many Oromo have embraced Islam or Christianity, a good number still observe the ritual. In most cases, even Christians and Muslims participate in the celebration of *irreecha*.

Chandrika Narayan, correspondent for CNN's *Inside Africa*, recorded the following by interviewing *irreecha* participants in 2005:

> Narayan: The ritual began the morning of October 3rd, after the spiritual leader blessed the festival. Worshipers put leaves and flowers around the sycamore tree, and offer prayers to their one god. The Oromo throw bait, bread, and other food items into the lake as offerings.
>
> Unidentified Female: The water is holy, water being you. You being 75 percent water, you are water. You are the tree. You are the plant. You are the animal. You're everything. Everything is connected with one another.

Narayan: Water is seen as a healing element of nature. Early in the morning, the Oromo bring the cattle, which are an essential part of their life, into the water.

Unidentified Female: The cattle is their family. So they bring their family into the water, asking the water to keep them clean, keep them healthy and have continuity, have a peaceful existence with this—with this oneness of nature.

Unidentified Male (through translator): We bathe them every year. I've been doing this for almost 20 years. The water has a healing effect.

Narayan: The festival includes ancient rituals that worshipers say they have been practicing for thousands of years, and brings together the forces of nature and the spirit of humans.

Unidentified Female (through translator): We are performing the rituals in the same way as our forefathers did long ago. We pray for the peace of our country. We pray for the sick, for the weak, for the poor, for all mankind.[35]

Irreecha is an important component of Oromo religion. It is interesting that the ritual site, Bishoftuu, is not far from the medieval capital of the nation, Odaa Nabee, which served as a seat of pan-Oromo *gadaa* government for centuries, as discussed in chapter 1. It is also interesting that the festival attracted non-Oromo groups. Although Ethiopia has been an Orthodox Christian country since the fourth century, much of Oromoland had not been evangelized until after the 1880s. Even after accepting Christianity or Islam, people from all corners attend the *irreecha* festival. It was into such religious practices that the missionaries tried to introduce the European form of Christianity beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century, as we shall see below.

Christian Missions in Nineteenth-Century Oromia: The Protestants

"The Oromo notables always liked to embrace the missionaries."[36]

The first Europeans to establish a firm and continuous link with Ethiopia were the Church Missionary Society (CMS) agents Samuel Gobat and Christian Kugler, who were singled out to bring their Lutheran convictions to its people. Arriving in February 1830, their initial objectives were to renew the Ethiopian Orthodox Church without proselytism, and introduce the European version of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. Both Kugler (based in Tigre) and

Gobat (based in Gondar) completely condemned the Ethiopian form of Christianity and called for the absolute supremacy of the Bible.[37]

While in Tigre, Gobat befriended a certain Habte Sellassie, a relative of King Sahle Sellassie of the kingdom of Shawa (who ruled from 1813 to 1847). Although a young native of Shawa, Habte Sellassie was in the service of *Dajjazmach* Wube of Tigre (d. 1855). Habte Sellassie became closely involved with the missionaries, and he proposed that the missionaries evangelize the Oromo in Shawa. Gobat writes: "He told me to return as soon as possible to Gondar, to go with him to commence a mission to the [Oromo], of whom he has much hope. Ever since I spoke to him concerning Evangelical Missions, he appears to be much taken up with the plan of going himself to proclaim the Gospel to the [Oromo]."[38] Gobat already had such intentions; he continues: "When I shall return to Gondar with a greater number of copies of the Gospel, he [Habte Sellassie] will conduct me to Schoa, introduce me to the king, his friend, & then go with me to establish a Mission among the [Oromo]."[39] Gobat was still occupied in his mission efforts in the north but Habte Sellassie continued to press him:

> Ever since you spoke to me of Missions, I feel constantly as if I ought to go and preach the Gospel to the [Oromo]. You return to your own country; but you have told me that you will come back in about a year. I will wait for you here. Hasten to come back: it is with you that I should wish to go as a Missionary among the [Oromo]. If we went there together, we could not fail of success. The [Oromo] are good people . . . They love instruction; and are disposed to believe, when any one speaks to them of the Gospel.[40]

Samuel Gobat traveled in many parts of Abyssinia, learned their language, and was well respected until he fell ill and was forced to return home, while Kugler died in an accident during a hunting excursion in Tigre. Gobat recovered and was later ordained Bishop of Jerusalem. That cut short initial efforts, until the pair were replaced in 1838 by Carl Isenberg and Johann Ludwig Krapf. Isenberg and Krapf were, however, forced to evacuate Tigre because of opposition from Ethiopian Orthodox priests, and they proceeded to Shawa, where King Sahle Sellassie had previously invited them. Initially welcomed in Shawa, they established a school not long after their arrival in May 1839. The school was attended by 30 to 40 scholars young and old, which gave them great promise for further missionary work. "The priesthood was not yet opposed to our work: on the contrary, all

professed friendship, and listened to what was said to them, though not without dispute. Controversy cannot be avoided; but we endeavored to avoid it as much as possible, and to proceed quietly, in order to prevent the crisis, which must be expected, from coming on too early, i.e., before some decidedly beneficial results of our work had appeared."[41]

Therefore, the beginnings of the Church Missionary Society efforts in Shawa seemed promising. But in any case, the missionaries Isenberg and Krapf believed that their principal aim was to reach the Oromo, and they could not access them other than via Shawa, where they could work among the various Tuulama Oromo groups. Isenberg continues, "But it is our opinion, that whatever the ultimate result of the Shoa Mission may be, Providence seems to have brought us thither in order to preach the Gospel to the heathen [Oromo]. No other opening to them is however apparent, but through Shoa. There we have access to numerous [Oromo clans] which are tributary to the King of Shoa, whilst from no other quarter we can reach them."[42]

Both Isenberg and Krapf believed that the Gospel should first be preached to the Oromo, then afterward to the Abyssinians. They came to Shawa only because of the lack of other venues to reach the Oromo. Because of their experience in Tigre, they were convinced that the Abyssinians were not ready to accept the Gospel, and they decided to find every means to reach the Oromo. For example, in making Bible translations into Afaan Oromoo, Krapf chose to use the Latin script instead of the Ethiopic script, which had been recommended by Abyssinian authorities. In explaining his reasoning, Krapf states: "But I was not disposed to follow their advice: because, first, I do not think this language to be an alien to the [Latin] idiom: secondly, because the Ethiopic Characters present great difficulty to writing as well as to the memory; and lastly, because I am convinced that the light of the Gospel and Science will be kindled first among the [Oromo], and thence proceed to the Abyssinians, who have nothing but the name of Christ."[43] Thus, the Church Missionary Society itself had made a significant shift in its area of operation. The East African Mission was then created as an extension of the Mediterranean Mission and directed to the Oromo nation.[44]

Krapf made considerable efforts to reach the Oromo. After his companion Isenberg left for Europe following a six-month stay in Shawa, in order to publish an Amharic dictionary, geography, and prayer book, Krapf remained for four more years working at the mission station and accompanying King Sahle Sellassie's expedition to the Maccaa Oromo on the southwest of Shawa.[45] Krapf's main target

was to find suitable ways of reaching the Oromo, rather than helping the king fight and conquer the Oromo. The Jesuits had taken a similar tack in their missionary efforts during the sixteenth century. They accompanied the emperor's expeditions, holding theological discussions. In Sahle Sellassie's expedition, Krapf met the son of the Oromo queen, Chamie, who was tributary to king Sahle Sellassie. The young prince, Jaarraa, was interested in obtaining religious instruction for himself as well as for his mother's Oromo subjects, if the king would allow it. In addition, the Oromo living around Yerer Mountain and the Muger River were believed to be a promising group among whom to start missionary work. During this time, Isenberg was in Europe publishing reports of the infant mission in Shawa and to press the society for more funding to extend the mission beyond Shawa into the Oromo groups.

By the beginning of 1842, the missionaries' efforts were becoming successful. Krapf had distributed a thousand copies of the scriptures, and the little school consisting of ten boys was prospering. He also planned to extend missions into other Oromo territories, as well as in the Gurage areas. But in the meantime, he decided to leave Shawa, mainly to facilitate the arrival of his new fellow laborers, Johannes Mühleisen-Arnold and Theodor Müller, who had arrived in Tajura (Djibouti) and were facing difficulties penetrating the Afar country on their way to Shawa. Instead of proceeding further to the south of Shawa for missionary activities, he went to facilitate their travels via the Afars into the interior. Also, he had a personal plan: to get married. He realized that an unmarried missionary could not do well in Abyssinia. Thus, he left Ankober (the camp of the king of Shawa) with the hope of returning and met his colleagues in Tajura. He married a woman named Rosine Dietrich in autumn 1842 in Egypt, after which he returned to Aden with his wife and colleagues Isenberg, Müller, and Mühleise-Arnold. Their main purpose was to return to Shawa and commence missionary operations among the Oromo.[46]

In November 1842, upon their arrival in Tajura with the intention of proceeding through the Afar country to Shawa, the group received bad news. King Sahle Sellasie had written orders to the sultan of Tajura to block the entrance of any Europeans into the interior. This turn of events was surprising, given that the king had originally welcomed them, and had even offered Krapf gifts during his stay at Ankober. On the eve of his departure from Ankober, Krapf stated: "The king had bestowed on me a silver sword, which gave me the rank of a governor."[47] They vehemently protested to the sultan of Tajura, who rejected their pleas. The group was forced to look for

another route to Shawa from Zeila via Somali country, an attempt that also failed. "Up to the March of 1843 we were negotiating the terms of transit with the Somali chiefs, when I received a letter from Major Harris, announcing the departure of the British mission from Shoa, and the decided refusal of the king to allow us to return."[48]

According to British diplomat Major Harris, who was in Shawa at the time, the main reason for the refusal was the opposition of the priests of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but Krapf also believed that the most important reason was opposition from fellow Europeans who were advancing Catholicism, particularly the French diplomat Rochet d'Héricourt. D'Héricourt had succeeded in prejudicing the queen of Shawa against Krapf. In the words of Krapf: "Another dangerous enemy was the intriguing Rocher d'Héricourt, a swindler who had insinuated himself into the favour of Sahela Selassie."[49] A serious rivalry emerged between d'Héricourt and Krapf, particularly over Shawa's political relations with Europe. "The missionary alleged that the King's interest was captured by a scheme wherein the application of European military discipline would gain him national ascendancy. Rochet, whose ideas these were, would represent them to his government. Whatever the Frenchman's real interests and proposals, he certainly convinced English observers that he harboured these harebrained ambitions."[50] It seems also that the king of Shawa no longer needed Krapf and his party; he had already secured what he wanted from the British mission via a treaty of commerce and friendship signed in 1843. It is also likely that Sahle Sellassie was uncomfortable with having Europeans in his territory who could observe and report on his possible breaches of the treaty.[51]

Isenberg and Mühleisen-Arnold next proposed that the party take the Massawa route, to enter the area by way of Tigre and Gondar outside of Shawa. Initially, Krapf reluctantly accepted. Isenberg wanted to work in Tigre until conditions seemed right for them to go to Oromia. On the way to Tigre, while they were in the Saho region, Krapf's wife prematurely gave birth to a daughter, whom he christened *Inba,* which means "tear" in Amharic. The infant died a few hours after birth, and having buried her, the mother had to travel only three days later because there was no village in the area in which to take shelter. Krapf and his wife arrived safely in Tigre and distributed Bibles there until they were joined by Mühleisen-Arnold and, later by Isenberg. All of them were, however, forced to return to Massawa because of opposition from priests led by the European Catholic missionaries already in the region.[52] Theophilus Waldmeier writes: "The somewhat incautious way in which he [Isenberg] afterwards

spoke against their worship of the Virgin Mary so exasperated the Abyssinians against him that it was easy for the Jesuit Sapeto, in connection with the Frenchman named Michel Abbadie, to induce King Ubie again to expel the Protestant missionaries from his country."[53] Their last attempt thus failed, and they decided to abandon Abyssinia and try to reach Oromia by way of East Africa. Krapf considered the Abyssinians nominal Christians and "the most serious obstacle to the spread of Christianity in the interior of Africa."[54]

Thus, the Protestant efforts in this area came to an end, even though they had been able to distribute nearly 8,000 copies of the scriptures elsewhere. Major Harris left Shawa after a treaty of commerce and friendship between Great Britain and Shawa was signed. Carl Isenberg and Mühleisen-Arnold traveled to Egypt, where they were later sent to the East Indies, while Krapf and his wife returned to Aden with the intention of continuing missionary efforts among the Oromo by way of East Africa. Thereafter, "neither diplomat nor missionary, under British protection, entered Shawā for many years. The only upshot was Krapf's celebrated search for an Evangelical El Dorado amongst the [Oromo] of East Africa."[55]

By the end of 1843, Krapf and his wife had arrived at the Somali coasts of Mogadishu and Brava, and they were happy when they met Oromo caravan traders at the island of Kiama. Krapf met and spoke to some Oromo traders at the coast. "The thought that exactly on Christmas-day we had arrived at the [Oromo] coast upheld and strengthened us, and we prayed fervently to the Lord that He would open up to us a way to convert these heathen whom we had journeyed to this distant shore to bring into His fold."[56] Clearly, they were determined to reach the Oromo at any cost, and while their fellow colleagues left for the East, they continued to look for routes to penetrate at least into southern Oromia. Krapf continued to believe that converting the Oromo would be a great potential for reaching many parts of Africa and decided to invest everything to that end. When they arrived at Mombasa and the little island of Tanga, they found the region suitable for missionary activities, but Krapf still believed that the gospel must first be preached to the Oromo. "I could not refrain from the thought that this spot was well suited for a preliminary missionary station, whence progress might be made into the interior; but the reflection that my missionary efforts must begin with the [Oromo] nipped that idea in the bud."[57]

On January 7, 1844, Krapf and his wife arrived at Zanzibar, where they decided to rest and to deliberate on his further plans. They were much welcomed by the British as well as American consuls who offered

to Krapf that he remain in Zanzibar to preach to the Europeans, work among the Indians living there, and establish schools for the Arabs as well as the Swahili, and prepare books in local languages for missionary efforts farther inland. But Krapf resisted: "I could not abandon my original design of founding a mission in the [Oromo]-land, which, so far as I know at present, extends to the fourth degree of south latitude. I felt that their conversion would produce the greatest impression on the whole of Eastern Africa, although it might be more difficult to found missions among them than among the Wanika, Wakamba, and Waseguas. To my mind Ormania is the Germany of Africa."[58] (Ormania is Krapf's designation of Oromoland, present-day Oromia.)

In his letter to Charles Cheetham, the treasurer of the United Methodist Free Churches, Krapf urges: "The [Oromo] nation had undoubtedly the same destination for Africa which Germany had for Europe. It will become one of the brightest ornaments of Christ's Church when it shall have been laid prostrate before our God and Savior. I therefore beg you, for the Lord's sake, to turn your attention to this important nation."[59] He believed that the Oromo nation has been destined by God, and if converted to Christianity, would attain the importance and fulfill the mission which God has pointed out to the Germans in Europe.[60] Both Isenberg and Krapf, "regarded the Oromo as the key to the evangelization of Africa."[61] Krapf in particular considered the Oromo as "a potential army of devoted Bible-inspired evangelists"[62] for the whole of Africa. In the words of Wolbert Smidt: "The Oromo were regarded as one of the most creative people in Africa. It was believed that, once converted to Protestantism, they could become the promoters of religious reform not only in East Africa, but in the whole of Africa."[63]

On March 13, 1844, Krapf arrived at Mombasa from Zanzibar with the intention of penetrating further into southern Oromia. After establishing himself at Mombasa, he made excursions into the nearby Wanika territory, in order to reach the Oromo.[64] After several visits to explore the area, Krapf and his fellow laborer Johannes Rebmann established a station to serve as a church at Rabai Mpia in the Wanika territory, some 24 kilometers (15 miles) inland from Mombasa. On the first day of the establishment of the station, some 12 people attended their service, but they were not ready to come every Sunday for worship. A church was built with the support of local Wanika, and a bell was brought from London. Krapf went from house to house in the vicinity of the station to encourage people to come to the Sunday church service. They set up a school, which a few boys attended.

Overall, Krapf and Rebmann labored greatly among this coastal people of Mombasa.[65] At Rabai Mpia station, they were able to convert the king, *Abbaa* Gunjaa, and his wife. The king's wife started to pray regularly, and the king himself began spreading Christianity in his kingdom. Still, the original plan of reaching the Oromoland by way of the Wanika had not yet been carried out.

When Krapf and Rebmann both retired back to Europe due to illness, they were succeeded by the Reverend Thomas Wakefield and, later, the Reverend Charles New, who undertook exploring the neighborhood of Mombasa in the second half of the nineteenth century. Wakefield was sent by the United Methodist Free Churches in 1861 under the supervision of Krapf. Wakefield first settled at the Ribe Mission Station, 10 kilometers (6 miles) from Rabai Mpia Mission Station, near Mombasa. He made his first expedition to the Oromoland from the Mombasa coast in 1865, while he conducted his second, which extended beyond the Tana River into Patta, accompanied by Reverend New, in 1866–1867. Wakefield made significant contributions not only to the mission efforts, but also to knowledge about the culture and geography of the east coast of Africa.[66]

Wakefield, in particular, had turned his attention to the Oromo from his residence at Ribe near Mombasa. "Mr. Wakefield, for years past, has been most anxious to establish a mission among the [Oromo], whom he looks upon as a manly and intelligent people."[67] He was convinced that both the primary and ultimate objective of the East African mission of the United Methodist Free Churches was the Oromo nation. By using the coast as stepping stones, the missionaries wanted to penetrate deep into the Oromo villages. From the coast, they wanted to proceed to Boorana and then to the whole of Oromia. In 1884, Wakefield wrote to his Missionary Secretary, "Bworana, I think, should be our first aim. It is only a few days' journey from Lamu—perhaps about twelve. If our Society works up into Bworana, then the whole of the [Oromo] country is right before it."[68]

Wakefield made negotiations with the Barareta Oromo, who live in the district extending from the Tana River to close to Malindi, and he obtained permission to establish a station there. He made four visits in 1877 to knit the friendship and to select a site for the mission station. Accompanied by his fellow laborers, Seden and Randall, he started the journey from Ribe in August 1877. After two-and-a-half hours' travel, he reached Sirgiso, where he met (Imme) Immanya, an Oromo chief of the road farther into the interior. Immanya forbade Wakefield's expedition from entering the interior, but allowed him to explore the vicinity of Sirgiso. In September 1877, the Oromo chief

of the area, *Abbaa Lagaa* Jaarraa, sent an emissary to the expedition to grant them permission to establish a station, on condition that they abstain from interfering with the settlement of runaway slaves. A site was selected in the vicinity of the Sabaki River, and many Oromo joined him.[69] "Mr. Wakefield's religious intercourse with the [Oromo] was of a satisfactory nature, and they readily joined him in prayer."[70]

The population of that community continued to be augmented, particularly after the 1870s when they began accepting a great number of fugitive slaves.[71] Although they were unable to penetrate deep into Oromia, Wakefield and his party were able to establish missions among the Oromo of the Kenya coast. More than Wakefield, Krapf might have been delighted for this relative success to reach the Oromo because he was directing Wakefield's expeditions. As we shall see below, the Swedish Protestant missions and the Catholics also suffered difficulties in their efforts to reach the Oromo.

The Swedish Mission and the Role of Oromo Converts

By 1865, another group, the Swedish Evangelical Mission, had set up itself along the Red Sea coast with the particular purpose of preaching the Gospel to the Oromo nation. Because of the difficulty of penetrating the interior through Abyssinia, whose kings and warlords were vehemently opposed to missionaries evangelizing the Oromo, they waited at the coast looking for an opportunity. In the meantime, they worked with freed slaves at the port of Massawa. There, they were able to educate and convert many Oromo freed slaves who were brought to the coast by Arab caravan traders.[72] The most notable of these converts include Hiikaa *Abbaa* Gammachiis (christened Onesimos Nasib), and Aster Gannoo Salbaanaa.

Hiikaa joined the Swedish school and was baptized Onesimos on Easter Sunday 1871. He showed great ability at his studies and was sent to Johannelund Missionary Training Institute in Stockholm in 1876. He graduated with a teacher's diploma and was commissioned as a missionary in 1881. After returning to Africa in October 1881, he became a teacher at the Swedish school, which moved to Mankullu, a small village on the mainland 5.6 kilometers (3.5miles) from Massawa port (today's Eritrea). At that time, members of the Swedish mission were preparing an expedition to Oromia. Onesimos joined the expedition, eager to preach the Gospel in his homeland. Because the earlier expedition to Oromia had failed, this time the mission group

decided to take the Sudan route, to enter by way of Guba and follow Oromo merchants to the south of the Abbay River. Upon arriving at Famaka, near the Ethiopian border, the missionaries were told by the Egyptian border authorities that the road to the Wallaggaa region was unsafe and were advised to turn back. This was perhaps the conflict-ridden period of the Gojjame expeditions into Western borderlands north of the Abbay River. Also, to the south of the river, King Menelik of Shawa (1865 to 1889) and King Takle Haymanot of Gojjam fought each other in Guduruu the same year. The party decided to return to Massawa.

On their way back to Massawa, G. E. Arrhenius, the leader of the expedition, and a young Oromo named Filipos died of illness. Onesimos himself suffered from fever and sandstorms but survived. He took over leadership of the party and returned to Mankullu in 1882. After recovering, Onesimos resumed his teaching and started a new project of translating the Bible and other scriptures into Afaan Oromoo. In the meantime, the mission had secured permission from King Menelik of Shawa (1865 to 1889) to proceed to the kingdom of Jimmaa, where it was believed that the King *Abbaa* Jifar was interested in missionaries coming as teachers, particularly to introduce modern education. At that point, Onesimos suspended the translation work and joined the expedition, which had arrived at Entoto, Menelik's present camp, in April 1884. The expedition included Onesimos and his wife Miheret, a young Oromo named Petros, and two Swedish evangelists, Pahlman and Bergman. Menelik, however, denied them permission, and they were forced to return to Mankullu. Menelik may have come to fear that, in educating the Oromo, the missionaries would facilitate the introduction of firearms to Oromia, making conquering them more difficult. As we shall see in chapter 6, Oromia was conquered largely because its people lacked weapons, unlike Menelik's Shawan kingdom, which had been awash with modern firearms by the late nineteenth century.

Back in Mankullu, Onesimos resumed translation work as well as teaching. He was happy to have educated many Oromo freed slaves at the station. In 1899, he traveled to Europe to publish his Oromo Bible, which appeared that same year. Later, he returned and settled in Asmara, Eritrea, where he worked as a mission teacher and evangelist among some five hundred Oromo residents and visitors. Still, the initial plan to penetrate Oromia was not abandoned. That opportunity arrived in 1904. In a new expedition that proved to be the last, Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia (1889 to 1913) granted permission for entrance to Oromia. Onesimos, his second wife, Lydia

Dimbo (his first wife had died), Aster Gannoo, and others arrived in Finfinnee in April 1904. The group proceeded to Wallaggaa, where they were welcomed by its governor, Kumsaa Morodaa (1889 to 1924).[73] It is not clear why he allowed them in at this time, but by 1900 Oromia had been conquered by Menelik, and it is likely that he no longer considered the presence of missionaries dangerous to his empire.

The Swedish Mission went on to found schools and mission stations in Wallaggaa. Until his death in 1931, Onesimos served as a "teacher, city evangelist, chaplain to prisoners, mediator of persons in conflict, and comforter of little fatherless children."[74] Aster Gannoo and Lydia Dimbo founded a girls' school in Naqamtee town in 1916, and together with Onesimos, they laid the foundation for the introduction of modern education in Wallaggaa, as well as the birth of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, which currently has more than five million members. After years of considerable difficulties, "a foundation had been laid for Evangelical movement of surprising extent and depth."[75]

The Role of Other Oromo Converts

Ganamee Yaa'ii and the Swiss Oromo Mission

Ganamee was born around 1830s in Guma, one of the five Oromo Gibee states. Her father died in a battle when she was only six. She was captured by Muslim merchants three years later, while she was visiting her father's grave. She was taken to Sennar in the Sudan, and after being sold 12 times, arrived in Cairo as the personal property of Mohammed Ali (1801 to 1849) of Egypt. She worked in his kitchen and was converted to Islam, taking the Muslim name of Fatima. When the German adventurer John Baron von Müller traveled to Egypt in 1847, Mohammed Ali gave Fatima to him as a gift. The adventurer also purchased two African boys and took all of them to Germany in 1849. Ganamee was first taken to Stuttgart, where she served in the house of von Müller's mother and received Catholic and German language instruction. Later, von Müller presented all three of the young Africans to the King of Württemberg. The queen mother, a Protestant, wished that Fatima would join the girls' school at the Pietist settlement in Kornthal, where Krapf had set up a mission station. There, she lived with a German family, the Fechts, who became her foster parents. She received Protestant instruction, was baptized on July 12, 1852, and was christened Pauline. She was eager to return home and evangelize her people. "In 1854, shortly after

a meeting with Krapf, who had just come back from East Africa, she wrote to him that she was happy about his plans to go to 'the dark land', and sent him some of her textile works and drawings as gifts for the Oromo."[76] Unfortunately, she never fulfilled her goal of returning home; she died of lung disease at the age of 24 on September 11, 1855.

But her legacy was influential. Ganamee influenced the Basel missionaries in Switzerland to send missions to Oromia. She had visited the Basel mission station before her death and had made a big impression on the leaders there in appealing to them to send missions to her country. The Basel missionary leaders, particularly their head, a man named Christian Friedrich Spittler,[77] "had regarded this as a 'holy legacy' and was always looking for means of realizing this 'burning demand."[78] The extent of her influence over European countries regarding sending missions to Africa, even after her death, was described in the *Church of England Magazine*:

> We think our friends knew already that bishop Gobat intends also a mission to the [Oromo clans], of whom a dear member, late Pauline Fathme, in the church-yard of Riehen, at the foot of St. Chrischona mountain, is resting in hope of the blessed day of a happy resurrection. Her sepulcher is to us a continual admonition not to forget the millions of [Oromo] that are inhabiting the south of Habesh, and nearly extend to the equator. Many think with us, that the best way of reaching this interesting people with the gospel lies through Abyssinia. And may the cheerful day of salvation for the Oromo [nation] soon dawn![79]

Bishop Gobat had indeed sent Krapf and another man, Martin Flad, to Emperor Tewodros in 1855 for permission to establish missions.[80] As discussed earlier, Krapf, Gobat, and the St. Chrischona Pilgermission (near Basel in Switzerland) had decided that it was impossible to establish a direct mission station in Oromia at that time (1850s), but were convinced they could do it through Abyssinia as a first step to Oromia. "Thus, the Ethiopian Mission, which aimed at a reform of the Christian Church in Ethiopia, was largely motivated by the hope that this would be the first step to the conversion of the Oromo."[81]

Emperor Tewodros, who was especially interested in the technical expertise of the missionaries, accepted Krapf and Flad's request, while the Orthodox Bishop Abuna Salama was also willing to welcome lay missionaries, as long as they did not organize new churches in the country. Krapf and Flad sent word to Gobat in Jerusalem; that same year (1856), he sent four men, Martin Flad, Christian F. Bender,

John Mayer, and Johannes Gottlieb Kienzlen, as lay missionaries to Abyssinia. Later, in 1858, Charles Saalmüller, Schroth and his son Heinrich, and Theophilus Waldmeier arrived to boost the number of missionaries in the area.[82] Having established themselves at Dabra Tabor, the group began distributing Bibles to the surrounding community and also among the Falasha, "who are especially desirous to possess them, and among whom the brothers think of settling, although they would almost have preferred to have found a settlement among the [Oromo]."[83]

These missionaries were planning for mission work in Oromia, even though the emperor would not allow them to go to the Oromo. One of them, Mayer, who had married a Wallo Oromo girl, prepared an Oromo wordbook, possibly supported by freed Oromo slaves who had joined the mission school at Dabra Tabor. Bishop Abuna Salama had handed over to the missionaries some Oromo who had been captured during the Emperor Tewodros's wars. By the 1860s, preparations for the Oromo mission looked very promising. The sale of the book *Galla-Büchlein: Aus dem Leben der Galla-Negerin Pauline Johanne Fathme* by K. F. Ledderhose on the life of Ganamee produced, together with other contributions, about 500 Swiss francs. Another sponsor from England contributed 2,500 Swiss francs in 1864, while Krapf promised an annual contribution of 300 gold florin (coins) if the mission could start right away. The Oromo mission was to be organized under Bishop Gobat and the leadership of the St. Chrischona Pilgermission. Toward the end of the 1860s, some missionaries had actually been sent, but they were unable to enter Oromia because of unrest along the Sudanese frontier. Attempts to cross to Oromia in 1867 from Sudan by way of Beni-Shangul to the south of Abbay River and by way of the Guba Muslim state to the north of the river failed, largely due to wars across the border. Thus, the Oromo mission failed. The Abyssinian mission also failed; Emperor Tewodros (1855 to 1868) jailed the missionaries together with the diplomats. The British government was forced to send an expeditionary force to obtain the release of the hostages.[84] The British army secured the release of the diplomats and the missionaries, which also led to the end of the emperor in 1868.

The St. Chrischona Oromo mission, although it initially failed, was not abandoned; in 1870, a new effort was undertaken. The missionary Mayer had settled at Adwa and joined *Alaqa* Zanab, who had served as a chronicler of Emperor Tewodros. Zanab, "a scholarly Oromo from Šawa,"[85] already had the intention of doing mission work in Oromo and had even translated the New Testament into

Afaan Oromoo, with the help of an Oromo assistant named Waaree. Mayer, Zanab, Waaree, and later, Jacob Greiner and Gabre Mikael, continued to study the Oromo language, held regular masses, and distributed Amharic Bibles. In 1872, Mayer and Greiner approached King Menelik II of Shawa, who allowed them to establish an Oromo school at Ankober, as well as a mission station in an area subjugated to him.[86] The Oromo mission in Shawa flourished for a while, thus partly fulfilling Ganamee's dream, but in 1886 Menelik expelled them on orders from Emperor Yohannes IV (1872 to 1889).[87]

Ruufoo

There were many Oromo of slave origin who were converted to Christianity in unprecedented ways. One such person was Ruufoo, who was sold into slavery in Guma, one of the five Oromo Gibee states. In 1865, he was redeemed by agents of Krapf. On orders from Krapf, he was bought for £16 at Matamma market on the Sudanese border, to assist him with a Bible translation into Afaan Oromoo.[88] He arrived at Kornthal, Krapf's residence, in 1866, received Christian instruction, and started to translate the Book of Acts and Romans. He was baptized on May 23, 1869, and was christened Christian Ludwig. Ruufoo also spoke Amharic, which he had learned when he lived as a slave in Gojjam. He started to work in the printing press of St. Chrischona Pilgermission near Basel in Switzerland, but also continued to help Krapf to finalize his Bible translation work. In 1870, they published the Gospel of St. Luke. He also helped to revise Krapf's earlier translations of the Gospel of St. Matthew and several chapters of St. John. Using Ruufoo's translations, Krapf published the whole of the New Testament in 1876. Ruufoo later convinced his masters to send him back to Oromia along with other missionaries. But first, he had to be sent to school for further education. He was sent to the Syrian orphanage in Jerusalem and later to the German Protestant community of Cairo, possibly to join a missionary post at the prospective Swiss Oromo mission. Unfortunately, like Ganamee, he died of lung disease on January 23, 1871 in Cairo.[89]

Raagoo

Like Ruufoo, Raagoo was born in Guma, in about 1831. He and his sister were sold into slavery by a local chieftain and then sold several times more until they arrived in Jidda, where they were separated. His

sister was sent into the interior of Arabia, while Raagoo was brought by another master northward along the Arabian side of the Red Sea coast to Cairo.[90] There, he was bought by a Christian for US$120, and the new master handed him over to a Church Missionary Society missionary, Johann R. G. Lieder, who already had an Oromo girl serving him. The girl helped Raagoo in Lieder's house in Cairo. When his master departed for Europe by way of Palestine and Turkey, Raagoo followed him to Switzerland. He received Christian instruction on the journey. Upon arriving in Switzerland, he was examined by a physician and found to be in a good health. Nothing is known about Raagoo's life in Switzerland in his later years, but we do know that he was converted to Christianity and fully admitted to partake of Holy Communion, and that he developed affection for a woman named Jenny, to whom he offered gifts.[91] Unlike most of his peers, who died shortly after their arrival in the cold climate of Europe, he seems to have adapted to life in Europe, remaining healthy and in good physical condition.

Ganamee Duroo

Ganamee Duroo, a Karrayyuu Oromo, was born in about 1857. While she, her brother, and sister, were looking after cattle, a foreign trader tried to lure them away. Although her brother and sister escaped, she was unable to run fast enough. She was captured and then sold at least twice before being brought to Matamma, where she was bought for US$70 by the St. Chrischona missionary trader Johann Eipperle, the same person who bought Ruufoo for Krapf. Ganamee Duroo was about ten years old when she was ransomed in 1867 by Eipperle. The missionary trader wanted to learn Afaan Oromoo from her; he took her to Gafat near Dabra Tabor, to the Mission school run by the Reverend Theophilus Waldmeier. She learned Amharic there before being sent back to Matamma station. She accompanied the Eipperles when they left for Europe due to health reasons, and they arrived at Basel in 1868.

Ganamee lived in the house of Spittler, the leader of the St. Chrischona Pilgermission, and was baptized at Riehen on October 4, 1868. She became a strong follower of Christianity. She attended primary schools both at Basel and Riehen before she went to high school, where she made great progress. She was, however, forced to drop out from secondary school due to health reasons; she died of tuberculosis, the disease widespread in nineteenth-century Europe, on January 5, 1874.[92]

Lovedale Freed Oromo Slaves

During a 2004 research visit to the archives at Durham University in England, this author discovered a document about a group of Oromo slaves who were rescued and taken to South Africa. This event had thus far eluded the attention of scholars; it is not described in any previous studies of the nineteenth-century Oromo diaspora. In 1888, more than two hundred Oromo slaves were rescued by the British navy on the Red Sea coast. They had all been captured, mostly from southwestern Oromia, by raiding Arab traders and were bound for the markets in Arabia. The slaves were all rescued after the dhows were towed to the port at Aden. They were housed temporarily by British government authorities, who contacted The Keith Falconer Mission of the Free Church of Scotland, situated near Aden, about the possibility of receiving them. The mission station agreed, and the children were taken there. About one-fifth of them died due to illness, but their numbers were augmented as other dhows were captured and more slaves were rescued and brought to the mission. By 1889, it became necessary to look for a more appropriate and comfortable station for them. Eventually, Lovedale was decided upon, and they were taken to South Africa. In his letter to Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Wingate, British director of Military Intelligence, the man in charge of their travel to South Africa, Alex Paterson writes:

> The problem is the disposal of a number of young [Oromo] men and women who are at present domiciled in the mission station at Lovedale, in South Africa, of the Free Church of Scotland. They are the survivors of over 200 slave children who are rescued off Mocha in Sept. 1888 by H. M. S. Osprey (Capt. Gissing) and brought to Aden where they were taken over temporarily by the Government. Being then in charge of the F.C. station of Shaikh Othman, near Aden, Lt. Col. Stace, OB, 2nd political officer at the time asked me if our mission would take a number of these children. We took between 60 and 70, the rest being disposed of elsewhere. Owing to the extreme unsuitableness of the climate but also to the lack of suitable educational apparatus in such a young and small station I was ordered, in 1890, by our Foreign missions committee to take them to Lovedale.[93]

Although they ranged in age up to nineteen, most of the children were only eight or nine years old. Many of them had been bought and sold more than eight times before arriving at Tajura on the Red Sea coast. The man in charge of their travel was Alexander Paterson, who also remained at the station as their teacher. Their board-master

was Alexander Geddes, whom they called *abbaa* (father). They eventually adapted to life in South Africa, and by 1891 about 30 of them were baptized into Christianity. Four years later, 51 more were baptized.[94]

Many of the children survived the hardship, and after their education, most of the girls joined domestic service in the Cape province, while the majority of the boys became businessmen. Paterson writes: "Many had in the meantime displayed great intelligence and aptitude to learn and in S. Africa (where they have enjoyed a climate and style of living closely approximating to their own) have made great progress in general education as well as in various trades to which many have been apprenticed in the institution."[95] They were educated in practical fields such as carpentry, blacksmithing, wagon-building, brick-making, basket-making, shoemaking, printing, book binding, farming, beekeeping, and tending poultry. According to Paterson, Lovedale was famous for its technical education, and "educationally it stands among the first at the Cape."[96] Like the Oromo converts who went to Europe, these former slaves were eager to return to their native Oromia and educate their people. They kept their language and close contacts in South Africa, even though some left the station to work for themselves. The station also had the intention of sending them back to Oromia as missionaries. In the words of Paterson: "They would make excellent material in a pioneer station among their own people."[97] The Lovedale missionaries wanted to approach Emperor Menelik for permission to establish a station in Oromia. Paterson's letter to Wingate requests that he approach the Ethiopian government to secure recognition to that end. However, it seems they were not successful, and most of them returned to Ethiopia on their own.

By 1899, ten of the boys and three of the girls had died, but quite a number of them returned to Oromia. Some soon found jobs elsewhere; one became an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society at Harar. Dr. John Young, a British missionary at Sheikh Othman near Aden, writes of another, Gammachis Garba, who died in 1900: "Of his genuine Christian spirit and love, his patience in suffering, his earnestness and faithfulness, his zeal and hopefulness, no one could say too much."[98] Young visited Addis Ababa in 1923 and met several other Oromo returnees from South Africa. He observed that some, both girls and boys, had died, but that there were seven still alive who had good recollections of their stay in South Africa. After returning home, some of them kept in touch with people they had known in South Africa, particularly with their boarding master, Geddes. For

example, Milko Guyo wrote a letter in 1925, care of the Bank of Abyssinia, to Geddes, whom he told that nine of his former charges were still alive in Ethiopia.[99] Lack of sources prevents us from detailing their contributions after their return to Oromia. But it is certain that they contributed in various capacities, such as, perhaps, by working as interpreters for embassies.

The Reverend James Chala Salfey

Perhaps the most successful and widely traveled Oromo missionary of slave origins was the Reverend James Chala Salfey. He was an Oromo rescued from an Arab slave dhow by the crew of a British warship active in the suppression of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea, and was adopted by Captain W. F. Hastings, Royal Navy. He was educated in England and ordained as an Anglican deacon by the Bishop of Oxford,[100] who was the son of the antislavery leader William Wilberforce. Chala Salfey offered to become a missionary in Africa and worked first in Usambara at the Magila mission station in Tanzania. By the end of 1882, he was one of the two African deacons there.[101]

The Magila mission was founded in 1867 when the Universities' Mission in Central Africa missionary C. A. Alington arrived in Usambara. Like Johann Ludwig Krapf two decades earlier, he visited the chief of the area. He received a negative answer from the chief, but was allowed to settle in Bondei country close to Zanzibari chiefs on the coast. He was assigned to the Magila station, which became the center of the Universities' Mission in Central Africa missionary efforts. The arrival of Chala and other local churchmen helped to gain a significant position for Magila.[102] In the words of Sundkler and Steed, "An interesting group of young African churchmen who joined the station helped gain for Magila its outstanding reputation: the Revd James Chala Salfey, the widely-travelled Oromo Anglican priest, eventually posted to Ledombo in Mozambique, accompanied by a Shambaa churchman trained at Kiungani."[103]

From 1888 to 1890, Chala was sent to England for further education for the priesthood and was ordained at Cuddesdon before returning to the Magila station in Tanzania. Next, he joined the Cowley Fathers' mission at Cape Town, South Africa. In 1894, he had again moved, to the Lebombo Anglican station in Mozambique. The European missionaries found African missionaries more suited to evangelical activity; Chala and other locals were particularly active in starting new stations elsewhere. William Edmund Smyth, the first

Bishop of Lebombo, Mozambique (1893 to 1912), at first had no English priests and succeeded in winning over Chala Salfey. Before coming to Mozambique, Smyth had worked in Zululand, and it is possible that he knew Chala Salfey in South Africa. Chala Salfey and his other local colleague, John Matthews, started work at Inhambane, far north along the Mozambique coast.[104]

The Catholic Missions

"La Missione [Oromo] però, prima di morire devo morire io"[105]
Before the mission of Oromo dies I would like to die first!
G. Massaja, Apostolic Vicariate of the Oromo

During the sixteenth century, the Jesuits tried to renew the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. At that time, they did not evangelize the Oromo. They were expelled in 1632. During the nineteenth century, two groups of Catholic missionaries arrived: the Lazarists in the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian areas, and the Capuchins in the Oromo areas. The Capuchins are an autonomous branch of the Franciscan order, founded in 1525 in the Marches, Italy[106], while the Lazarists, named after the College of St. Lazare in Paris, are one of the congregations of the Priests of the Mission, an institute founded in 1624 by Vincent de Paul. Here, we are concerned with the Capuchins in the Oromo areas, but a few words about the mission in the north are also an important point of departure. The Roman Catholic Mission had set itself up in northeast Africa during the nineteenth century and had established contact with the rulers in northern Ethiopia. They had relations, though not intimate friendship, with Wagshum Gobeze (who ruled from 1868 to 1871) in northern Ethiopia. "The sympathies of the Roman Catholic missionaries being naturally with France, as the leading Power of their religion, it might perhaps be deemed expedient to act upon them through the French Government, in which case the recognition of Waagshum Gobazye as Emperor of Abyssinia might be made by the Governments of France and England concurrently."[107]

The Catholic leadership was eager to counter the activities of the Church Missionary Society in Abyssinia in the first half of the nineteenth century. In order to assess the Church Missionary Society situation and arrange the return of the Catholics, a young Lazarist, Friar Giuseppe Sapeto, who was previously stationed in Syria, volunteered in 1837 to come to Abyssinia. In the words of Theophilus Waldmeier: "As soon as the Jesuit Propaganda in Rome saw that the Protestants had begun a Mission in Abyssinia, they sent the priest

Sapeto to that country, and his intrigues were sufficient to influence the Governor to stop the Protestant Mission. This took place in 1838."[108] Sapeto joined the French brothers Arnauld and Antoine d'Abbadie in Cairo, and they went to Massawa. When they arrived in Tigre in March 1838, the Church Missionary Society led by Krapf and Isenberg had already been expelled from that region, which led them to take precautionary actions, particularly not to anger the Ethiopian priesthood. "Fr. Giuseppe quickly ingratiated himself with the Adwā clergy, inducing *Qedus* Gabreʿēl Church to send a declaration of submission to Rome. Encouraged by Sapeto's reports, and doubtlessly considering the increasing involvement of both France and the Lazarists in the Levant, Propaganda asked the Congregation of the Mission to undertake the work."[109] Giustino de Jacobis of the Province of Naples was appointed under the initiative of the Propaganda Prefect Apostolic of Ethiopia, who arrived in Adwa in October 1839. "Thus, of a double *fait accompli*—Sapeto's on Rome, Propaganda's on the Lazarists—was born an exemplary career."[110]

The origin of the Capuchins in this area was also linked to the same events. Following the reports provided by European missionaries and travelers about the existence of highly organized kingdoms in the Oromo and southern regions by the first half of the nineteenth century, European interests and attention were directed to these regions. The well-known kingdoms include the five Oromo Gibee states of Limmuu-Enarya, Jimmaa, Guma, Goma, and Gera. The dates, as well as the dynamism of the emergence of these states, still need further research, but it seems that they had emerged by the beginning of the nineteenth century.[111] Nevertheless, Oromo indigenous governance institutions still continue to dominate. As Makuria Bulcha writes, "In the middle of the 19th century three types of political organizations existed in Oromoland; *gada* federations and confederations, chiefly principalities and kingdoms. Irrespective of a radical departure from the *gada* form of political organization, the cultural, and to a great extent, the ideological underpinnings of the kingdoms and principalities remained basically similar to that of the *gada* system."[112]

Antoine d'Abbadie, who had traveled extensively between 1838 and 1846 in Ethiopia, was the first modern European (probably after Antonio Fernandez, 1613) to have traveled as far as the Gibee states. He wrote about these states, including their traditional religion, which contributed to the growing interests of the missionaries.[113] The British traveler Charles Beke, who traveled extensively in Ethiopia, also visited these regions and reported about the Oromo

religion, even indicating that some Oromo were Christians. Thus, the Lazarist Sapeto reported home about the exciting potential for sharing the Gospel among the Oromo. Moreover, Edouard Blondeel, the Catholic Belgian diplomat, reported the great potential of converting the Oromo.[114]

Of the Europeans, Antoine d'Abbadie's report was well-received; he had firsthand, detailed information, thanks to his visits to the region. He wrote a letter in March 1845 to the Propaganda, "of the possibility of an imminent conversion of the [Oromo people]."[115] He was impressed by their hospitality and kindness. He lived one year with King *Abbaa* Bogibo of Limmuu Enarya. He was convinced that the Oromo were well-disposed to receive Christian missionaries at that time.[116] The Capuchins agreed to undertake the mission established by papal decree on April 30, 1846. Bishop Guglielmo Massaja was appointed Apostolic Vicariate of the Oromo and to lead the mission with four Piedmontese confrères who had landed at Massawa by the end of 1846.[117]

From the Red Sea port of Massawa, Massaja and his party reached Tigre in the territory ruled by *Dajjazmach* Wube (d. 1855), who had earlier expelled the Lazarist leader Giustino de Jacobis. Massaja was also expelled in 1847 and was forced to find a different route to Oromia. It is interesting that, like the Protestants' efforts, the Catholics' efforts to reach the Oromo suffered opposition from Abyssinian chiefs. Both the Lazarists and the Capuchins were expelled and forced to settle at Mankullu, near Massawa. De Jacobis and his indigenous followers had settled there and built a small church. In 1848, Giustino de Jacobis was consecrated the first Apostolic Vicariate of Abyssinia by Massaja[118] at the church. Massaja also led the confirmation of several native converts, including many Oromo. The French consul at Massawa rescued many Oromo from slavery and directed them into the Catholic faith. Massaja writes: "Previously I had held a confirmation which was doubly interesting to me from a good many of the [Oromo clans] taking part in the sacred rite, the [Oromo] being the people to whom the Holy See had specially directed my steps. These converts were the fruits of the zeal of Mdme. de Goutin and Mlle. Mélanie, her eldest girl, who, with M. de Goutin—the French consul—have done so much for the honour of God in this country."[119] Massaja took the Massawa route, canceling an original plan of traveling via the Blue Nile, to enter Oromia, particularly for this important task of ordaining native converts as well as consecrating de Jacobis. Then, Massaja left for Aden in order to determine other possible routes to the Oromo.

Perhaps unable to secure other routes, in 1849 Massaja decided to undertake a second expedition attempt, by way of northern Ethiopia, to reach the Oromo. This time, he changed his name to Antonio and disguised himself as a merchant to the Ethiopian priesthood and chiefs. He was welcomed by *Dajjazmach* Wube, the same person who had expelled him earlier. He was allowed to proceed to Gondar, beyond Wube's territory, which he reached in July 1849. There were already some Lazarist missionaries in Gondar at the time, and they welcomed him. Together with Sapeto, two other missionaries existed when they arrived in 1838. Initially, Sapeto and M. Montuori proceeded to *Ras* Ali's territory in Gonder; later, Sapeto returned to Tigre, while Montuori was stationed in Gonder. There were a good many Catholics in the region five years after their arrival. Sapeto, however, fell ill and was forced to return to Cairo, while Montuori remained in Gondar.[120]

While in Gondar, Massaja sent an envoy, *Abbaa* Imnetu, to *Ras* Ali, to request permission to go to Oromia. In the meantime, the Bishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abuna Salama III, came to realize that Antonio was not a merchant, but in fact was the Catholic Bishop Massaja, called locally *Abbaa* Masiyas. Abuna Salama turned his supporters against Massaja, and had him imprisoned in Gondar. It was only when a trusted Lazarist, Brother Filippino, intervened that Massaja was released. En route to Shawa, Massaja met *Ras* Ali at Dabre Work, the military camp of the *Ras* in 1849. *Ras* Ali, however, asked him to travel to Europe and to plead with the European powers against the Egyptians, who had been making raids into northern Ethiopia since their occupation of the Sudan in 1821.[121] Massaja then left for Europe in 1850; his second attempt to reach Oromia had also failed.

While in Europe, preparing for a return to Oromia in spite of considerable problems and opposition, Massaja was informed of the expulsion of the Capuchins from Abyssinia. He was very much concerned about the mission in Oromia, and he was unsure where to relocate the missionaries. Indeed, his slogan was, "Before the mission of [Oromo] dies I would like to die first."[122] It is interesting that the Catholics also shared the Protestant belief that converting the Oromo would eventually pave the way into the whole of eastern and central Africa. The Oromo belief in one God, their intelligence, manly manner, and hospitality, as well as their widespread nation in East Africa, convinced them that a great opportunity lay in the conversion of the Oromo. As well, given that their several attempts to renew the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had failed, they came to the conclusion

that the Gospel must first be preached to the Oromo nation in order to open the door to the Ethiopians. Therefore, like the Protestant missionaries, the Catholics did their best to evangelize the Oromo.

Like Krapf, Massaja decided to do everything he could to reach Oromia. In 1851, he changed his name once more, to Dr. Giorgio Bartorelli, the first name of his godfather and the last name of his mother. He also dressed as an Abyssinian monk. This time he was successful. Entering Ethiopia by way of Sudan, he crossed the Abbay River to enter Wallaggaa. From Khartoum, he and his party arrived at Assandabo in Wallaggaa in November 1852. He praised the Lord with joy after finally reaching the Oromo, destined for their vicariate. He was more than happy to have safely arrived, and wrote a letter to the Propaganda Fide, confirming that he was ready to work for the mission with the Oromo until his death.[123]

In Guduruu, he founded a mission station on land granted to him by King Gama Moras. The king had welcomed them, and actually helped them to construct the chapel, which was consecrated toward the end of 1852. Children of Gama Moras were baptized into the Catholic faith, although the king himself refrained from being baptized, possibly because he was unwilling to divorce his multiple wives. His son Goshu was christened Gabriel, and other daughters and family members of the king were also baptized[124]; however, there were no significant numbers of converts in Guduruu. People were more interested in the flourishing commerce than accepting the Catholic faith. Yet, the Catholics continued to do their best to get more converts. Massaja successfully settled a conflict against Gama Moras, which improved the people's attitude toward the missionaries and the Catholic faith. A man named Wolde Giyorgis, a military commander of Gama Moras, was converted and encouraged his subordinates to do the same. These military men, who were baptized by Massaja himself, founded an association known as the Christian Association for Soldiers under the protection of St. Michael. Membership was based on being Christian, and this might have, to some extent, facilitated the conversion of the soldiers and their families.[125]

At the request of King *Abbaa* Bogibo of Limmuu Enarya, the Capuchins headed southwest to establish another mission station. In April 1854, a caravan consisting of indigenous and European missionaries arrived at Saqqa-Limmuu, the capital of Limmuu Enarya, where they were granted temporary housing as well as a site for a mission station. He was, however, more interested in their technical assistance, including from teachers and artisans, than accepting their faith. He told them that they arrived too late. *Abbaa* Bogibo seemed

to have only been interested in conversion had they arrived before the Muslim missionaries. Because he was Muslim (as was his kingdom), there were few converts, although some frequented the instruction offered at the chapel.[126]

On his way to the kingdom of Kafa in 1859, Massaja founded a mission station in the Oromo kingdom of Gera. He appointed several indigenous instructors there and then moved on to Kafa. After founding a station in Kafa, he was forced to leave by the authorities there. Massaja was welcomed back by *Abbaa* Bogibo, who became the protector of the Catholics in the region. But upon his arrival in Saqqa-Limmuu in September 1861, *Abbaa* Bogibo died from an illness. He was much mourned by the mission, as well as by the people. He was succeeded by *Abbaa* Gomol, a young man under the influence of the Muslims, who had opposed the missions. *Abbaa* Gomol also suspected that the Catholic stations were actually being used to store arms and that the Catholics were looking for an opportunity to annex his kingdom. Due to these and other factors, *Abbaa* Gomol issued a decree to expel all Catholics from his kingdom. Massaja, therefore, had to leave the southwestern kingdoms. By way of Nonno-Billo and Laga Amara, where there was a small station, Massaja arrived at Guduruu and was welcomed back by King Gama Moras.[127]

In 1863, Massaja left for Europe to reorganize the Oromo mission. In the meantime, his mission was combined with that of the French Capuchins. This move was partly due to the influence of the French Antoine d'Abbadie upon the foundation of the apostolic vicariate of the Oromo itself. It was his letter that convinced the Catholic hierarchy to establish a mission to the Oromo. Massaja also took two Oromo boys, named Raffael and Stephen, to France to set up a college for the Oromo in Europe. He believed that missionaries needed to study Oromo before going to Oromia for mission work; he was also compiling an Oromo catechism and an Amharic-Oromo grammar book. He was granted permission and given access to a site at the Capuchin Convent of Marseille in France. Friar Emmanuel de Montagnac was appointed director of the Oromo boys under the supervision of Friar Taurin Cahagne de Heubecourt, who was the guardian of the Marseille convent and the newly appointed vice-prefect of the Oromo mission. Having completed all legal processes regarding the land, Massaja blessed St. Michael's College of the Oromo on April 15, 1866.[128]

Having established the college and other business in Europe, Massaja left for Ethiopia. He was also responsible for increasing the

number of the boys at the college, beyond the ten he had already recruited. Then the college administrators decided to send a group of recruiters to Egypt to buy more Oromo boys from slavery. In 1869, nineteen Oromo boys were baptized at the College in Marseille.[129]

Massaja then returned to Aden, which had become part of the Oromo Mission, and he wanted to proceed to western Oromia through Shawa. He arrived at Liche, King Menelik's temporary camp, in March 1868. It seems that King Menelik was unwilling to let him go to the Oromo areas. Indeed, since his departure from southwestern regions in 1863, Massaja had not been allowed to return. "From the very first audience he had with King Menelik, Massaja had the impression that the King would not let him move out of his kingdom."[130] Later, he was allowed to move to Fekrie Gemb in Shawa, leaving the house of Liche to Friar Taurin, who was the vice-prefect of the mission. He tried to win some converts there, but eventually he returned to Liche, which allowed Taurin to move to Birbirsa, close to Finfinnee. Taurin and some of his Oromo boys were welcomed by a local Oromo chief of Birbirsa, named Sarrawa, and they soon started to build houses for the mission. From Birbirsa, in the summer of 1868, Taurin and his group moved down to Finfinnee, where he restored an old, abandoned sanctuary dedicated to Saint Mary. The restored church was rededicated to Saint Mary and called Maryaam Giiftii. Massaja decided to establish a mission station in Finfinnee, because he believed that Menelik would not let him leave Shawa and because he realized that Finfinnee and its surroundings were Oromo localities. Thus, with the blessing and support of Massaja, Taurin founded the Finfinnee Mission in 1868, and later another missionary, Friar Ferdinand of Hyeres, joined him from Liche. About a year later, in July 1869, the first worship chapel of the Finfinnee mission was inaugurated and became a Catholic center for that area.[131]

The Finfinnee and Birbirsa mission stations were founded during a difficult time for the area. The Oromo there were resisting Menelik's attacks on them, and many Oromo refugees were in the Catholic mission stations. In October 1869, Taurin, together with his Oromo assistants Stephanos and Robi, visited Menelik during the night while he was in the vicinity of Birbirsaa. Menelik assured them of protection and promised not to attack the Oromo refugees. He also released Oromo captives. That same year, Massaja gave an overall account of the Oromo mission to the provincial minister of the French Capuchins and indicated that the mission was going

slowly due to opposition and hindrance, mainly from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

In the meantime, the Oromo students at the college in Marseille were suffering from illness. During the first three years, several boys died. Many of the freed slaves who had been taken to other parts of Europe also lost their lives due to illness. Upon confirming the conditions of the boys with doctors as well as the directors of the college, Massaja decided to suspend the further construction of college buildings, and the college itself was closed in June 1870. But Massaja had other plans. He wanted to open a college in Shawa, which he felt would address urgent pastoral needs and which he hoped would fare better than the school in France. Thus, it was decided to bring the surviving Oromo boys in Marseille back home. The boys, accompanied by Friar Emmanuele de Montagnac and Friar Louis de Gonzague Lasserre de Morestel, arrived in Aden on October 1, 1870, and proceeded to Shawa. While awaiting an appropriate time to travel to Shawa, some died, and others continued to suffer. In 1872, four boys, named Joseph, Francis, Yohannes, and Paulos, safely arrived in Shawa. A year later, a final group of three boys, led by Louis de Gonzague, arrived in Shawa, which gave consolation to the Catholic mission stations there.[132]

However, in 1879 all the Catholics were forced out of Shawa on orders from Emperor Yohannes IV (1872 to 1889). Massaja returned to Europe and resigned from the Apostolic Vicariate of the Oromo, while Cahagne, together with some of the boys, returned to Aden to figure out their next steps. Massaja retired to write his memoirs, while Cahagne eventually took over the overall Oromo mission. In the meantime, Cahagne also left for France, where he published religious books in Afaan Oromoo. Having appointed a successor to the vicariate of Oromo, and urged by anticlerical decrees to flee France, Massaja returned to Ethiopia in 1881, where he founded the mission in Harar.[133] During his stay, Massaja ordained ten Oromo priests, who contributed considerably to the expansion of the missionary efforts there. Despite continued opposition to the mission, the group was, to some extent, successful. Massaja "claimed to have personally baptized more than 36,000 people."[134] Of their success in East Africa in general, the British traveler Sir Richard F. Burton writes: "Some 40,000 pagans had, it was asserted, embraced Christianity, and conversions were still taking place in legions . . . The successes which have crowned the efforts of Catholic missioners in these eastern regions reflect honour upon their system, and cast a deep shade upon the desultory individualistic display of Protestant energy."[135]

Cahagne and the Harar Mission

Monsignor Cahagne, the successor to Massaja, arrived at Harar in April 1881 and presented himself to the Egyptian governor of the town, who welcomed him. The Egyptians had occupied Harar from 1875 to 1885. From the walled city of Harar, he made excursions into the neighboring Oromo villages. He gradually developed an intimacy with them, as well as an understanding of their culture and customs. He shared his impressions of the Oromo with the governor, Nadi, and won his confidence. In order to reach the Oromo effectively, Cahagne set up an Oromo mission procurement center at Berbera on the Somali coast. In December 1881, he left for Aden by way of Berbera to receive a new group of French Capuchin missionaries, including Friar Jean of Lannon, Friar Andre Jarosseau, and Brother Roger of Sainte-Marie. Along the way, he learned that Berbera would not be effective due to its unhealthy living conditions and inaccessibility, and he moved the procurement center to Zeila. The new arrivals joined those already in the region, and they were distributed to carry out their respective duties.[136]

In December 1882, the Reverend Friar Louis de Gonzague, the former director of the Oromo boys' College in Marseille, was consecrated under the new name of Monsignor Lasserre and was sent to Shawa. On his way to Shawa, he stayed among the Karrayyuu Oromo to carry out mission work with them, and then proceeded to the Ittuu Oromo for similar work. He was able to serve some converts. "During his short stay there [Karrayyuu], Mgr. Lasserre reconciled to the faith a certain number of Catholics and administered to them the Sacrament of Confirmation, and to about hundred persons Easter Communion. He also encouraged and exhorted the indigenous priests in Shewa by writing them letters, and sending them the necessary provisions for their temporary needs."[137]

The Oromo mission headquarters in Harar seemed to be progressing in the early 1880s. The mission made contacts with those of Shawa, particularly at the Finfinnee mission, and also those in Gera and Kafa to the southwest. For the Harar region, Friar Pierre was sent to evangelize the Aniya Oromo. In 1884, another missionary, Friar Ferdinand, was entrusted to a station among the Noolee Oromo branch. Friar Andre Jarosseau was appointed his assistant. Although the trade route to Zeila was dominated by Muslims, the Noolee had earlier refused the Islamic faith and were well disposed to accepting Christianity. It looked promising for the Catholic activities in the eastern part of Oromia, but still, Monsignor Lasserre was not

doing well in Shawa, this time because of Emperor Yohannes' strict orders.[138]

Following the Egyptian evacuation from Harar in 1885, the local Oromo chiefs were relieved. They invited the Catholic missionaries to establish mission stations and instruct their children; however, Emir Abdullah of the Harari people assumed power as governor of Harar after Emir Nadi's evacuation, and Abdullahi enforced strict Islamic expansion. He decreed that there should be a mosque in each village, and those who resisted Islam were threatened with the loss of their property. This became a bulwark against Christianity. In 1886, Emir Abudullahi expelled all missionaries from Harar and Cahagne, and all missionaries around Harar left for Zeila. Zeila and Obock had served as a refuge for the missionaries, as well as for some Oromo converts. It was only after Menelik's occupation of Harar in 1887 that the Catholic missionaries were allowed to return to Harar. Monsignor Cahagne had secured the friendship of Emperor Menelik, as well as of the governor of Harar, *Ras* Makonnen. During their stay at Obock, the missionaries instructed twelve Oromo boys in Latin and French. Their leader was Friar Andre Jarosseau. The missionaries believed that these indigenous students could be effective catechists.[139]

In the early 1890s, missionary activities in the Harar region flourished. Contacts with those in Shawa and elsewhere also continued. In 1891, the Mi'essoo station was founded, in addition to the Ittuu and Ala Oromo stations. Also, the Laaftoo station among the Oborraa Oromo was founded; this is where Friar Anastase and some of the Oromo boys were sent. There was also one station among the Arsi Oromo at Minne, which also had a minor seminary.[140]

After considerable hurdles, the Catholics began to fare better in eastern Oromia than in the west and central regions. Massaja was not allowed to return to the Guduruu as well as Gibee region, where he had laid the foundations for several stations that survived the precarious situation during the conquests of Menelik in the 1880s. Massaja worked among the Oromo of Shawa until his expulsion. He was succeeded by Cahagne, who set up Harar as a central station and Zeila, Obock, and Djibouti as launching pads. The coastal posts could also be considered Oromo mission stations, because the missionaries returned from these refuge centers after their expulsion. They also educated, in the meantime, Oromo catechists for further and effective missionary works. Although expelled by Emir Abudullahi in 1886, they were able to return after 1887 when Shawa occupied Harar. Cahagne had been in Shawa earlier and had a good friendship with Menelik, who allowed the return of the Catholics to Harar. The Shawa mission had some contacts with those in Harar, but they also suffered greatly under the

government as well as local Orthodox priests' persecutions. Few survived to the end of 1890s. The eastern Oromia mission work was developing in the early 1890s, and more workers arrived to bolster it. But the untimely death of the Monsignor Cahagne affected the flourishing missionary work. He was succeeded by Friar Andre Jarosseau, whom the Propaganda Fide appointed as vicar apostolic of the Oromo in April 1900. He took the Catholic Oromo missionary efforts to the next level in the twentieth century, until he was expelled by the Italians (Italy occupied Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941) in 1937.[141]

In spite of considerable efforts by both Protestant and Catholic missionaries, there were few Christians in Oromia throughout much of the nineteenth century, and the vast majority of the population were Muslims and followers of Oromo religion. Indeed, Islam had large followers in eastern and southern Oromia as well as in Wallo. Long before the eighteenth century, the Oromo of Wallo and Yajju had already professed Islam as their faith,[142] while those of the Gibee region did not embrace Islam until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Those of the Harar region were also largely converted to Islam in the nineteenth century, although some had already become Islamized much earlier.

In general, the vast majority of the Oromo retained their indigenous religious institutions. But in opposition to the Ethiopians' ruthless conquests and forceful imposition of Christianity upon them, the great majority of the eastern Oromo accepted Islam toward the end of the nineteenth century. According to John Trimingham: "The shock of the ruthless military conquests of the Abyssinians which broke up much of their . . . constitution and customary sanctions, opened the way to Islamic infiltration amongst the Arūsi [clans] through emissaries dispersed from the missionary centre of Harar."[143]

Islam was introduced to the Gibee region mainly through the Muslim merchants coming from Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula in the first half of the nineteenth century. The foreign Muslim merchants formed local centers of religious practice in the region. One such center was Jimmaa.[144] "This change of religion was natural in that it helped to reinforce the independence of the states against both Sidāma and Amhara, strengthened the authority of their rulers, and facilitated the growth of a thriving trade in slaves."[145] Thus, all five Oromo Gibee states embraced Islam largely as a result of Muslim traders during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the words of Gabre-Sellassie:

> The [Oromo] countries beyond the Gibe were converted to Islam between 1855 and 1870. Impetus to the conversion to Islam was given mostly by Muslim merchants coming from northern Ethiopia and to a

> certain extent by men who came from the Sudan and from Harar. The two opposing cultural influences of Islam—that of the Sudan and that of Harar, which both contributed to the original diffusion of Islam in south-west Ethiopia—resulted in two diverse Muslim fraternities, that of the Sudan which was wide-spread amongst the Tijiania, and that of Harar, the Qadiria.[146]

It was during this time that *Abbaa* Bogibo, the king of Limmuu-Enarya (1825 to 1861), informed the Cardinal Massaja in 1846 that the Catholic missionaries had arrived too late, that his kingdom was already Muslim and that they could not afford to embrace Catholicism.[147]

The Muslim walled city of Harar played a significant role in spreading Islam among the surrounding Oromo as well as to the Arsi and Gibee regions. A holy and commercial city, Harar bred migrant scholars of Islam much earlier than the nineteenth century. Although the city was restricted to other groups, there was an Oromo quarter within the walls, and various gates led to Oromo states. Thus, the Oromo of Harar might have embraced Islam before all other groups.

As in Oromo religion, Islamic faith strengthened pan-Oromo relations as well as Oromo and non-Oromo relations. The conversion from Oromo religion to Islamic faith does not significantly alter the worship of Waaqa. The veneration of saints was common in Muslim areas. In Arsi, for instance, the Prophet Mohammad himself and several others were assimilated into indigenous spirits and ultimately to Waaqa. Perhaps one of the most widely celebrated Muslim saints is Sheikh Hussein, whose shrine is located in the Baale zone of Oromia. Large groups of pilgrims (approximately 50,000), particularly during the Muslim month of hajj, attend the cult of Sheikh Hussein, which may have existed since at least the twelfth century. "It continued among the initial pagan [Oromo] settlers, being assimilated to that of the traditional high priests or *kallus*, and all these disparate elements survive in the cult's highly syncretistic form today. Indeed, it is exported to the adjoining Somali Republic in the form of a spirit possession cult which the Somalis know by the name *borana*."[148] There seems some kind of syncretism between Oromo religion and the cult of Sheikh Hussein. There is similarity between the early pilgrimage to *abbaa muudaa* and respects to the *qaalluus,* and the pilgrimage to Sheikh Hussein.

The shrine of Sheikh Hussien has continued to attract Muslim pilgrims, who traditionally carry small cleft sticks known as Ulee Sheikh Hussein, from all over Ethiopia twice a year. Indeed, the Sheikh

Hussein shrine had influence throughout East Africa. According to B. W. Andrzejewski: "Sheikh Hussein of Bale is regarded by many Muslims of Ethiopia, Northern Kenya and Somalia as their greatest Saint, and his annual festival is an important religious and social event which draws huge crowds of pilgrims to his tomb. His cult is particularly popular among the speakers of [Afaan Oromoo], especially among the Arussi."[149] They observe his birth as well as his death, and sing hymns in praise of him. Praise songs of Sheikh Hussein (and the Prophet Mohammed) are also common at local prayer meetings, [150] and the shrine became an important venue for ethnic relations in East Africa.

6

From Guduruu to Guduruu

Nagaa Oromoo and the Kingdom of Shawa

As described in chapter 1, the Ethiopian military expeditions against the Oromo and other groups waned from 1704, when Emperor Iyyasu I succeeded in crossing Guduruu to the southwest. A major factor responsible for reducing the expeditions was the civil wars of *Zamane masafent* (the Era of the Princes) from 1769 to 1855. During this period, various regional lords of the Empire of Ethiopia fought for supremacy. There was not a single powerful emperor over the whole of Ethiopia—instead, several regional princes in Tigray, Bagemeder, Gojjam, and Wallo had the real power. While there was a nominal emperor at Gondar, he was powerless, and regional lords, who were competing with each other, dictated to him.

This period also saw hairsplitting doctrinal controversies on the nature of Christ, briefly referenced in chapter 1. The controversy was ignited by the Jesuits, who came to Ethiopia in 1557 and preached the concept of the two, but undivided, natures of Christ. The religious controversies had regional character as well, sponsored by the various princes. These divisions weakened the empire until the coming to power of Kasa Hailu (Emperor Tewodros II, 1855 to 1868). Kasa Hailu was able to defeat all of the regional lords and attempted to outlaw all religious factions, except the Tewahedo doctrine. He then embarked on an attempt to forcibly unite all of Ethiopia by first attacking Wallo Oromo, a Muslim stronghold located inconveniently as a buffer zone between the Christian kingdoms of Tigray and Shawa.[1]

Emperor Tewodros had a relatively modern and disciplined army, and, therefore, the expeditions were well-organized, as opposed to those of the previous two centuries. In June 1855, not long after

taking the throne, he marched against the Oromo of Wallo and devastated them before proceeding to the kingdom of Shawa. The Oromo of Wallo put up stiff resistance in defending themselves. Emperor Tewodros was unable to conquer Wallo, and fighting continued for several months until he temporarily defeated Queen Workitu Wadajo (who died in the early 1880s). He captured her Maqdala fortress when he took captive several Oromo leaders, including Prince Ahmed Ali Liban, her eldest son. As Theodor Nöldeke writes of the Wallo resistance:

> Really to subjugate this people was a much heavier task than he could have supposed. The Wollos have long been [Muslims], and are proud of their faith . . . but they were all at one in their love of independence and in hatred of the Christian conqueror . . . Sometimes with kindness, often with severity rising to atrocious cruelty, he sought to bring them under his sway; but the result was always the same, that in the end in Walloland he could call nothing his own except garrisoned fortresses like Makdala.[2]

The Oromo could not forge a united alliance in defense of Wallo as they had in previous centuries, due both to the decline of their *gadaa* system as a pan-Oromo organization, and to engagements elsewhere. Some alliances existed, but not on the scale of the overall Oromo solidarity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The growth of their population and the need to adapt themselves to conditions elsewhere reduced their urge for unity. The Oromo were also immersed in the civil wars of the *Zamane masafent*.[3] Nevertheless, Wallo put up a prolonged resistance, and Emperor Tewodros never was able to become master of the entire Walloland.

The Oromo were also unable to forge unity because they were under continuous attack from another powerful foe, the kingdom of Shawa, to the south of Wallo. The kingdom of Shawa never participated in the civil wars of the *Zamane masafent*. Its rulers monopolized trade at the expense of northern rulers and continued to consolidate their positions, a vantage point from which they later defeated the other independent kingdoms in the Horn of Africa. The Shawan kingdom was founded by Nagasi Kristos around the end of the eighteenth century. After establishing the Shawan Amhara dynasty in Manz, Nagasi Kristos died (ca. 1703) and was succeeded by Sebeste, who further consolidated the polity until his death (ca. 1720), to be succeeded by his son Abbiye. The latter completed the unification of Manz and initiated the beginning of the Shawan Amhara expeditions

against the Oromo[4] that continued until 1900. All Shawan rulers, from Abbiye to Menelik II (king of Shawa, 1865 to 1889, emperor of Ethiopia, 1889 to 1913), led expeditions against the Oromo. These campaigns were undertaken on peaceful villagers after the harvest season. G. E. Underhill writes of the Oromo in Shawa: "For centuries they had been regarded as fair game by their warlike Abyssinian neighbours, who, when the [Oromo] crops had been harvested, were accustomed to make raids upon these peaceful farmers, carrying off not only their corn and cattle, but also their women and children."[5]

The Oromo continued to resist the Shawan army. In about 1745, the Karrayyuu Oromo succeeded in defending themselves when Abbiye marched against them. In fact, he died fighting the Karrayyuu. To avenge Abbiye's death, his successor, Amha Iyyesus, continued leading expeditions against the Karrayyuu. Amha Iyyesus imported weapons from his allies in Gondar, conquered the town of Ankober, and founded a military post there to set up his army for expeditions farther afield. After pushing the borders of Manz even farther, Amha Iyyesus died in 1775. He was succeeded by Asfa Wassan (1775 to 1808), who continued the expansion of Shawa on a much larger scale. After consolidating his position in the towns of Ankober and Dabra Berhan, Asfa Wassan conquered Oborraa Oromo, where, later, the town of Angolola was founded. He continued the policy of establishing garrisons to be used as colonial outposts as well as evangelical stations.

The Oromo continued to resist and succeeded in declaring themselves independent, particularly during changes in leadership. The Shawan rulers were forced to introduce several policies to quell Oromo resistance. Wassan Saggad (ruled from 1808 to 1813), the son and successor of Asfa Wassan, for example, introduced the policy of treating the Oromo and other groups as social equals and tolerating their religion rather than forcing their conversion to Christianity. The Amhara group, however, had always treated the Oromo as their inferiors, and therefore rose in rebellion against Wassan Saggad. The Amhara resented their subjects being considered equals with them, and subsequently succeeded in assassinating him in 1813. Wassan Saggad was succeeded by Sahle Sellassie (ruled from 1813 to 47),[6] who undertook massive campaigns to subjugate the Oromo during his reign.

Upon the death of Wassan Saggad, whose policy of equality did not satisfy them, the Oromo declared themselves independent and fought for that right. In the words of Darkwah, "Throughout the development of Shewa the death of a ruler was an occasion for insurrection

in one [Oromo] province or another. While the Shewan Amhara as a group were by and large loyal to the ideals for which the dynasty stood the [Oromo] dependencies appear to have been attached rather to the person of the ruler than to any ideals that the dynasty may have stood for."[7]

The Shawan policy of integration by forceful means did not materialize as these periodic insurrections suggest. Rather, as outlined in this book, the integration of the Oromo and other groups happened through the actions of the people themselves. Those who wanted adoption by the Oromo approached the *abbaa bokkuu* or even a villager to lead them to the *abbaa bokkuu*; the *abbaa bokkuu* would not have pressured them. Therefore, that sort of integration was accepted by all. What Wassan Saggad tried to do was to bestow a sense of equality to the conquered and second-class subjects; in that case, his own people rejected the notion, because they did not want to be seen as equal to their subjects, either in a religious aspect or in terms of social status.

The Oromo, on the other hand, welcomed all, and their principle of *qixxee* was extended to everyone regardless of background or situation. As will be discussed below, they welcomed even the Amhara Shawan ruling family when they were persecuted by Emperor Tewodros in 1855. This welcoming philosophy was based on humanity rather than dictated by domineering powers. Elsewhere, the Oromo contributed to peaceful coexistence and communal sharing of resources, which considerably lessened potential ethnic conflicts.

Expecting similar acceptance, some Oromo chiefs continued to serve the interests of the Shawan lords, but the Shawan rulers always used marriages and other forms of diplomacy to rule over the Oromo, rather than considering them as equals. When Sahle Sellassie assumed power, for example, the Oromo declared their independence from Shawa, and the young leader had to devise several tactics to win them over. As Kofi Darkwah writes of Sahle Sellassie: "The young *Ras* (he was aged 18 years) displayed great tact in those difficult days and succeeded in winning over some of the [Oromo] chiefs by diplomacy; with their help and with the help of the royal subjects of his father, Sahla Selassie suppressed the revolts and re-established the power of the central authority over all the districts."[8]

For example, *Abbaa* Mualle, an Oromo, helped him to re-annex Angolola. He was appointed governor of that town and its neighborhood and helped in the king's expeditions to other Oromo areas. *Abbaa* Mualle, who was formerly chief of an Oromo district, writes Harris, "was also formerly very inimical to Shoa; but being won over

to the royal interests by the espousal of his sister, by preferment to extensive power, and by the hand of one of the despotic princesses, he was four years since converted to Christianity, when the King became his sponsor."[9] Diplomacy and trickery helped Shawan authorities to win over some influential Oromo chiefs.

Political marriage was one such mechanism that helped to thwart threats from powerful chiefs. "In instances where powerful regions posed a threat to central rule, marriage was successfully used as a weapon to co-opt the powerful regional rulers to the center and help avert unnecessary challenges. Menelik employed such traditional marriage connections of Ethiopian society to strengthen his position. For instance, his fourth wife, Empress Taytu, was of Oromo origin and commanded the loyalty of a large section of the Oromo. Such practices were further reinforced under Haile Sellassie [1930–1974]."[10]

Political marriages were also used as a pretext to annex a territory. If the marriage proposal was rejected, the king could send an expedition to occupy the land. When King Sahle Sellassie approached the Oromo queen Chamie for political marriage, for instance, she refused and said, "that if he would spread the entire road from Angóllala with rich carpets, she might perhaps listen to the proposal, but upon no other conditions!"[11] (Angolola was several miles away from her province). Furious, the king invaded and conquered her territory; her son, Jaarraa, was appointed governor of all the Oromo groups between the sources of the Awash and Abbay Rivers. Because the main objective of the marriage proposal was to annex new territory, the king was successful in his deceitful move. In delivering his marriage proposal, Sahle Sellassie's messengers also acted as intelligence gatherers, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of her kingdom.

Jaarraa was forced to temporarily accept Sahle Sellassie's overlordship, but even as a vassal, he continued to resist, awaiting an opportunity to retaliate. Though forced to surrender to Shawa, Jaarraa may have the idea of revenge, not only against the king but against Shawa itself. Until conditions favored him, he accepted the position of subordination to the King but was rewarded with governorship of vast territory up to the Abbay River. As eyewitness British diplomat Cornwallis Harris writes: "There can be little doubt, although he has hitherto evinced strong attachment to the crown, that, imitating the example of all pagan chieftains who have gone before him, he will one day profit by his opportunities to take up arms against Shoa, and may thus be destined to enact a most conspicuous part in the history of the [Oromo] nation."[12]

However, Oromo resistance against Shawan expeditions suffered as Sahle Sellassie amassed modern weapons from Tigre province and Gondar in the north as well as imports through the port of Tajura. The subjugation of the Oromo initiated by Abbiye gained momentum under Sahle Sellassie, who, with his modern weapons and diplomacy, occupied much of Tuulama Oromo. A priest at St. George Church, *Alaqa* Walda Hanna, boasted of Sahle Sellassie's success in subjugating the Oromo: "The people of the Franks [Europeans] are come to praise and adore the King of Shoa."[13]

Sahle Sellassie was fortunate to rule Shawa at a time when Europeans had started to flock to Africa; their presence helped to bolster his kingdom. In 1839, the British sent a mission to sign a treaty of commerce and friendship; France also sent an envoy that same year. Sahle Sellassie was able to import weapons, which increased his prestige in Shawa, in addition to modernizing his army. While his victims were still using the spear and the lance, the king was able to use modern weapons, and against his large numbers of troops, villagers were unprepared to defend themselves.

Sahle Sellassie was succeeded by his son, Haile Melekot, who was not as strong a ruler. His reign was also short-lived; he died of fever in 1855 during Emperor Tewodros's campaign in Shawa. The Oromo took advantage of this transition and declared themselves independent once again; they fought off Emperor Tewodros as well. Upon the death of Haile Melekot, Tewodros appointed his own governor over Shawa, but resistance continued against the new puppet governor. That halted Shawan expansion as well as subsequent expeditions to the Oromo territories until after 1865, when the royal prince Menelik escaped from Maqdala prison. He had been taken there with other Shawan dignitaries in 1855 by Emperor Tewodros. Menelik's escape was a crucial moment for Shawan, Ethiopian, and Oromo history.

After he escaped from Maqdala prison in 1865, Menelik sought refuge with Queen Workitu of Wallo Oromo, whose son was held hostage by the emperor. Emperor Tewodros threatened to kill Queen Workitu's son unless she turned Menelik over to him. The queen tried her best to save her son, but her chief advisors, who were sworn to protect Menelik, refused. As Emperor Tewodros's captive, Henry Stern, explains:

> The queen-regent, on learning her son's unhappy position, tried, by bribes, ransoms, and even the offer of an annual tribute, to conciliate the rankling hate of the ferocious despot. Messenger after messenger in rapid succession followed each other with proffers of amity from

> the [Oromo], and exorbitant conditions from the king. "Give up the deserters," was the peremptory order addressed to the regent, "and Imam shall live; refuse, and he shall die." Worket would willingly, had she been able, have sacrificed all the Amharas, to save her own son; but this she could not effect without the consent of her proud chiefs, who unanimously refused to yield up to a capricious and faithless tyrant the men they had solemnly sworn to protect. Baffled in her expectations, she had recourse to fair words, artful promises, and valuable presents, to ward off the catastrophe which might rob her of the very object around which her deepest affections were entwined, when an event occurred that caused every [Oromo's] heart to swell with the mingled passions of anger and pain, indignation and grief.[14]

The Oromo value the institution of *kooluu* (roughly, asylum), which offers full protection. In the *kooluu* ritual, the Oromo take an oath not to abandon refugees. The circumstances of Queen Workitu's acceptance of the refugees were unclear—we do not know whether she was forced by her chiefs to take them in, or was willingly following the traditional *kooluu* institution. But having welcomed a distant prince, who had escaped from the emperor and was holding her own son captive, she had put herself in an awkward position. Menelik and his Shawan followers knew that if they were to return to Tewodros, they could be killed. They put pressure on Workitu's chiefs, who were sworn to protect the deserters. Had the queen's son escaped with Menelik and his Shawan followers, we would have been telling a different story.

In the end, the emperor killed her son, and Menelik proceeded to his native Shawa, where he was welcomed and installed as successor to his father, Haile Melekot. This was an event of historic proportions; it led to the emergence of a powerful Ethiopian Empire through a series of wars that had huge repercussions for peace in East Africa. Because there had been already a power vacuum on the throne of Shawa since Menelik's capture in 1855, had Menelik returned to Maqdala and been killed by the emperor, the course of modern history of Ethiopia would have changed completely. Instead, Menelik assumed the throne of Shawa and embarked on the largest territorial expansion in Shawan history.

Another interesting historical development followed Menelik's return to power—the prominent Oromo chief Gobana Daacci submitted to Menelik rather than fight for Oromo independence. As indicated above, the Oromo declared themselves independent, particularly during changes of leadership in Shawa. Before Menelik consolidated his power, it would have been an ideal opportunity for the

Oromo to solidify their own independence. Instead, Gobana submitted to Menelik, which neutralized the Oromo rally for independence. The reasons for Gobana's submission still continue to baffle scholars. In betraying his own people, he played a considerable role in the Shawan occupation of Oromia.

Gobana was born (ca. 1821) in Wagda in Shawa. He was a brave horseman, and many Oromo rallied around him. Menelik conferred upon him the title *dajjazmach* (literally, commander of the gate, a title of nobility equivalent to a count), which boosted his career as well as support from the other Oromo. The year 1876 could be considered a significant year for Gobana's surge in power. At that time, Emperor Yohannes IV (1872 to 1889, the next significant ruler after Emperor Tewodros) marched through Shawa in the region where Gobana was chief; his army spread throughout the countryside, plundering the villages for food. Gobana took the opportunity to ambush the isolated soldiers, capturing more than a thousand Snider and Remington rifles.[15] With his increased arsenal, he embarked on a campaign to subjugate the Tuulama Oromo and beyond.

Earlier, Gobana had refused to submit to *Ato* Bezabih, Tewodros's appointee over Shawa. Finding no reason to conform to the contenders of Shawa's throne, he fought Bezabih for five months. But when Menelik escaped from Maqdala, Gobana submitted to him and played an important role in the subsequent reconciliation effort between Menelik and Bezabih, who were now contending against each other for the Shawan throne. In the presence of Gobana, both Menelik and Bezabih agreed not to attack each another, and the latter accepted Menelik's unassailable position as king of Shawa. It seems that Menelik received an enthusiastic welcome elsewhere in Shawa, and Bezabih realized that he was not in a position to challenge the popular and energetic prince. Menelik's popularity and strong position might have weighed too heavily on Gobana as well; he chose to submit rather than fight as chief of the surrounding Oromo.

It is also possible that Gobana had previous contacts with Menelik. An unsubstantiated report claims that Menelik, during his babyhood, had lived with Gobana in the town of Angolola when his mother, Ejigayehu Lemma Adyamo, moved there.[16] Moreover, when Tewodros arrived in Shawa in 1855, the child Menelik fled and took refuge among the Ada'a Oromo. "Addaa Oromo welcomed the Showan refugees and on 22 December 1855, raised their arms to protect the prince and his entourage against Tewodros in a battle which lost them more than a thousand dead and wounded."[17] It is interesting to note that the Oromo continued their policy of human rights—to welcome

all. Menelik stayed with the Oromo during that time of turmoil, until Shawan officials accepted the reality of defeat and advised him to submit to Emperor Tewodros along with the rest of the Shawan dignitaries.[18] In addition to the *kooluu* institution that requires every Oromo to grant full protection to refugees, long centuries of relationships between the Oromo and the Amhara ruling house in the region helped foster the welcoming of the Shawan refugees.

In addition, Gobana may not have felt the same sense of ethnic identity as the rest of the Oromo. He had a mixed background—his father was an Oromo, while his mother, an Amhara.[19] He also grew up in an Oromo locality heavily influenced by Amhara culture and values.[20] Perhaps he found it useful to work with Menelik in the creation of the Shawan Empire, hoping he could later assume power when conditions would favor him.

Had it not been for Gobana's role, the Arsi Oromo would not have been conquered by Menelik; Menelik left the southwest to Gobana, who concentrated on the Arsi campaign for six years (1882 to 1886). Even at the Battle of Embabo in 1882, it was Gobana who fought hard and captured King Takle Haymanot, which paved the way for the Menelik's occupation of Maccaa Oromo.[21] In 1878, Gobana was promoted to *Ras* (the highest title below king), and in 1882 he was made king of Kafa before the kingdom was occupied (in addition to being king of Wallaggaa), perhaps in the hope that he would move forward to attack the kingdom. Previously, Gobana had tried to, but declared Kafa a difficult country. In fact, it took several years to conquer Kafa, which only occurred after stiff resistance in 1897.

His appointment, however, aroused the envy and jealousy of Shawan officials. As Bairu Tafla writes: "The possibility that Ras Gobäna, backed by the various [Oromo] chiefs, would defy Menilek's authority and set up a federated empire of the [Oromo] territories seemed to many imminent. Indeed, their suspicions could be substantiated by some material evidence. In 1885–86 the whole of Mäčča [Oromo] refused to recognize any other governor except Ras Gobäna, and Negus Menilek was able to instate his official, Däjazmač Täklä Maryam Gulelaté [grandnephew of Menilek], only by force of arms."[22]

Gobana might have had the intention to form a federated Oromo government after being submissive to Menelik, once conditions favored him, as Jaarraa had hoped to do under Sahle Sellassie. Whatever Gobana's intent, the Oromo were cheated—they largely submitted to him, rather than to Shawa, believing that he was creating a pan-Oromo government as opposed to helping to build an Ethiopian

empire. Although he worked hard and remained loyal to Shawa, the Shawan officials still suspected Gobana (in view of his background) and wanted him removed after the work had been done. He was too old to rebel against his boss, and he died of illness in 1889 without fulfilling his possible "hidden plan to create a pan-Oromo empire." Rather, he is seen today by many Oromo as "the 'Trojan horse' that was planted at the heart of Oromiyya to destroy the unity and the nation from within. The policy of working against the interest of its own people is still known among the Oromo as the 'Gobanist phenomenon.'"[23]

Menelik's Military Build-up and Its Impact on Peace in the Region

Menelik's victory at the Battle of Embabo in 1882 was a passport to Shawan expansion beyond Tuulamaland to Maccaaland. At that time, much of the Maccaa-Tuulama Oromo lost their independence, and became subjugated by Shawa. While this is not the right place to discuss Menelik's wars on the Oromo and other groups that continued to 1900, it is important to highlight the role of modern weapons, which significantly contributed to Menelik's victory.

Firearms played a considerable role in Ethiopian history—beginning, perhaps, with the arrival of Portuguese troops in 1541—in helping the Christian Empire of Ethiopia against the wars of Ahmed Grañ (1527 to 1543). Richard Pankhurst writes:

> Almost from their advent in the fifteenth century firearms played a decisive role in Ethiopian history, revolutionising the nature of war, determining the outcome of many a battle, profoundly influencing the balance of power both internally and externally, contributing on the one hand to the separatism of the coastal provinces and integration of other areas, the quest for arms and experts to handle them being moreover a major factor influencing the country's foreign policy and almost all efforts at rapprochement with other lands.[24]

However, firearms were still scarce in Ethiopia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The British traveler Nathaniel Pearce observed in 1809: "Ras Walda Sellassie, the ruler of Tigré, had some 5,500 matchlocks and his chiefs a further 3,400. The Amhara area, however, was far less supplied: the ruler of Gojam had but 500 guns, Gugsa of Gondar and Gojam no more than 450, Ras Aylo of Lasta not 100, and Ras Gabriel of Samien only 'a few.'"[25] Henry Salt,

who also visited Tigre in 1809 and 1810, indicated that there were about eight thousand matchlocks in the province and that Tigre was the best equipped of all Ethiopia.[26] Kofi Darkwah also details: "Beginning from the first decade of the century there was a steady influx of firearms until by the 1880s Ethiopia was the best armed of the black African countries. Owing to her geographical position—her nearness to the coast—Tigre was by far the most successful in the acquisition of firearms. As early as 1808 the ruler of Tigre, Ras Walda Sellassie and his subordinate chiefs were reported to possess a total of 8,900 matchlocks, and by 1831 the Tigrean rulers had acquired at least another three thousand muskets."[27]

The situation in Shawa to the south was slightly different. Tigre's geographic proximity to the coast helped them to amass a good number of firearms. Shawa, however, had to consolidate their emerging state and then open up to the coast to do the same. King Sahle Sellassie, in particular, did his best to increase considerably his introduction of weapons. He had friendly relationships with both Sabagadis of Tigre (ruled ca.1823 to 1831) and *Ras* Ali of Gondar (ruled ca.1834 to 1853), from where he imported firearms.[28] After European travelers began visiting Shawa, another source of firearms importation opened up—Sahle Sellassie started to import them via Tajura, using the slave trade to finance his efforts. "Between 1839 and 1844 his stock of firearms was increased by the presents of pistols offered him by the European travellers, and especially by the large consignments of matchlocks, muskets, and detonating pistols together with their accessories which were offered him by Harris in the name of the [British] Bombay Government."[29]

There was also an attempt to manufacture weapons at home. The French envoy Rochet d'Hericourt had brought to King Sahle Sellassie a mill to produce gunpowder. It is also reported that he advised the king to reorganize his troops in the same levels as France's if he were to become king of all Ethiopia. The envoy offered to procure weapons for the king; he advised the king that, in order to accomplish the reorganization, he would need more weapons at his disposal. Whatever the intentions of the envoy, Sahle Sellassie was happy with him and sent him back with a letter to the monarch of France. The envoy returned from Europe with 140 muskets for Sahle Sellassie.[30]

King Sahle Sellassie was also determined to forge relations with Britain in his desperate attempt to import firearms. On June 28, 1840, he wrote a letter to the British East India Company: "I wish very much that it may please you to make friendship with me. God has given me a good and large kingdom; but arts and sciences have

not yet come to my country, as they have to yours. May it therefore please you to assist me, particularly in sending guns, cannon, and other things, which I do not have in my country. I do not state how much you shall send me. You may act according to your love and kindness, which are known everywhere."[31]

The British responded favorably by sending a mission, led by Captain Cornwallis Harris, which arrived in Shawa in 1842 with a gift of one hundred pistols, two cannons, and three hundred muskets, as well as other valuable articles.[32] The king appointed Armenians, Copts, and Greeks to repair the firearms and also to try to produce weapons at home.[33] Armed with these weapons, the king led a series of expeditions against the Tuulama Oromo. Even though he needed time to introduce his army to the usage of these modern weapons, the mere possession of the weapons gave a psychological boost to the ongoing expeditions against the Oromo.

The son and successor of Sahle Sellassie, Haile Melekot, also made continued requests to the Europeans for help. It must be mentioned that, since medieval times, the Ethiopian rulers had continued to request arms and technical assistance mainly against the Oromo threat. Haile Melekot, for instance, in September 1850 sent a request for gunpowder to the British Bombay government via the British consul at Aden. The British government refused the request because they knew "that the gunpowder would be used in 'slaughtering the [Oromo].' "[34]

It is interesting to note that the British government was fully aware of the intended purpose of the weapons being requested: to kill the Oromo. The Oromo and other groups to the south of Shawa had few to no weapons with which to properly defend themselves. According to Arnauld d'Abbadie, in the 1840s the Oromo in the west were not yet acquainted with the use of firearms.[35] The Oromo of Wallo were relatively better equipped in the nineteenth century. Firearms were introduced to Yajju, Azebo, and Warra Himano via Tigre—Johann L. Krapf observed that the Imam Liban of Wallo had a thousand matchlock guns in 1842.[36] But they were fully immersed in the civil wars of the *Zamane masafent* and were not in a position to provide meaningful assistance to the other Oromo.

Like Sahle Sellassie, King Menelik, the son and successor of Haile Melekot, was well aware of the importance of firearms. According to C. Keller, Menelik considered the import of a large number of firearms as a matter of "life and death."[37] His confinement at Magdala from 1855 to 1865 by Tewodros helped him to develop his ambitions. He had gained the art of administration and discipline as well as an

appreciation of the importance of a strong arsenal. Two years after he escaped from Magdala in 1865, he had between two thousand and three thousand muskets[38]—many more than his grandfather Sahle Sellassie had possessed. He employed many experienced riflemen from Gondar, and in 1875 also set up a station to produce gunpowder in Shawa. The station was founded by a Frenchman, Pierre Arnoux, "who thereby considerably improved Menelik's position."[39] Another Frenchman, M. Joubert, helped erect a gunpowder-making station in the town of Ankober. In 1876, another Frenchman called Pottier was appointed to train Menelik's troops and to fight against rebels. Yet another Frenchman built a stone house at Ankober, although the king did not reside in it.[40]

In 1877, Menelik sent a message to his Swiss friend in Aden to find skilled European personnel. Subsequently, three young Swiss technicians, Appenzeller, Zimmermann, and Alfred Ilg, arrived in 1878. They were specialists in iron work, woodwork, and engineering, respectively. Appenzeller and Zimmermann served until they left in 1893, but Ilg continued to help Menelik well into first half of the twentieth century. Other Europeans also came to Shawa on their own. Frenchmen Leon Chefneux and M. Arnoux became the pioneers of French influence, as well as facilitating Menelik's procurement of weapons from France. In 1880, another Frenchman, Paul Soleillet, shipped weapons to the port of Zeila that Leon Chefneux then transported to Menelik.[41] Europeans also considerably improved Menelik's government; Ilg even became a councilor of state and adviser on foreign affairs. As Count Gleichen writes of Ilg: "He has gradually by hard work and intelligence become indispensable to the King, who has long consulted him on European matters, and, without abandoning his interest in commercial and engendering enterprise, he has now been officially named 'Conseiller d'Etat' to his Majesty."[42]

Also in the 1880s, various other foreigners (most of them French) arrived in Shawa, where they greatly helped Menelik in the importation of firearms. "They included Brémond, Pino, Tramier, Tian, Savouré, Barral, Labatut and the decadent poet Arthur Rimbaud, as well as the Capuchin missionaries, Taurin and Lassere."[43] The French adventurers profited much from the arms trade with Menelik.[44] "All the French traders in Abyssinia dealt in arms, and did all the French travellers, except perhaps Jules Borelli."[45] Menelik paid them well—they bought rifles for 7 or 8 French francs apiece in Europe and sold them for 40 French francs in Shawa.

In addition to modern weapons, the French provided much needed advice on how to effectively use the weapons. The use of

the weapons is more important but, as mentioned above, even their mere presence gave them an advantage over villagers who were still using traditional weapons. The French also advised Menelik on how to annex Oromia. "He ignored the struggles in the north by which John [Emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia, 1872 to 1889] fought his way to the emperorship, and, acting on French advice, methodically set about conquering the rich [Oromo] country to the south and west of his kingdom."[46]

With weapons and advice aplenty, Menelik's motive was not just raiding, as was the case with his predecessors, but rather, the permanent conquest of Oromia, with Shawan garrison troops stationed amid the people. Jones and Monroe continue: "The French advice proved good, and John, fearing Menelik's increasing power, thought it wise to come to terms. In 1882, they agreed on their respective territories; Menelik was to have Harar, Kaffa, and the [Oromo] countries, John the more northerly territory of the Wallo [Oromo]."[47] Oromoland was divided among powerful Ethiopian rulers: Emperor Yohannes in the north, King Takle Haymanot in the northwest, and King Menelik in the west, east, and south. All of these rulers had modern weapons and organized bureaucracies that they had inherited from their predecessors, which had a significant affect on the peaceful way of life throughout the region.

King Menelik of Shawa also contacted the Khedive Ismail of Egypt for more weapons. In March 1875, he sent two envoys, *Ras* Birru and a certain Bogos. The Khedive sent him some weapons, particularly because he had disputes with Emperor Yohannes IV in the north, and wanted Menelik's support against the emperor. That same year, when Egypt occupied Harar, cutting Shawa off from the coast, their relations took a bad turn, from friendship to protestation. Menelik tried to protest against the Khedive and to the British government about the blockage of weapons to Shawa, but the British did not want to alienate Egypt, with whom they had better relations, and therefore, rejected Menelik's appeals. The British view was: "It is not to be expected that the Egyptians would allow either Menelik or King John to supply themselves with arms which would under any circumstances render them more powerful and dangerous to their neighbours than they are at present."[48]

Once again, the British position is very interesting. They understood the power of these two rulers of Ethiopia, both of whom intended to attack neighboring Oromo. Emperor Yohannes attacked the Oromo of Wallo and forced them to convert to Ethiopian Orthodox Church doctrine. The Oromo chiefs had to abandon their property as well

as their positions when they refused to conform. Menelik's principal motive was to annex the rich Oromo areas, divert the lucrative trade routes, and control items of trade so that he could further finance the importation of weapons. These tactics also helped him to consolidate his position to eventually succeed the emperor.

The Italians were another significant source of arms procurement for Menelik in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1876, the Italian Geographical Society sent an expedition to Shawa that included entomologist and leader of the party Marchese Ignazio Antinori; a military officer, Captain Sebastino Martini; and an expert in natural sciences, Giovanni Chiarini. They understood King Menelik's desperate need for weapons and gave him 50 Remington rifles. Later, they presented him with an additional 150 Remington rifles. Menelik realized that this was not enough: "Massaia relates that the mission was immediately asked for more rifles, as well as cannon and ammunition, the sovereign subsequently suggesting that one of its members, Martini, be sent home for supplies while his compatriots remained in the country."[49] Martini left for Europe to purchase weapons. In return, the expedition secured a geographical station near the town of Ankober.

Menelik's insatiable appetite for weapons should also be noted. Among several African rulers, he stands at the top of such ambitious plans for power and territorial aggrandizement using modern weapons. Martini returned to Shawa with more weapons. The king of Italy gave Menelik two mountain cannons, together with four boxes of ammunition for them, not to mention the 11,000 cartridges for the Remington rifles he had previously presented to him. Even though the Geographical Society contributed an additional 12 rifles and 18 pistols, Martini felt that Menelik still needed more, and requested that the Italian Foreign Office send an additional 200 rifles. In 1879, the Italian envoy in Shawa, Pietro Antonelli, agreed to privately procure for Menelik 2,000 Remington rifles, but they did not materialize until 1881 when the two signed a formal agreement.[50]

Shortly after the arrival of the Antinori mission, Italian physicians were sent to Shawa—doctors were also much needed. According to Antonelli, Menelik "has the greatest veneration for our medicines and always travels with two pharmaceutical chests."[51] One of the doctors, Dr. Raphael Alfieri, became the king's personal physician. The Shawan-Italian partnership gained momentum after the arrival of the first Italian diplomat, Count Pietro Antonelli. The Italian government, which took over the control of the port of Assab from the private Rubbatino Company in 1869, was more concerned with

the occupation of present-day Eritrea, which was under the emperorship of Yohannes IV. The Italians wanted the friendship of Menelik in their struggle against the emperor and therefore readily provided Menelik with weapons. "They accordingly opened a road from Assab to Shoa, largely for the supply of such weapons, the first consignment of 5,000 Wetterly rifles being brought in by Antonelli early in 1884."[52]

Thus, Menelik made considerable use of both the Italians and the French to amass modern weapons. For their own political gains, the French private traders and the Italian government continued to supply weapons to the king of Shawa. The Italians wanted Menelik's help or at least neutrality in their conflict with Emperor Yohannes in the north, while the French wanted his help in their rivalry against the British in this part of Africa. The British strongly opposed the introduction of weapons to Ethiopia on various grounds, including the idea that it could be dangerous for their future plans; in addition, they were concerned that weapons could find their way to Mahdist Sudan (the Mahdists subsequently did force the British out of Sudan in 1885). By the end of 1881, Menelik had over an estimated 4,000 riflemen, in addition to 15,000 soldiers armed with wick arquebuses and another 3,000 with flint arquebuses.[53] In less than a decade, he had obtained some 25,000 rifles, almost entirely from the Italians and the French.[54] He had also employed several European experts, who were mostly French and Russian, to train his troops.[55] By the mid-1880s, Menelik was in an unassailable position in military buildup, especially considering that there were few weapons and a complete absence of foreign advisors in the neighboring states of Oromia, Somalia, Afar, Kafa, and others.

Menelik's position was further strengthened when, with the Egyptian evacuation of Harar in 1884–1885, he gained access to the coast to freely import more weapons. The British resident in Aden reported: "It is impossible to travel between Harar and Addis Ababa without repeatedly meeting caravans of rifles and cartridges. I should think there are more rifles, Gras and Remingtons, in the country than there are men to carry them."[56] Menelik expanded Shawa to a considerable extent and became emperor of the whole of Ethiopia following the death of Emperor Yohannes in 1889. In the subsequent decades, more weapons were imported. Because it was very profitable, Menelik's engineer and advisor Alfred Ilg, in addition to Greek and Armenian traders, also joined the arms trade. By 1894, "Menelik is said to have had 82, 000 rifles, as well as 5½ million cartridges."[57] Shortly afterward, the British vice-consul A. B. Wylde noted that Ethiopia was "by far the strongest native power in Africa,"[58] which

was later confirmed by his friend Boyes, who called its people, "the best armed Native race in Africa."[59]

In contrast, the Oromo were denied access to rifles. According to Gleichen: "The Abyssinians proper do not use spears. The [Oromo], however, being debarred from the use of rifles, make use of this weapon."[60] He adds: "They are prevented from combining and rising against them by being denied rifles or ammunition. Many of them have the frightened or harassed look of a subject race who do not love their masters, and no wonder!"[61] J. W. Jennings and C. Addison corroborate that statement: "All Abyssinians go armed, but the [Oromo] and the Somalis in Harrar itself are not allowed to be armed, although in the country districts they may carry spears."[62]

In addition to weaponry, Shawan rulers also employed the old strategy of political marriages and adopting the Afaan Oromoo language in an attempt to subjugate the Oromo. These tactics gave them an exceptional advantage in intervening in the affairs of the nation. King Sahle Sellassie spoke Afaan Oromoo "pretty well,"[63] and he did not have difficulty communicating with the Oromo. Many Oromo chiefs also married Shawan women and were appointed governors over Oromo territories. For instance, the chief of Galaan Oromo, a man called Shumbo, was the son-in-law of Sahle Sellassie, according to an eyewitness account by Charles Johnston.[64]

The expeditions were also conducted to control trade routes and items of trade. Slaves from western Oromolands were particularly profitable, which attracted traders from elsewhere. "As the [Oromo] commanded a high price in the slave market because of their beauty, the local governors in Christian territory found war against them not only a pleasant vengeance but also profitable."[65] The slaves were also employed to work in the households and courts of palaces. In the Shawan court, slaves labored as craftsmen, soldiers, carriers, spinners, weavers, royal table attendants, and cowherds. Provincial governors and royal wives also had their own slaves.[66] Some captives were given a church education at Ankober and were appointed surrogate governors of neighboring Oromo groups.[67]

The Shawan rulers also wanted to amass wealth from the Oromos' rich mineral resources in order to consolidate their kingdom. As Edward Powell writes of the riches of the western Oromoland:

> In the provinces of the south and southwest alluvial gold is known to exist in considerable quantities; placer-mines along the banks of the watercourses having been worked from time immemorial by the [Oromo] as an industry subsidiary to tending their flocks and herds.

> There are also seams of auriferous quartz in the Wallega country which, in the opinion of the French engineer Comboul, "are certainly not inferior to those of the Transvaal," a statement which should, however, be taken with a grain of salt. And there are other gold mines in southern Shoa.[68]

The control of these resources enabled Shawan rulers to finance imports and further consolidate their power. Menelik, in particular, used these resources to amass weapons. G. E. Underhill explains: "All his new acquisitions and revenues Menelik steadily used for one object only—to increase his military power and prestige. With [Oromo] money he rewarded his generals, paid his soldiers, and bought, first from the French and then from the Italians, huge supplies of arms and ammunition wherewith to equip his ever-growing armies."[69]

These southern and western resources also invited another Ethiopian kingdom—Gojjam, which continued to raid Oromo territories to the south of the Abbay River. That province also had relative access to weapons via Tigre, and although not as strong as Shawa or Tigre itself, Gojjam was in a better position than the Oromo. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, Gojjam society had been integrated with the Oromo since at least the reign of Emperor Sarsa Dengel. Familiarity with Oromo culture and the introduction of weapons helped the people of Gojjam to expand to Guduruu. When A. d'Abbadie visited Gojjam and Guduruu in the early 1840s, he observed: "The coming of these weapons enabled the people of that province for the first time effectively to resist the [Oromo] who in the middle of the nineteenth century were still virtually without guns and had as a result lost their initiative to which they owed all their earlier successes since at least the sixteenth century."[70]

Because of the rich resources and lucrative trade in the western Oromo region immediately to the south of Abbay River, Gojjam decided to permanently occupy it. The previous raids, which had been conducted since the sixteenth century, proved ineffective in terms of economic and political gains for Gojjam. The raids into Guduruu, however, finally paved the way for occupation, which began in earnest in the 1870s. With better weapons, good intelligence, and diplomacy, the Gojjame troops intervened in the local rivalry in 1872 and continued to strengthen their position in Guduruu. While most local chiefs were defeated by the Gojjame army, led by *Dajjazmach* Yimer in about 1872, others realized their mistake and put up a stiff resistance. One such leader was Abishe Garba of Horroo. He took a strategic hill of Kokor and stubbornly resisted the Gojjame advance for three

years. The Gojjames' attempt to dislodge him failed until an additional force was sent under *Ras* Daraso, who was *Ras* Adal Tesemma's (the future king Takle Haymanot) best military commander.

Upon the arrival of Daraso, the Gojjame tried to use diplomacy rather than combat. They sent the previously submitted chief Qadiidaa Wanabe of Jimmaa-Raaree, who persuaded Abishe to submit on condition that he would be appointed chief of all the Oromo provinces south of the Abbay River. He agreed and submitted, but he was immediately arrested and taken prisoner in Gojjam. His younger brother Fandalala was made the chief over Horroo instead.[71] The capture of Abishe was an important landmark in Guduruu. "The dating of Abišé's capture is not sure. But traditions are unanimous in stating that this important event marked the end of *Sera [Oromo]*, the law of the [Oromo], in the region and the beginning of a period of oppression."[72]

The Oromo of Guduruu, however, rose in rebellion against the Gojjame troops. There were widespread rebellions elsewhere throughout the 1870s until 1882, including surprise attacks on Gojjame garrison; the whole of Guduruu was far from being under Gojjame rule. The Gojjame administration was forced to send expeditions only during the dry season to force people to pay tributes, but the Oromo asserted their independence during the rainy season. Therefore, the Oromo countries south of the Abbay were far from being subjugated by the Gojjame army before 1882. This was further evidenced by the fact that, during the Battle of Embabo in June 1882, the Oromo never fought on the side of either of the two Amhara lords, Kings Menelik and Takle Haymanot. The Oromo recognized that the conflict was a foreign war on Oromo soil, of no use to them.[73] Had the Gojjame effectively occupied Guduruu, the Oromo would have fought on their side against Shawa.

The possession of weapons, however, helped the Gojjame to disrupt the lucrative trade and peace of the Oromo. By the last years of the eighteenth century, firearms were in wider circulation in northern provinces of Ethiopia. In the north, large groups of people had already obtained muskets, either via purchase or capture from regional rulers. This gave the northern provinces a good position and a psychological boost in their campaign against the richest provinces of Oromia and the southern states. Thus, Gojjam moved against Guduruu and eventually against the southwest, while Menelik of Shawa also moved in the same direction. As described above, these provinces were the richest and several governors vied for them. Emperor Iyyasu I conducted the last grand campaign against Guduruu and the southwest

in 1704. Nearly two hundred years later, another decisive battle was fought in Guduruu (at the Battle of Embabo in June 1882) that led to the Shawan conquest of Oromia and the southern states. The last "Guduruu"; that is, the Battle of Embabo in June 1882, affected not only the peace of Guduruu but eventually the whole of Oromoland.

With the defeat of Takle Haymanot, Menelik remained the sole sovereign to succeed Emperor Yohannes. When the latter died in 1889, Menelik was already in possession of a huge amount of weapons and territory. The southwest, west, Harar, and Arsi Oromo areas were already subjugated. As mentioned above, one of the greatest culprits in the Oromos' loss of freedom was Gobana's submission to Menelik. Without Gobana, it seems unlikely that Menelik could have gone so far. Almost all of the Maccaaland, the "richest regions which henceforth became the economic backbone of Menelik's empire,"[74] and parts of Tuulamaland, were annexed by Gobana for Menelik.

The chiefs of Shawa did everything they could to block the smuggling of weapons into Oromoland. They kept the missionaries, such as Massaja and Krapf, in Shawa for the same purpose. According to Vivian:

> Until recently the Abyssinians have taken great pains to prevent them [Oromo] from arming themselves, knowing very well that if once these brave [nation] came to realise their own strength, they would not acquiesce in further servitude. But now a certain French Count, whose acquiesce I was privileged to make, has been entrusted with the task of drilling them, and reducing them to discipline. He is very sanguine about success, and I certainly agree with him that he could not possibly have any finer material to work upon.[75]

The Oromo "have been conquered, and are held in subjection by the help of firearms which their conquerors [the Shawans] take care they do not obtain, and by this device they are kept in a position of distinct inferiority and abject servitude."[76] Herbert Vivian also asserted of the Oromo: "If once they could obtain guns, even to a small extent, I believe they would soon make themselves masters of the empire."[77] Modern weapons were a major a factor for European colonization of Africa; here we have an African country awash with modern weapons and European advisors annexing fellow neighbors who had only traditional weapons, and were thus easy victims.[78]

Why did Shawa succeed at the expense of other African states? As described above, when Menelik assumed power, he had considerable experience. He inherited from his predecessors an organized

government structure and a modern army. Even in prison, he was treated like a son of Emperor Tewodros and was offered all kinds of state education and leadership training. He had the chance to meet foreigners and observe the art of government, including relations with Europeans. Fortunately for him, his reign took place during the time of an influx of Europeans, who helped him to acquire firearms and train his soldiers, and provided advice about governance. In the words of Fantahun Haile Michael: "European medicine was introduced, and the army was trained on European lines. In short, all the essential elements of European civilization were introduced into Shoa."[79]

European countries, particularly Italy, France, and Britain, had an interest in getting a foothold along the Red Sea coast, and competed with each other. This situation gave Menelik the chance to play one against the other. Also, unlike Emperor Yohannes, who was busy fighting the Italians, Egyptians, and, later, Mahdists, Menelik was free to do business elsewhere. Shawa was not involved in the *Zamane masafent* (Era of the Princes) and had benefited from its autonomous existence as well as its booming trade-based economy. In short, Menelik's "supply of modern rifles and artillery came from a combination of skill, luck, and the configuration of European strategic interests centering on the upper Nile and the mouth of the Red Sea."[80]

On the other hand, the states of the south had no such experience or organized bureaucracy. The Europeans themselves wanted a more organized state—to do business with, and for their own security purposes. The five Oromo Gibee states that had emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century were not strong enough to challenge Shawa; they were more engaged in commerce to boost their economy and to strengthen their bureaucracy. As a result of booming international commerce in the region, several Arab slave raiders also destabilized the region. Traders also introduced the Islamic religion, and many people were converted to the Islamic faith instead of the Oromo religion; Islam encouraged commerce and conversion, and many caravan traders were Muslims.

Unlike Menelik's European agents, Arab traders were more active in the slave and ivory trades than in modernized weapons sales, and raided villages for slaves. When they did try to export weapons to the Oromo territories in the south, Arab traders found it difficult to cross Shawa with weapons to the south, because Shawa continued to block the introduction of weapons to its south. Egypt also discouraged weapon sales to Ethiopia—Arab traders from Egypt and Sudan could not bring weapons to trade for slaves. The south thus remained unarmed and

therefore weak compared with Shawa. As Fantahun Haile Michael explains it: "In order to fulfill the process of the formation of relation of domination and state power in such a society, a relatively superior source of power, organization, firearms and leadership were essential. Menelik had all of them—a modern army, and a centrally organized bureaucracy composed of his Shoa lords and some Oromo chiefs over his southern weakly organized linguistic and cultural groups."[81]

The Oromo and other groups in East Africa thus were incorporated into the Empire of Ethiopia. The *gadaa* system, though previously already in decline, was banned outright, diminishing the prominent roles of the Oromo chiefs and *gadaa* leaders. That paved the way for the emergence in west Oromia of the *qaalluus* as powerful sociopolitical and judicial figures, in addition to their ancient role as religious leaders.[82]

Farther south, the Boorana were caught between two powers: Britain from Kenya and Ethiopia. And subsequently, they were unable to defend themselves. "The imposition of colonial order, made possible in both Kenya and in Ethiopia by the use of firearms, and the subsequent division of the Borana of Kenya and those of Ethiopia made it impossible for the Borana to resist and defend their territories."[83] This affected the Boorana culture considerably. G. Schlee corroborates this point: "The Boran-Oromo were a dominant force in what is now southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya from sometime in the sixteenth century to the threshold of the twentieth century. Their decline began when Menelik's armies arrived from the north and the British from the south."[84]

Thus, all Oromo became subjugated, which brought an end to their freedom and democratic government. As Bulatovich explains: "Such was the form of government of [Oromo] states up until their conquest by the Abyssinians. But from that time the peaceful, free way of life, which could have become the ideal for philosophers and writers of the eighteenth century, if they had known of it, was completely changed. Their peaceful way of life is broken; freedom is lost; and the independent, freedom-loving [Oromo] find themselves under the severe authority of the Abyssinian conquerors."[85]

Nevertheless, Oromo fundamental principles of peace and *qixxee* were not completely abandoned. *Gadaa* rituals continued in a modified way in Gujii, Boorana, and in some areas of Oromia. As Asafa Jalata writes:

> These changes did not totally uproot Oromo values and traditions. Some elements of Oromo democratic values still exist in areas where

> the *Gada* system was suppressed. Nevertheless, in its modified form, the system is still in practice in southern Oromia, such as in the Boran and Guji regions, under Ethiopian colonialism; *Gada* still helps to maintain peace, exchange knowledge and practice rituals among some moieties and groups in southern Oromia and in other parts of Oromia. Today Oromo nationalism incorporates these cultural and political values. Some Oromo democratic principles with other democratic values of other societies can be a starting point towards creating and building a legitimate multicultural democratic state in the region.[86]

As the *gadaa* system of government and rituals were outlawed, as well as adoption on a larger scale, subsequently, ethnic integration declined considerably. Forceful conversion into Tewahedo doctrine, imposition of Amharic language and names, and adopting Amhara culture had huge repercussions for interethnic relations and integration in the region. Most Oromo and other groups in today's southern Ethiopia refused conversion into Christianity and continued to resist forceful integration into the Ethiopian Empire. On the other hand, conflict resolutions through the role of the local mediators and peaceful coexistence with neighbors continued. Thus, "The 19th century was an interesting and at the same time a very important period in the long history of the empire of Ethiopia."[87]

Conclusion

The *nagaa Oromoo,* coupled with the fellow concept of *qixxee*, reinforced the process of ethnic assimilation and integration between the Oromo and their neighbors in East Africa. More than any other comparable groups, the Oromos' openness to strangers and treating strangers as their equals contributed significantly to peace and ethnic integration, and avoided major ethnic wars in the region. "Oromo institutions proved to be a source of stability in the period of insecurity."[1] For instance, in Wanbara, which is home to many diversified ethnic groups and a remote peripheral region outside effective state control, protracted major ethnic wars did not occur. The major inhabitants of the region—Gumuz, Shinasha, Agaw, Oromo, and Amhara—have continually intermingled for centuries. The region became a special platform for positive societal relations and cultural integration. Members of the four Ethiopian language superfamilies (Cushitic, Semitic, Omotic, and Nilo-Saharan) have been represented in this region. Of the four major language families, Gumuz belongs to the Nilo-Saharan; Shinasha belongs to the Omotic; Agaw and Oromo to the Cushitic; and Amhara to the Semitic, forming "Ethiopia in miniature."[2]

It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that the region was placed under Ethiopian administration. Even after its incorporation, the Ethiopian administration was loose, and some of the districts continued to be ruled by their hereditary chiefs into the first half of the twentieth century, although they were regularly required to pay tributes in slaves, gold, and ivory to the Ethiopian state. As a remote territory on the periphery of the Ethiopian state, this region could have seen major ethnic wars, owing also to raids from Sudan. Yet, Oromo institutions fostered peace and ethnic solidarity; subsequently, all groups adopted the Oromo *michuu* mechanism of conflict resolution and friendship.

Michuu is an Oromo word that literally means "friendship." It is a reciprocal bond, invoked for more important conflicts. It is an institution governing life and property security that establishes free

movement of people and a traditional basis for solving conflicts. Although originally an Oromo institution, *michuu* is used among all inhabitants of the region as a mechanism of conflict resolution and reconciliation. The *michuu* institution had already been common south of the Abbay River before the Oromo expansion to Wanbara, and in Wanbara, the system continued without difficulty. The majority of merchants from the north had established *michuu* friendships south of the Abbay as far as western Wallaggaa. There had been strong commercial relations on both sides of the river since much earlier times, which consolidated the *michuu* institution. *Michuu* facilitated freedom of movement on both sides of the river, ensuring security for peoples and goods. It greatly facilitated interethnic relations to the north of that river and facilitated cultural interactions on both sides of the river. Consequently, the Shinasha, the Gumuz, the Agaw, and later, the Amhara, adopted *michuu,* even retaining its Oromo name.

Michuu played an important role in preventing conflicts. It even gradually developed into assimilation. In the Dangab region, for instance, those Gumuz who became *michuu* to the Anu and Jaggaa Oromo clans called themselves after these Oromo clans; in other words, those Gumuz who became *michuu* to Anu called themselves Anu Oromo. In areas of prolonged contact, *michuu* developed into cultural and social integration. As I have discussed elsewhere,[3] the Oromo traditional institutions of peace made a huge impact on the region's peace.

In southern Ethiopia, there are good relationships and assimilation between the Oromo and the Hadiya, Sidama, Gurage, and so on. Likewise, in Kenya, there were and are significant relationships between the Boorana and Garre, Sakuye, Rendille, Pokomo, and other groups. It should be noted that conflicts and warfare have existed throughout human history, and naturally border raids and sometimes violence did occur between these groups. However, East Africa did not experience protracted ethnic wars as did, for example, southern Africa due to the dispersal of the Nguni group in the first half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps demographic factors, coupled with competition over resources, forced the Nguni speakers to move from South Africa all the way to Tanzania in the 1830s. The various Nguni, such as the Ngwane, moved northward, and after conquering the local groups formed the Swazi kingdom, while the Ndwandwe moved to Mozambique and formed the Gaza kingdom over the indigenous groups. Another Ndwandwe group, also called Ngoni, pushed northward as far as Tanzania.[4] Yet, the Nguni did not have a compact

and uniform language from South Africa to Tanzania. In contrast, the Oromo managed to survive many pressures to keep their language uniform and maintain a compact geography all the way from Kenya to northern Ethiopia.

The Nguni introduced new military techniques, and absorbed conquered people into their military ranks, thereby establishing an efficient and disciplined army with which they raided their neighbors. As Kevin Shillington writes: "When they settled in a region the regiments were sent out to raid for cattle and to collect tribute in grain and other food."[5] To the contrary, the Oromo approached their neighbors largely for friendships, as we have seen in Wanbara, for example. Also, the Ngoni "despised the long-settled, unmilitarised agriculturalists they conquered,"[6] in stark contrast to the Oromo, who welcomed and gave others as equal privileges as themselves.

Commercial relations also contributed to ethnic relations and integration. As the Oromo *gadaa* system declined, the market center played a significant role in bringing various Oromo clans together during much of the nineteenth century. From every quarter, the Oromo made contact with each other, got news and information, made commercial transactions, and formed friendships with non-Oromo groups. The Oromo and other groups made contact with not only traders coming from elsewhere in Africa, but also from Asia and even from Europe. This contributed to the introduction of new fashions, new ideas, new items, new religion, and so on, which altered their lifestyles. Although the caravans profited from trade, villagers also benefited from markets, because commerce was a major activity that affected much of Oromia during the nineteenth century.

Commercial relations also led to both the introduction of Islamic religion and expansion of Christianity. Missionaries followed the caravans on their way to Oromia, while others, such as the Swedish Mission, evangelized freed Oromo slaves who had been captured during the rampant nineteenth-century slave raids. Local missionaries, like Onesimos and Aster Gannoo, were former slaves who played a key role in the introduction and expansion of Protestant Christianity in western Oromia. Many converted to Islam and Christianity, mainly during the twentieth century, but still, the Oromo religion, culture, and way of life remained strong. "The *qaallu* religious institution continued and *jilaa* [pilgrims] from the kingdoms visited the *Abba Muuda* at Walaabu without interruption."[7] Pilgrimages to the *abbaa muudaa* and to Dirree Sheikh Hussein, celebration of the *irreecha* and *ateetee* rituals, and traditional Oromo prayers continued.

Although many Oromo accepted Islam and Christianity instead of Oromo religion, the new faith did not seem to have a strong impact on the values and egalitarian ethos of the people. "Thus, whether they became Muslims or Christians, the underpinnings of Oromo religious belief remained their traditional religion. Most of its rituals continued to be observed by converts of the new religions."[8] Islam and Christianity did not erase indigenous beliefs and culture. As Ali Mazrui writes: "Of the three principal religious legacies of Africa (indigenous, Islamic, and Christian) perhaps the most inherently ecumenical is the *indigenous* tradition. This is true of Oromo traditional beliefs."[9]

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church tried to convert the Oromo by force. In 1839, King Sahle Sellassie of Shawa informed the Church Missionary Society agent Johann Ludwig Krapf: "The people of Shoa attempted to convert these heathens [Oromo] by means of war and magic sentences; but they refused to accept the Christian faith."[10] As a result of forced conversions, many Oromo joined Islam in opposition to Shawa, while most retained their indigenous beliefs and customs. The Oromo religion did not force anyone into conversion. Instead, it promoted tolerance and peaceful coexistence. "But far more religiously tolerant than either Islam or Christianity have been indigenous African traditions, including those of the Oromo—especially since these do not aspire to universalism and are not inherently competitive."[11]

The Oromo welcomed everybody, regardless of background and beliefs, and did not impose their own religion or government. The idea of *qixxee,* the *gadaa* system, and the concept of *nagaa* are among the most important institutions of the Oromo. *Gadaa* endeavors to ensure that *nagaa* flourishes. All of these contributed to peaceful relations and prevented potential ethnic wars. Until the end of the nineteenth century, most Oromo shared the same republican *gadaa* government and values. "Even in the exceptional cases where monarchical states emerged among the Hulle clans of the Gibe region, a high degree of democratic practice survived and the kings never claimed divine origin or supra-natural attributes that other African kings claimed . . . Most of the Gibe kings were distinguished from their people mainly by possession of more lands and power."[12]

The introduction of modern weapons and use of European advisors helped Emperor Menelik to undertake a series of attacks and repetitive raids against unarmed Oromo villagers. That eventually led to conquest of various independent states in the Horn of Africa by 1900. By then, the peaceful way of life in the region had been significantly

affected. The *gadaa* system was banned, *gadaa* rituals were outlawed, and Orthodox Christianity was imposed. In a few areas like in Boorana, the *gadaa* governance structure survived despite the ban, while in most other areas, democratic values and concepts of peace and *qixxee* continued. "As political and cultural activities in Oromia have revealed since May 1991, the democratic values of the *gada* system, and knowledge about how the system functioned and how its rituals were conducted, still exist among all religious groups and in all the Oromo regions."[13]

Glossary

aaddee	honorific title of respect given to women.
abbaa	father, or owner of; title of respect.
abbaa bokkuu	holder of the scepter, head of the *gadaa* government.
abbaa duulaa	commander.
abbaa muudaa	the most important spiritual leader of the Oromo religion; literally, "father of anointing."
addooyyee	Oromo women's friendship institution.
angafa	first-born.
ateetee	a largely women-specific ceremony, held in honor of the Oromo mother deity.
awrajja	administrative sub-province.
bajerond	royal treasurer.
bärr	gate.
bahr negash	a title given to the Ethiopian governor of the Red Sea littoral.
bitwaddad	most favored courtier, imperial counselor; one who often officiates in the name of the king.
blatta	honorific title generally signifying learning; the most educated one.
blattengeta	master of the *blatta*.
Buttaa	Oromo traditional festival that takes place every eight years.
Caffee	Oromo assembly; regional parliament or governance council.
dajjazmach	the commander of the gate; a military title below the *Ras*.
dhaabaa/ dhoqqee	pillar, foundation; common ancestral property; ancestral homeland.
dubbisa	greeting, conversation.
ekeraa	the spirit of a dead person believed to appear on earth.
Falasha	Ethiopian Jews, the Beta Israel.

farasulla	traditional measuring unit, equivalent to about 17 kilos (37.4 pounds); generally used for weighing coffee and ivory.
fitawrari	commander of the vanguard, a military title below *dajjazmach*.
gabbar	tribute-paying peasant or peasants.
gadaa	democratic governance system of the Oromo.
galma	ritual house (temple) of the Oromo religion.
grazmach	commander of the left; a politico-military title equivalent to a baron.
guddifachaa	to foster, adopt; adoption.
ilkaan tumachuu	the beautification of the gums.
irreecha	an ancient Oromo thanksgiving ceremony celebrated annually on the shores of Hora Lake in Bishoftuu town.
jilaa	pilgrims who received blessings and anointment from the *abbaa muudaa*.
kooluu	asylum.
meedhicha	strips of skin cut from a freshly sacrificed animal, before it is completely skinned and butchered, to be worn ceremonially as a wristlet.
michuu	friendship.
moggaasaa	adoption.
mootii	king; literally, "winner."
nagaa	peace.
neftañña	after *neft*, or "rifle"; Emperor Menelik's warriors of northern origin who settled in southern Ethiopia.
okolee	pot for milking a cow.
qaalluu	a priest of the Oromo religion.
qabiyyee	Oromo landholding system.
qaññazmach	commander of the right; a politico-military title above *grazmach*.
qixxee	equal; equality.
qoroo	a provincial governor.
ras	head, the highest military title below *negus* (king).
saa dhaabbachuu	a ritual to celebrate the birth of a calf to a cow.
sogidda	salt bar.
tarree	alignment, hierarchical order.

Wanbara	a region north of the Abbay River and generally west of the Durra River (see maps 4 and 5). Medieval chroniclers have called it Wambarya, and the region is also sometimes spelled Wembara. Today, it is one of the administrative divisions of the Matakkal zone of the Beni Shangul-Gumuz regional state.
warada	an Ethiopian administrative district.
Zamane masafent	the Era of the Princes (1769–1855).

Notes

Introduction

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16. James, *The Unknown Horn of Africa,* 58; see also pp. 125 and 141 for wells and stone houses attributed to the Oromo.
17. I. M. Lewis, "The So-called Galla Graves," *Man* (1961): 103–106.
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1 Conflict and Integration: Oromo Settlement and Assimilation in Northern Ethiopia, 1570–1704

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