



A Historiography of the Conquest of Kaffa in 1897

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Abstract

The year 1897 is a benchmark in the history of Kaffa as the forces of Emperor Menelik were incorporated into the Ethiopian empire after a lengthy war with the Kaffa king. By introducing a new system in later years, the war was changed dramatically and dynamically. The conquest of Kaffa and the southward movement and expansion of the Christian empire to the southern, southeastern, and southwestern areas, in general, were viewed differently by different scholars. In this paper, an attempt was made to survey the historiography, the study of history, of the conquest of Kaffa in particular. This was followed by the southward movement of Imperial Ethiopia in the broad sense. In the last quarter of the 19th century, most Ethiopian historians, including Ethiopianists, passively generalized the southward movement of Emperor Menilek based on the available evidence. As one group of writers argued, the movement aimed to retake previously known territories for the purpose of unification, while the other viewed it from a colonial perspective. Thus, the objective of this paper was to analyze the imperial southward movement of Ethiopia under Menilek in general and the conquest of Kaffa in particular.

Keywords: Expansion, Southward Movement, Kaffa, Ethiopia

Introduction

The ‘Greater Ethiopian empire state of the twentieth century consisted of a number of previously autonomous distinct groups (of people) who were subordinate to the empire formed by the Semitic speakers in the north. According to Donald N. Levien, Emperor Menilek II’s (r.1889-1913) expansionist policy to the southern part of the country tripled the territory subjected to the Ethiopian empire-state.¹ This was due to a series of conquest, which added a dozen of ethnic groups and millions of people to the empire.²

The southward expansion of the Ethiopian empire-state was begun in earlier times. Obviously, the southward movement of the Imperial Empire was begun in the fourteenth century and it was shaped and reshaped by several factors. For instance, King Amda Seyon (1314-1344) began the process by incorporating the neighboring Muslim States in the South-central part of the empire. However, it became swift and reached its zenith during the time of emperor Menilek.³ This southward expansion brought to an end the autonomy of the kingdoms that were found south of Addis Ababa, the capital of the Ethiopian empire. It had three stages during the time of Menilek’s expansion.⁴⁵

The first stage of expansion was begun before Menilek’s accession to the Ethiopian throne when he was still a king of Shoa. From 1867 to 1889 King Menilek incorporated the surrounding Oromo confederation, the Gurage area, and the kingdoms of Jimma, Arsi, Wollaga, and Harar. Emperor Menilek by continuing his expansion after 1889, annexed part of Sidamo, Ogaden, and the kingdom of Wolaita. After the battle of Adwa in 1896 Emperor Menilek once again turned his

¹ Donald N. Levien, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of A Multiethnic Society*, (1974), Chicago, p.20- p.26; Addis Hiwot, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution*, (London: Published by Review of African Political Economy, 1975), pp. 1-4; Herbert S. Lewis, *A (Oromo) Monarchy: Jimma Aba Jifar*, Ethiopia 1800-1932, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp.44-45.

² Addis Hiwot, pp. 1-4; Herbert S. Lewis, pp.44-45.

³Harold G. Marcus, “Imperialism and Expansionism in Ethiopia from 1865 to1980” in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*: Edited by H Gann and Peter Duignan. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 447-455; . “Motives, Methods and Some Result of the Unification of Ethiopia During the reign of Menilek II” in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Addis Ababa, 1969), pp. 269-280; , *The Life and Times of Menilek II: Ethiopia 1844-1913*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 57-76; Richard. Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935*, (Addis Ababa: HSIU Press, 1968), p. 24; Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), pp. 93-104; Bahiru Zewde, *A Modern History of Ethiopia 1855-1974*, (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1991), pp.61-70.

⁴ ibid

covetous eyes toward the south. It was a result of the Great Ethiopian Famine, *Kifu Qen* (1888-1892), which exhausted the economic power of the emperor. To relieve the danger emperor Menilek and his army rushed out to the southern, southeastern, and southwestern parts and incorporated the kingdom of Kaffa, Borana, and Beni Shangul area.⁵ At the time, emperor Menilek's expansion to the southern part of the country completed and forged the Ethiopian territory by competing the European powers.

In the meantime, the European colonial powers began the 'Scramble' of Africa continent. However, emperor Menilek played off the Imperialist European powers and was able to forge the present boundary of Ethiopia through a series of boundary agreements with the surrounding Imperialist powers.⁶

During the time of Menilek's expansion, the southern kingdoms had two fates: either peaceful submission or 'bravely' resisting the 'invading' Menilek's army. Most of the southern kingdoms submitted peacefully and allowed a fair degree of autonomy like the kingdom of Jimma and Wallaga.⁷ However, the darkest face of the emperor had been turned for those who resisted his expansionist policy. It was so harsh for the peoples of Harar (1886), Arsi (1885), the Kingdom of Wolaita (1894), and the Kingdom of Kaffa (1897) that resisted emperor Menilek and his army.⁸ In such areas, there were brutal suppressions, exploitation and all kinds of the extremely wicked measures had been taken until their submission to the central government. This was particularly the case for the Kingdom of Kaffa which was incorporated by Emperor Menilek in 1897 after his victory at the battle of Adwa.⁹

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Greenfield, p.96; Bahiru, p.61; Bonny K.Holcomb, and Sisai Ibissa, *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of Dependent Colonial State in North East Africa*, (New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 1990), pp. 71-144.

⁷ Bahiru, pp.60-70; Marcus, *The life and...*, pp. 57-76; Lewis, pp.45-46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Wagner Lange, *A History of Southern Gonga Peoples (South West Ethiopia)* (Wiesbaden: Franz Stern Verlag, 1982),p.214; Leggese Gebeyhu, "Conquest of The Kingdom of Kaffa in 1897" BA Thesis(HSIU., History, 1971), pp.14-29; Nardos Ababa, "Expansion of Ethiopia through Menilek 1867-1898" BA Thesis (HSIU, History, 1963), pp.25-28.

⁹ *ibid*

The kingdom of Kaffa was one of the oldest and the most powerful medieval state in the southwestern part of the country.¹⁰ The kingdom was ruled by a king with the title *Tato*, who was supported by his advisors, *Mikrecho*, since the millennia. Economically, the kingdom was rich and became source of various commodities for the long-distance trade.¹¹ Such kind of peace and prosperity of the kingdom of Kaffa withered away after the conquest of Menilek in 1897.

Before the final showdown and subjugation to the central empire in 1897, the forces of Emperor Menilek were repulsed twice by the Kingdom of Kaffa. This was because of the position of indigenous religion and Kaffa's effective use of the natural defense system, which provided effective protection against the 'invading' force. As a result of strong resistance, the war became bloody and lasted for at least eight months until the last *Tato*, Gaki Shericho surrendered at a place called Shat.¹²

The surrender of the king marked the end of the independent existence of the medieval kingdom of Kaffa in 1897. Since then, Kaffa has become part and parcel of the central government of Ethiopia. Thus, the objective of this paper was to make a general historiographical survey of the kingdom of Kaffa with a particular emphasis on Menilek's conquest in 1897. In the survey, the researcher tried to encompass historical, anthropological, linguistics, and other literature produced in the last hundred years, both published and unpublished monographs. This survey is incomplete and needs more investigation in many ways. However, the author hopes, the paper may contribute to the general understanding of the writings of Ethiopian history.

The Historiographical Sketch of the Conquest

The earliest and the only women published monograph that surveyed in this paper was Margery Perham's *The Government of Ethiopia*.¹³ In her argumentative and widely readable monograph, Perham had good descriptions of the Shoa expansion to the southern part of the country.²⁰

¹⁰ Ibid.; Getahun Dilebo, "Emperor Menilek's Ethiopia, 1815-1916: National Unification or Amhara Communal Domination", PhD dissertation in History (Washington D.C.: Howard University, 1974), pp.118-124; Amnon Orent, "Lineage Structure and the Supernatural: The Kaffa of South West Ethiopia", PhD dissertation in Anthropology (Boston: Boston University 1969), pp. 55-59.

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, (London: Faber & Faber limited, 1947), pp.293-295, 315-322.

However, it was restricted only to the political aspect particularly, the government and its functionaries.

In 1965, two books¹⁴ came to scene in Ethiopian historiography. The first was Richard Greenfield's *Ethiopia: A New Political History*. Like Perham, Greenfield dictates the political aspect of Ethiopian history, but not the social and economic history of the southern part of the country. He gave more emphasis on the modern period of Ethiopia, particularly on the emergence of the Ethiopian empire-state under emperor Menilek II (1889-1913). He accounted for the emergence of the empire-state as a 're-building' in the second part of the book.¹⁵ The other one was that of Herbert Lewis's Anthropological Ph.D. dissertation on the kingdom of Jimma. In his study, Lewis tried to compare the kingdom of Jimma with other African kingdoms.¹⁶ However, Lewis said little about the conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa and the surrounding kingdoms under the fury minds of Menilek's expansionist policy in 1897.

One of the major sources of this paper belongs to Richard Pankhurst who was the doyen of the Department of History of Addis Ababa University. Pankhurst devoted most of his works to the economic and social aspects of Ethiopian historiography. Particularly, his articles and books explicitly narrated the agonies and the exploitation of the southern part of the country after the conquest of emperor Menilek in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ In one of his articles, his monograph provides the Great Ethiopian Famine which killed millions of peoples in the northern and central part of the country between 1888 and 1892.¹⁸ In most of his articles, Pankhurst had similar conceptual analysis on the slave trade.¹⁹

¹⁴ Greenfield, pp.96-113; Lewis, pp.40-46.

¹⁵ See Greenfield, pp.96-113

¹⁶ See Lewis, pp.40-46

¹⁷ Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Slave Trade in Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century" in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, (Vol.9, No. 1,1964); . "Trade of South and Western Ethiopian and Indian Ocean in Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century" in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, (Vol. VIII, No. 2,1965) ; , Economic.... pp. , "Firearms in Ethiopian history (1800-1935) in *Ethiopian Observer* (Addis Ababa, Vol.6, No.2, 1967), pp.135-150.

¹⁸ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine 1888-1892: A New assessment" in *Journal of the history of Medicine and Allied Science*, (New Haven, Vol.21, No. 2&3, 1966) pp. 271-294; , "The Great Ethiopian Famine 1888-1892" Monograph.

¹⁹ Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Slave Trade ..." and "Trade of South and Western Ethiopian ..." that he discusses the southward expansion brought the slave trade to intensify in the newly conquered territories

The other major sources have come from Harold G. Marcus who was a distinguished professor of History and African studies. His contribution to Ethiopian historiography is immense, and his enormous works on the history of Menelik are considered as ‘biographer of the emperor’. However, most of his works are highly over-skewed toward the ruling elites in Ethiopian history. His books and his articles had great value for the historiography of the conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa in 1897.²⁰ Despite this, Marcus’s writings were hardly free from critics. One of the major shortcomings of his articles was the redundancy of the theses in their narration. The only difference that the researcher found was in their title, but not in their details.²¹ From this point of view, it is possible to conclude that Marcus undoubtedly reflects the viewpoints of the Shoa ruling elites rather than the society at the center. In other words, the works of Marcus viewed the first group of writers who viewed Menelik’s expansion as a unifying mission of re-conquering the ancient territories. The author’s contention is not to reject his contribution, but rather to point out his limitations.

The second group of writers who viewed as an anti-Semitic thesis of Menilek’s expansionist policy was Addis Hiwot’s *Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution* and Bonny K. Holcomb and Sisay Ibssa’s *The Invention Of Ethiopia: The Making of Dependent Colonialism in North-East Africa*. In their account, both Addis & Holcomb and Sisay narrate the political, social, and economic history of the country and explain Menilek’s expansion in the southern part of the country. They had similar anti-Semitic synthesis on Menilek’s expansions. They conceptualized this ‘historic process’ of the 19th century as “military-feudal-colonialism”²² and “dependent colonialism”²³. They used a ‘harsh’ colonial perspective in their analysis. Although theory dominates most of Holcomb and Sisay’s book, its historical aspect had an immense contribution to Ethiopian

²⁰ Harold G. Marcus, “A History of Negotiation Concerning the Borders between Ethiopia and British East Africa 1897-1914” in *African History*: Edited by Jeffrey Buttler. (Boston: Boston University Press, 1966); “Imperialism and Expansionism...”; “Motives, Methods...”, *The Life and Times....* pp.57-76, *Introduction to the History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), pp.94-105

²¹ See Marcus, “A history of negotiation...”; “Colonialism in Africa...”; “Imperialism and Expansionism...”; “Motives, Methods...”. in these works, the main theses are the same, but different in title, and the place of publication.

²² Addis Hiwot, pp.1-4.

²³ Holcomb and Sisai, pp.71-144.

historiography particularly, the Shoan expansion to the southern part of the country since the 1800s.²⁴

In addition to this, the author of the paper takes a look at some published monographs and unpublished Ph.D. dissertations, and senior essays. Two of the most important dissertations were Amnon Orent's anthropological study on the kingdom of Kaffa²⁵ and Getahun Dilebo's unpublished history Ph.D. dissertation on emperor Menilek's expansion.²⁶ The former had valuable information on the history of the kingdom of Kaffa in general and its conquest in 1897 in particular. However, the latter assessed Menilek's expansion in general with little emphasis on the conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa in 1897. One of the major weaknesses of Getahun Dilebo's Ph.D. dissertation is coining the view of the second group towards Emperor Menilek's expansion to the southern part of the country. Even though his thesis lacks consistency and inept explanation, Lapso G. Dilebo's books written in Amharic²⁷ have got public readings unlike the others.

To supplement this someone from Kaffa may have first-hand information about the kingdom of Kaffa. Recently, some amateur writers produced on the history of Kaffa²⁸ though their orientation is different. Besides few theses submitted to the department of history, Addis Ababa University gave passively discussed political, social, and economic as well as the religious history of the medieval kingdom of Kaffa, but they need critical assessment as they were submitted to fulfill their education²⁹

The 'Motives of Menilek's Expansion and the Conquest of Kaffa in 1897

The conquest of the medieval kingdom of Kaffa must be viewed as part and parcel of Menilek's expansionist policy to the southern part of Ethiopia. It was according to Addis Hiwot a policy of

²⁴ Bahiru, *A History...*, pp.60-69; , "A Century of Ethiopian Historiography", in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, (Vol. XXXIII, No 2, 2000), pp.1-26.

²⁵ Orent, pp.55-60

²⁶ Getahun, pp. 105-124.

²⁷See Lapiso G. Dilebo's Books written on Amharic.

²⁸ Bekele "A History of Kaffa" (Amharic)

²⁹ Leggese; Nardos; Kochito Wolde Mikael "Historical Survey of Kaffa 1897-1935" BA Thesis (A.A.U. History, 1979); Ali Osman "The History of Bonga Town From its Foundation to 1974" BA Thesis (A.A.U. History, 1982); Kifile Wolde Mikael. "Central Cults and Beliefs among Kaffa South Western Ethiopia" BA Thesis (A.A.U. Sociology, 1992).

feudal centralization: expansion, annexation, and administration of territories.³⁰ Some historians called this ‘historic process’ as ‘expansion’³¹ of the Ethiopian empire to the southern part of the country. Others have argued it as a kind of ‘colonial perspective’³² by comparing it with some, as they said ‘theory’. Still, other historians interpreted this historic process in different ways.

At this juncture, we may raise questions on emperor Menilek’s expansion to the south in general and the conquest of Kaffa in particular. The question may include:

- ▶ Had Menilek’s expansion to the southern part of the country a ‘colonial’ nature?
- ▶ Why did some scholars (both Ethiopians and Ethiopianist) ‘prefer to use the positive metaphors (euphemisms?)’ like re-conquest, re-unification, re-building, re... for the such historic process of the last century, while some others regarded the southward movement negatively (conquest, colonization....)?

To address the above thesis/ antithesis by various scholars, studying Ethiopian history interpreted the expansion of Emperor Menilek in different ways. Some of the historiographical issues addressed in Ethiopian historiography on Menilek’s expansion to the south are briefly discussed below.

I. Political Aspiration

Political aspiration and economic interest are the basic ‘drive or motives for emperor Menilek’s expansion to the southern part of the country. The author of this paper begins with the first group of sources that advocate the political aspiration of emperor Menilek’s conquest of the southern part of Ethiopia as the continuation of the empire to the south. It is better to call them as ‘Shoan circle’. They advocate re-conquest and re-unification for this ‘historic process’ including Bahru (1991) who deals with the creation of the ‘modern Ethiopian empire state explicitly argued that Menilek’s expansion to the southern part of the country as a ‘re-unification’ of his old Christian empire territory. He conceived it as a kind of creating a centralized unitary state by pushing the frontiers of the Ethiopian state to the areas beyond the reach that were known in medieval times.³³

³⁰ Addis, pp.3-4.

³¹ Bahru....

³² Boni k Holcomb and Sisai

³³ Bahru A history ... pp.60-70

This may be due to the influence of Menilek's circular letter³⁴ to the Imperialist European powers. In the letter, emperor Menilek claimed the campaign as a legitimate and 're-occupation' of provinces, which were known under Ethiopian suzerainty in the past. Thus, Bahiru's interpretation belongs to the first group who argue the view of unification'.

With a new kind of interpretation, Richard Greenfield (1968) advocates this 'historic process' as a kind of 're-building' of the Ethiopian empire-state.³⁵ In one of the units of the book, Greenfield explicitly discussed the expansion of Menilek to the neighboring Shoan Oromo confederations, Gurage land, the conquest of Harar, Wallaga, and Jimma. At the end of the unit, he dealt with the fall of the southern kingdoms that include the kingdoms of Wolaita, Dawro, Konta, Gamo, Gofa, ... and Kaffa. Among them, Greenfield gave more emphasis to the conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa in 1897.³⁶

In his explanation, Greenfield (1968) argued that Menilek's expansionist policy was motivated partly by a desire to occupy many areas as possible as before Imperialist European powers took over them. These actions, to some extent, a response for the 'Scramble for Africa'³⁷ from this what we can understand is that Greenfield like Bahiru was influenced by Menilek's Circular letter of 1891.

Harold G. Marcus contributed a lot for Ethiopian historiography. Marcus (1966, 1969, 1975, 2002) had similar argument on Menilek expansion to the south with Bahiru and Greenfield. However, Marcus conceived this 'historic process' as 'territorial aggrandizement'³⁸ that emperor Menilek was motivated by strengthening and increasing his internal power to regain areas that were Ethiopia's claim in the past. He also states that Menilek's motive was partly to 'keep' European Imperialist powers away from the heart of Ethiopia.³⁹ In other words Menilek's

³⁴ "... ...while tracing today the actual boundary of my empire I shall endeavor, if God gives me life and strength to re-establish the ancient [tributaries]of Ethiopia up to Khartoum, and as far as lake Nyanza...."

Extracted from Menilek's circular letter to European powers in 1891 by Greenfield p.103.

³⁵ Greenfield, pp.96-103.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Marcus, "A history of negotiation...."; "Imperialism and Expansionism...."; "Motives, Methods...."; , *Introduction to...*, pp.94-104.

³⁹ Ibid

expansion to the south was a response to European Imperialist powers during the period of the ‘Scramble of Africa’.

One of the most important components of Ethiopian historiography is Richard Pankhurst’s writings. In his accounts, Pankhurst (1964, 1965, 1968) gave vivid pictures of the wealth of the kingdom of Kaffa. He explained that emperor Menilek turned his attention to the kingdom in order to exploit her natural resource.⁴⁰ At the end, Pankhurst tells nothing about Menilek’s conquest of Kaffa as ‘re-unification’ or ‘colonization’.

In her valuable book, Margery Perham (1947) explicitly dictates about Shoan expansion to the Oromo, Sidama, Kaffa and Gurage areas.⁴¹ She confirmed that the end of the ‘independent’ existence of the greater part of the vast area of south Addis Ababa came after the end of fifty or sixty years.⁴² However, she said nothing about Menilek’s conquest of the south, particularly the kingdom of Kaffa whether ‘re-unification’ or not like Pankhurst.

Herbert Lewis (1965) and Werner Lange (1982) expound in their study, the southwestern part of Ethiopia. The southward expansion of emperor Menilek was not an expansion, but an exploitation of the rich source of wealth and invasion over an independent kingdom of Kaffa.⁴³

In their account both Lewis and Lange stated that by using European ‘modern’ rifles the ‘Abyssinians’ subdued and occupied the southern region that live in a simple, on small socio-politically independent units. These kingdoms never fell under any sovereign rule.⁴⁴ At the end they summarized writings about the conquest of the south particularly the kingdom of Kaffa as subjugation.

Contrary to what have been said earlier, the author found a group of writings that considered Menilek’s expansion to the south as a kind of ‘military-feudal-colonization’. Addis Hiwot (1975)

⁴⁰ Pankhurst, “The Ethiopian Slave Trade ...”; “Trade of South and Western Ethiopian ...”; *Economic ...*, pp.447-449.

⁴¹ Perham pp. 315-322

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Lewis, pp.19-45; Lange,214-216

⁴⁴ Ibid

argued that Ethiopia had been created by incorporating one principality after another. Addis Hiwot put it as "... series of conquest and incorporation that made up the expansion of the Shoan feudal principality saw the apogee in the creation and consolidation of the empire-state between the 1880's and the 1930's."⁴⁵ Hence, the series of conquest became swift and reached its zenith during the time of emperor Menilek and the present-day Ethiopian empire-state created as a result of Menilek's expansion to the southern part of the country.

In his book, Addis Hiwot characterized the Horn of Africa as a region of contention between the 'military-feudal-colonization' of 'Abyssinia' and the 'capitalist colonization' of European powers by comparing it with the other part of Africa in the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ It was in this contention that emperor Menilek incorporated and annexed the southern part of the country to create the Ethiopian empire-state.⁵⁵

Similar to Addis Hiwot, Bonny K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa came up with a more 'Marxist' argument about emperor Menilek's expansion to the south. They called this 'historic process' as a 'dependent colonialism'.⁴⁷ Although they overemphasized and 'invent' a new kind of history toward Menilek's expansionist policy, Holcomb and Sisai, in their book, came up with a new thesis on this 'historic process'. They explain that 'Ethiopia' [they preferred to call it 'Abyssinia'] with the help of Imperialist European powers, who were in rivalry in the Horn of Africa, blessed the Abyssinian southward 'colonization'.⁴⁸ So that emperor Menilek would be able to 'colonize' many areas in the south, including the kingdom of Kaffa, in order to create 'Greater Ethiopia'.⁵⁸

In the book, Holcomb and Sisai described 'Ethiopia' as a 'dependent colonial' empire. In the third unit of the book, they dictated the 'birth of a dependent colonial state of Ethiopia' where they justified the high dependence of the country on European powers. In the unit, they wrote about the 'Marxist philosophy' and 'natures of colonization'. Even they tried to convince it by presenting

⁴⁵ Addis Hiwot pp. 1-5

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Holcomb and Sisai, pp. 71-144.

⁴⁸ See Bahiru, "A Century of Ethiopian Historiography", in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, 2002. For further assessment about this book

‘supportive’ theory and characteristic features of colonialism⁴⁹ and a number of ‘maps’.⁵⁰ In the author’s perception, both the ‘theories’ and ‘maps’ are incompatible with the subject that they intended to deal with.

Based on what they intended to state in their account, it is possible to generalize that Holcomb and Sisai were in a position to ‘create’ new history rather than writing the ‘actual truth’. This is because they conceptualized their approach as a kind of ‘interpretation’.⁵¹ Holcomb and Sisai wrote: “...our approach is to examine the empire through analytical discussions.... This is not a work of history, though history is a significant part of it, nor is it a work of theory, though the theory is a central concern. It is our interpretation”.⁵²

From this ‘methodology’, one may ask what it means. What do the authors intend to interpret, History or theory? And how? How much they are ‘ethically’ free from their personal ‘orientation’? Holcomb and Sisai used the term ‘interpretation’ erroneously. As Ivo Streker said in the shadow of ‘interpretation’ the authors ineptly explained the actual truth in the study of history.⁵³ At the end of the book, the more than fourteen pages of bibliographies show the entire dependency of the book on secondary sources, which hardly gave due attention to primary sources. It may, or may not, be due to a lack of open access to such materials. Therefore, in the researcher’s perception, it

⁴⁹ Holcomb and Sisai, see page 19 The Specific characteristics of colonialism that transcend the particular era in which the colonization takes place are: -

1. settlement of aliens on territory originally in the position of distinct nation or nationality.
2. the reliance on extremely derived resource, personnel and idea to administer the occupied area and to control its inhabitants.
3. the use or redirection of indigenous labor and the extraction of surplus from the conquered to serve and determined by conquering people.
4. the suppression of the organization and cultural life of indigenous people.
5. assimilation program conducted to enable selected ingenious personnel to blunt opposition to import rule and eventually to function in the apparatus of administration.
6. heavy militarism of the settler group for the enforcement of newly introduced mechanism for administration of the region.
7. harsh suppression of the resistance encountered from local inhabitants.
8. development reliance upon an elaborated ideological justification of the occupation for uses both internally and externally. (Holcomb and Sisai. P.19.)

⁵⁰ See Holcomb and Sisai, pp.72-73 where you found seventeen –page distinct ‘imaginary’ maps

⁵¹ Ibid p.3

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ivo Striker, “Glories and Agonies of the Ethiopian Past” *Social Anthropology*, (Vol.2, No.3, 1994), pp.303-312.

is difficult to reconstruct people's past by entire dependency on pertinent written sources. This might be the Rankian⁵⁴ orientation of the authors, probably.

Similar to Addis's and Holcomb and Sisai's interpretations of emperor Menilek's 'colonial' policy, Getahun (1974) in his unpublished history Ph.D. dissertation conceived this historic process as a 'flagrant, imperial conquest and consolidation, not unification let alone reunification.'⁵⁵ He called *Habasha* for people of the northern provinces and non-*Habasha* Ethiopia for the people of Oromo, Sidama, Afar, etc. Even, he gave his own justifications that the conquered and occupied area by emperor Menilek originally were not the homeland of the Christians and the non-*Habasha* lands had never been under the rule of *Habasha* before Menilek's time including the kingdom of Kaffa.⁵⁶

II. Economic Intension

The second motive of Menilek's conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa in 1897 was economy. Many scholars interpreted this expansion in different way in Ethiopian historiography. However, the dominant themes are tribute appropriations, trade and famine.

Some scholars attributed Menilek's expansion to the south in general, and the conquest of Kaffa in particular with a collection of annual tribute. As Marcus (1966, 1969) states, Emperor Menilek had a huge army that needed 'modern' rifles for war as/ well as accommodation. In order to supply and support such a large army, the emperor required large annual tribute from the newly conquered areas.⁵⁷ Hence, Emperor Menilek opened his eyes to the south, and conquered new areas for tribute appropriations. Even, Perham (1947) and Holcomb and Sisai (1990) dictate about the dependence of the Ethiopian empire state on tax and revenue that levied from the newly conquered areas [Holcomb and Sisai preferred to call 'colonies']⁵⁸ at that time. Thus, Marcus, Perham and Holcomb and Sisai conceived Menilek's conquest of Kaffa in order to collect tax and tribute for the central government.

⁵⁴ Von Ranke

⁵⁵ Getahun, p.127.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Marcus, "Colonialism..."; , "Motives, Methods..."; , The Life and Times....., pp.57-76.

⁵⁸ Holcomb and Sisai, pp.71-156

Contrary to this Pankhurst (1966 and 1968) and Marcus (1975) in their account discoursed the economic motives of Menilek's conquest of Kaffa in order to control the long-distance trade route. In his writings, Pankhurst (1964, 1965 and 1968) explicitly justified that Menilek's expansion was intended to control the rich sources of slaves and other precious commodities of the trade, which were abundant in the south, particularly in the kingdom of Kaffa. However, the conquest brought reorientation of the trade route.⁷¹ Marcus (1975) shares a similar idea with Pankhurst. In his book, Marcus dealt about 'commerce and conquest' in unit III, where he showed the economic importance of the kingdom of Kaffa to the central kingdom. He states that 'the newly conquered area was used as a source of profit and indispensable to the economic life of the country itself'. Hence, the kingdom of Kaffa as a source of goods and the origin of long-distance trade attracted the covetous eyes of emperor Menilek II during his expansion.

Still, other historians conceived Menilek's Expansion to the southern part of the country, particularly the conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa as a response to the Great Ethiopian Famine, *Kifu Qen*, (1888-1892).⁵⁹ The famine exhausted the economic power of the emperor. Pankhurst, in his various articles and monographs state about the effect of the famine which brought cannibalism in the northern part of the country.⁶⁰ To alleviate this crisis emperor Menilek II and his army rushed out to the south including the kingdom of Kaffa, where he settled his 'hungry men'. Similarly, Perham (1947) accounted it as to open up fresh ground to quarter his hungry men to the conquered lands.⁶¹ In connection with this, Getahun, in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, argues that the cholera epidemic, which aggravated Menilek's 'colonization' in the south, particularly the kingdom of Kaffa, increased the causality of the famine.⁶²

Marcus (1969) expounds on this expansion as a large-scale population movement of northern Christian, Semitic speakers to the 'pagan' and Muslim people of the south. It was as a result of typhus and dysentery epidemic attacks on both the animal and men that followed the Great

⁵⁹ Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian..."

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Perham pp. 161-162

⁶² Getahun pp.105-109

Ethiopian Famine (1888-1892). According Marcus, this movement was not only a result of famine but also due to overpopulation and over farming of the northern area.⁶³

The Course of war

After the battle of Adwa (1896), emperor Menilek II ordered his large and well-equipped army under the leadership of *Ras WoldeGiorgis* to conquer the kingdom of Kaffa in 1897.⁶⁴ According to Marcus (1966,1969,1975), *Ras WoldeGiorgis* mobilized 31,000 armies of which 20,000 armed with ‘modern’ rifles over 300 obsolete fire-arm of *Tato Gaki Serecho*.⁶⁵ However, the war became fierce and lasted after eight months until *Tato Gaki Serecho* surrendered. In other words, Marcus perceived the Menilek’s conquest of Kaffa as a result of his military might. But Marcus did not explain about the war and the place where Gaki Serecho surrendered. Another incompleteness of the book is that Marcus gave more emphasis for Ethiopian rulers rather than the newly conquered states and societies. Moreover, he failed to acknowledge the reason behind Kaffa’s resistance to the ‘invading’ Menilek’s army.

As oppose to Marcus, Herbert Lewis (1965), Bahru (1991) and Perham (1947) justified the defeat of Kaffa not through Menilek’s military might rather his mobilization of the surrounding kingdoms like the kingdoms of [Dawro] Konta, Jimma, and Wollaga against the kingdom of Kaffa. With a different interpretation of the society in Kaffa, Lange (1982) and Orent (1969) explicitly defended Kaffa’s resistance during the time of the war. They argued that the indigenous religion mobilized all adults of Kaffa against the ‘invading’ army.⁶⁶ According to Pankhurst (1966, 1968), Kaffa’s economy dependent on trade a great role for the war.⁶⁷ Most of other sources narrated about the effective use of Kaffa her natural defense against the enemy that made the war fiercer and bloody that lasted for more than nine months and cost many lives and resources up until the Kafa king submit Menelik’s army in 1897.⁶⁸

⁶³ Marcus, “Motives...”

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Marcus, *The Life...*, p.185.

⁶⁶ Lewis, p.45-47; Lange, p.82; Perham, pp. 318-319

⁶⁷ Pankhurst, “Slave Trade....”, *Economic....*, pp.447-448.

⁶⁸ H. Darly, *Slave and Ivory in Abyssinia*, (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), p.33; G.Huntugford, *The (Oromo) Ethiopia : The Kingdom of Kaffa and (Yam)*, (London: Lowe & Brydon (Press)ltd.,1969), pp.119-127.

The Consequences of the war

According to most of the sources consulted for this survey, Menilek's conquest of Kaffa had devastating effects on society at large. At the time of the war, Marcus (1969, 1975) and Pankhurst (1968) argued that this conquest led to the depopulation of Kaffa. It was explained differently by Perham (1947), Orent (1969), and Lange (1982). They stated that as the population bravely resisted the 'invading' army Menilek forced to enslave the indigenous people of Kaffa after the conquest. As a result, the population of the kingdom of Kaffa declined by one-third.

The conquest of Kaffa by Emperor Menilek adversely affected the social life of the people. A number of scholars have noted that the indigenous religion of the Kaffa was distracted and Christian proselytizing expanded in the kingdom (Marcus, 1969, 1975, 2002; Lange, 1982; Orent, 1969). In the long run, the central government underwent acculturation and political assimilation. As one of the travelers reported, the conquest brought a change in the style of dressing in ordinary society.

The political assimilation of the central government brought territorial integration of the empire to the surrounding entities. The conquered land with its people became part of the empire and was distributed to the Amhara minority in the newly conquered areas. After the annexation of many territories, Ethiopia got twofold of the former Abyssinia. However, this thesis is highly objected to by Holcomb and Sisai (1990) who conceived Menilek's expansion as 'colonization'. In order to control his 'colonies' effectively, Menilek fortified garrison towns, *Ketemas*, where colonial culture, language, and religion were disseminated.

Economically, the conquest had high repercussions on the Kaffa people and benefited the central government. As Pankhurst (1968:92) stated, the conquest brought a major re-orientation of the trade route to the south by abandoning the north. He also explained the breakdown of the Muslim monopoly of trade in the kingdom and the distraction of major market centers like Bonga. Similarly, the war affected the import of goods into the kingdom. However, Marcus (1975), in Chapter III which deals with 'commerce and conquest' in the time of Menilek, did not explain the effects of Menilek's conquest on the economic life of the ordinary society of Kaffa.

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Conclusions

Emperor Menilek's conquest of the kingdom of Kaffa was part and parcel of his expansionist policy to the southern part of Ethiopia. The conquest brought to an end the independent existence of many kingdoms that were found south of Addis Ababa. Economic exploitation and destruction of the indigenous social and religious institution by an alien Semitic minority was also another outcome of the conquest. Besides to this, there was acculturation and assimilation of 'new' cultures in the newly conquered areas. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that this 'historic process' of the last century as 'military-feudal-colonization', according to Addis Hiwot, though most of the sources disagree. This is because Emperor Menilek's conquest withered away the political, social, economic as well as religious independence and prosperity of the medieval kingdom of Kaffa in 1897. Since then, Kaffa became the part and parcel of the Ethiopian empire to whom the central government appoints governors from the center.

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