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THE RISE OF THE KINGDOM OF SHOA

1813-1889

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Abstract

From the beginning of the 17th century to the middle of the 19th century the Christian Empire of Ethiopia was in decline; the power and prestige of the Emperor were at a low ebb and the provincial governors vied with one another for a dominant position in the Empire. This decline was the combined effect upon the Empire of past wars with her Muslim neighbours, religious civil war and the Galla invasions.

At the provincial level the period was marked by territorial expansion, centralization and consolidation of provincial autonomy. This development achieved varying degrees of success in the different provinces. Probably the highest degree of success was achieved in the Galla-dominated province of Shoa, where a line of Amhara rulers from the district of Manz succeeded in establishing a stable dynasty. Through military prowess and administrative ability the dynasty gradually conquered the surrounding Galla, and by the 1840s had created a powerful kingdom independent of the Emperor. The success of Shoa's development was due partly to the ability of its rulers, partly to the absence of interference from other princes in the Empire, and partly to the political and military weakness of the Galla tribes.

In 1855-6 Emperor Theodros, having revived the imperial authority, conquered Shoa but nine years later Shoa regained her independence. From 1865 to 1889 the relations between Shoa and the revitalized Imperial power became a crucial domestic issue in the Empire. The period also saw Shoa conquer more Galla provinces.

As a result of her expansion there evolved in Shoa a strong centralized administration, and a commercial and military activity, the relative efficiency of which enabled the kingdom to withstand efforts by the Imperial power to conquer it.

In 1889 the King of Shoa became Emperor and thereby re-united the Empire under the Shoan dynasty.

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Preface

My original idea was to write a history of the Galla in Ethiopia; I was not clear in my own mind whether it was to be the Galla of the central plateau or those in the south. Nevertheless, I began to go through the literature on the Galla. After I had seen a fair amount of the literature I decided to write on the rise of Shoa. I was led to this decision by one simple factor. All the general histories on Ethiopia devote considerable space to the reign of Emperor Menelik II and rightly emphasize his contribution to the building of present day Ethiopia. However, very little indeed is said of Menelik before he became Emperor. Invariably he is mentioned as having aspired to the imperial throne, as having been thwarted for some time by the superior strength of Yohannes IV, and as having been a friend of the Italians from whom he obtained firearms. Menelik as King of Shoa is dismissed in a couple of lines. A few periodical articles give some sidelights on the Kingdom of Shoa, but this is always incidental to the main theme of the articles and consequently is useful only as an indication of what might be found. With the exception of two recent studies the general histories on Ethiopia do not say anything about the kingdom over which Menelik ruled, its administration, commercial and military organi-

zation. Yet these are the things one would like to know in order to appreciate more fully the role played by Menelik, not only as Emperor but even more so as King of Shoa, since the few references to him as King of Shoa tend to suggest that even then Menelik was an important figure in the politics of the Empire.

Of the two studies which give some account of Shoa, Levine's work,¹ published towards the end of 1965, is a sociological rather than a historical study of Ethiopia. His account of Shoa covers eight to nine pages of a chapter which deals primarily with the relative legacies of Gondar and Manz to the present day Empire of Ethiopia. In order to be able to assess the legacy of Manz, Levine found himself sketching the outlines of the history of Shoa. All that he could do in that limited space was to trace the rise of the Shoan dynasty. Even so the crucial period from about 1848 to 1889 deserved more than the fourteen lines which the author gives to it.

The only study which deals at some length with the Kingdom of Shoa is Dr. Abir's thesis which is not yet published.²

¹Levine, D.N: Wax and Gold, Chicago and London 1965.

²Abir, M.: Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region 1830-55. London Ph.D. 1964.

In a chapter of some sixty pages the author has written a political and commercial history of modern Shoa up to about 1855. Indeed his thesis is the only existing study which gives a coherent account of some of the provinces which now constitute the Empire during the first half of the nineteenth century. The major limitations of the work are pointed out in the preface by the author himself. In connection with Shoa, however (and probably with the other chapters too) it should be noted that, being a pioneer in the field, Dr. Abir has tended, not unnaturally, to accept some facts which seem to me to be questionable. Moreover, interesting as the study is, it really ends with the death of Sahla Selassie in 1847, for the reign of Haile Malakot, the successor of Sahla Selassie, is dismissed in a couple of lines.

The present study, which attempts to give a coherent and detailed history of Shoa up to 1889, has been undertaken with a view to providing that background which seems to me to be indispensable to a proper understanding of the succession of Menelik to the imperial throne in 1889, and of the often emphasized role which he, as Emperor, played in the Empire.

The sources which I have used for this study can be grouped into two broad categories: first, traditional Ethiopian and,

secondly, official archival as well as published material, British, French and Italian. For convenience in discussing the second group of sources we shall sub-divide them into the different nationalities and consider them under those headings.

The traditional Ethiopian sources consist of chronicles of the reigns of the Emperors Theodros and Menelik. Of these the chronicle of the reign of Theodros which is believed to have been written by Alaka Zanab is incomplete and goes only as far as about 1860. Although it contains an outline of the history of the Empire from about 1800 and is fairly detailed on Theodros's early life and rise to power, it is sketchy, even for a chronicle, on events in Shoa. On the other hand, the chronicle of the same Emperor written by a Shoan cleric, Alaka Walda Maryam, is complete and more detailed. This chronicle is the only source I could find which treats the period 1855 to 1865 in any detail. Thus my account of that period has tended to be heavily dependent on this chronicle. The author, being a Shoan eye-witness of the events recorded, one would suspect that the narrative is somewhat biased against Theodros. This suspicion becomes greater when it is remembered that the chronicle was written thirteen years after the death of Theodros, at a time when a Shoan was likely to extol and over-emphasize the role played by "Shoans" during the period

covered by the chronicle. For example, Walda Maryam writes with emotions about executions inflicted by Theodros on his soldiers who attempted to revolt while they were in Shoa, as if execution for a similar offence was completely unknown in the history of Shoa. On the whole, however, Walda Maryam is fair to Theodros. He records in some detail both the wicked and commendable actions of the Emperor and the occasional eulogies so characteristic of Ethiopian royal chronicles are not wanting.

The third chronicle consulted for this study is that of the reign of Menelik written by Guebre sellasié. The author was the Emperor's Minister of the Pen and therefore the chronicle may be regarded as the official account of the reign. Although sketchy, as is to be expected, on the early rulers of Shoa, it is extremely detailed for the reign of Menelik both as King of Shoa and as Emperor. It is to the credit of the author that much of his account, especially from 1876 onwards, is confirmed not only in the essentials but sometimes also in the minor details in the despatches sent to Europe by the Europeans who were then in the country.

Of the European archival material the British had a limited value for my purposes. This is because British source material

on Shoa is limited to the period 1839-43, with a few odd despatches referring to the years 1848-50, and 1868-71. The voluminous reports on the Afar and Somali coasts in the 1880s are of only peripheral importance for the purpose of this study. The material which deals with the period 1839-43 is made up of reports, partly by the protestant missionary Krapf, and partly by the Harris Mission, which arrived in Shoa in July 1841 and left in February 1843. Krapf came to Shoa after he and his companion Isenberg had been expelled from Tigre by Ubie the ruler of that province. Their reasons for coming to Shoa may have been purely evangelical, but Krapf's letters from that Kingdom reflect a conviction, probably as a result of his experience in Tigre, that his missionary activities would be doomed to failure unless it was linked up with British commercial and colonial enterprise. For this reason he was anxious to lead the British government on to acquire an influence in Shoa. Krapf's information about the strength and resources of Shoa, therefore, are not always accurate. His anxiety to interest the British in Shoa led him to exaggerate the danger offered by the French. One tends to suspect that the ambitious project which Krapf attributes to the Frenchman Rochet d'Héricourt,¹ who was then in Shoa, was designed to achieve

¹Unreservedly accepted as a fact by Ullendorff and Beckingham in their article "The first Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty", Journal of Semitic Studies, Vol. IX, No. 1 Spring 1964.

his object of persuading the British government to send a permanent mission to Shoa. One's suspicion is strengthened by the awareness that Rochet himself does not speak of his projects in Shoa in such grandiose terms. Yet one would have expected him to speak in high terms about his plans in the letters and reports which he sent to the French government ministries if only to win official backing. One does not get the full weight of Krapf's ideas from his published works; his most telling reports are in the archives.

The official reports, articles and books written by Harris and members of his mission provide much of what we know of Shoa during the reign of Sahla Selassie. The bulk of the official reports was written by Harris in his capacity as the leader of the mission, yet for the most part, Harris lived in Ankober and could hardly have acquired all the information himself. One concludes therefore that Harris obtained his information partly from other members of his mission, partly from the English traveller Dr. Beke who was also in Shoa at this time and partly from Krapf. A careful comparison of the "medical report" by Kirk,¹ of the report on Aliu Amba by Barker,² of the report on

¹LG 205 No. 1453.

²LG 185 No. 1440.

agriculture by Graham³ and of Beke's letters with the reports of Harris makes this clear. It is a pity that Harris does not acknowledge openly the part played by others in providing information for his reports. Although in general the men who furnished the material for Harris were careful and reliable observers Harris himself had an inordinate tendency to exaggeration. There is little doubt that the nature of his mission influenced the contents of his reports. Nevertheless, when all reservations are made, one has to admit that the information furnished by Krapf and members of the Harris Mission constitute a very valuable source material for our knowledge about Shoa in the 1840s.

The French archival sources span a longer period than the British sources. Besides the material on the 1840s, there is also material which begins from about 1874 and which continues to flow, though not without some interruption, throughout the period covered in this study. The French material which I found useful is to be found partly in the Bibliothèque Nationale but mainly in the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. There are also a few letters in the Archives Nationales. The material in the Bibliothèque Nationale is made up entirely

of the "d'Abbadie Papers". I should explain what is contained in these papers. The d'Abbadie Papers consist of about twenty-seven volumes, most of which deal with Ethiopia but some contain private papers of the d'Abbadie family. Of those dealing with Ethiopia the bulk is made up of notes, personal observations and oral information collected by Antoine d'Abbadie during his travels in Ethiopia. The rest consists of correspondence between Antoine d'Abbadie and various people such as the Prefects of Propaganda Fide and the Catholic missionaries, Massaia, Taurin Cahagne and others; all this correspondence deals with Ethiopia. It was these letters which were useful to me; the oral information and personal observations written down by d'Abbadie himself during his Ethiopian travels were hardly of interest to this study. In this connection it should be remembered that, although they travelled widely in Ethiopia, neither of the d'Abbadie brothers visited Shoa, so that all that they were able to write about Shoa was derived from Muslim merchants whom they met in other parts of Ethiopia. In many cases I found this type of information inaccurate. As regards the Missionaries in Shoa and the Galla country who were in regular touch with d'Abbadie, it should be noted that they were in general men of limited intelligence whose attitude and reports were often influenced

by religious sentimentalism.

At the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères I would like to draw attention particularly to the series Mémoires et Documents. Other series like 'Consulaire et Commercial' and 'Correspondance politique des Consuls', the section for Massawa, which is catalogued under Egypt, contain interesting information on Ethiopia generally but these were not of much direct help to me. In the M. & D. series we may note first a memorandum by Rochet d'Héricourt on the politics and commerce of Shoa. Rochet is often referred to by writers on Ethiopia as a French agent; no doubt this reflects the tone of Krapf. Rochet was in early 1840s no more a French agent than Henry Salt was **a British agent**. We need to distinguish between the Rochet who in the first half of the 1840s was an adventurer, a commercial speculator, and the Rochet who in 1846 was sent on a mission by the French government to northern Ethiopia and later was appointed French Consul at Jedda. Rochet's later career depended on his knowledge of the area and not on the fact that in the early 1840s he was an agent for the French government. That Rochet had no contact in French official circles during his visits to Shoa, is indicated by his inability to secure even an official encouragement for the trade he planned to follow in Shoa. The second thing we may note in

the M. & D. series is the extracts from the journal kept by Arnoux while he was in Shoa, and the letters he wrote in an effort to win official support for his commercial enterprise. It is regrettable that the full journal is not available, for although one detects a certain overlay in Arnoux's letters, the entries in the journal regarding events which he witnessed in Shoa bear the stamp of authenticity.

We may now mention the journals of Soleillet and Borelli detailing their travels in Shoa, and the articles written by Aubry and Audon and other French travellers who visited Shoa during the period covered by this study. Borelli is probably the most reliable of our French sources. Practically all the Frenchmen who visited Shoa during the reign of Menelik were in one way or another interested in opening up commercial links between Shoa and the French port of Obock on the Somali coast. Borelli unlike all the others was purely an explorer seeking geographical information. Thus he had no particular reason not to record the non-geographical information which came his way as faithfully as he could, and one would like to think that this is what Borelli did.

The fourth category of sources which I have made use of for this study is the Italian archival and printed primary material. We need to distinguish three separate archives here.

First, the archives of Propaganda Fide where are to be found, at least up to 1892, the letters and reports written by members of the Catholic mission to the Galla. The material covering the period after 1892 has been transferred to the Vatican archives. Secondly, there are the historical archives of the Italian Geographical Society. It is here that are kept the original despatches from the members of the geographical expedition led by Marquis Antinori, which was intended to go to the equatorial lakes but which came to be based in Shoa. Some of these despatches were published either partly or wholly in the bulletins of the geographical society but others have remained unpublished. Thirdly, the archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The material which I found useful here are those which originally belonged to the now dissolved Italian Ministry for Africa and which are kept as part of the MAEI.¹ archives. This material is labelled ASMAI¹ in the archives. Some of this material was published in the Italian government Green Books. It should be noted, however, that in a number of cases only extracts from the original despatches were published in the

¹See Abbreviations.

Green Books, and sometimes the omissions are by no means the least important. The safest way to use the Green Books therefore is to cross-check their contents with the original despatches in the archives.

The quality and reliability of the material in the Propaganda Archives have been indirectly commented upon in connection with the "d'Abbadie papers". Here it is only necessary to emphasize that the writings of Massaia are in many ways a disappointing source. Massaia, it will be recalled, was the head of the mission to the Galla from its inception in 1847 until 1879, when he was expelled from Ethiopia by Emperor Yohannes. For the last eleven years of his evangelical life in Ethiopia, Massaia lived continuously in Shoa. Here was a man who could have furnished us with invaluable information on the first fourteen years or so of Menelik's reign as King of Shoa. True enough, he wrote fairly regularly to the Propaganda but his letters, and also his published twelve volume work detailing his missionary activities,¹ are concerned more with his evangelical work than with politics and other aspects

¹Massaia, G.: I. Miei Trentacinque anni di missione nell' alta Etiopia, Milano 1885-95.

of life in the areas where he worked. That portion of his writings which is of interest to us tends to be sketchy and sometimes confused, and often he saw things only through the eyes of his religion.

In the Geographical Society archives attention should be drawn to the reports sent by Antinori, Ragazzi and Traversi. Although right from the beginning Antinori's mission had commercial as well as political undertones, he remained at heart an explorer whose previous experiences as such and whose scientific mind taught him to report honestly and accurately the information he obtained. As regards Ragazzi and Traversi, it should be remembered that by their time Italy's colonial aspirations had taken a definite turn towards territorial acquisition. Despite the fact that both Ragazzi and Traversi were intelligent, well educated and scientifically trained men they could hardly have written reports as dispassionate as one would have expected of them. Fortunately, however, they both travelled widely in the kingdom and knew at first hand much of the events and facts about which they wrote.

The material in the archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was furnished by various officials not only in Shoa but also in other parts of Ethiopia, and in the Red Sea as

well as the Somali Coast ports. Antonelli stands out prominently among all those officials. From 1882 to 1889 Antonelli was the accredited representative of the Italian Government in Shoa. As such, Antonelli was under instructions from Italy and in most cases his actions in Shoa were carefully guided to suit the policy of his government. An interesting example of this is found in the way Antonelli dealt with Menelik's searching questions about the Italian occupation of Massawa in 1885. Naturally therefore one needs to scrutinize Antonelli's reports. The need for caution becomes greater if those reports are used as source material for diplomatic history. Nevertheless, in a sense, the fact that Antonelli was an official government representative is a great help to us, for he was thus obliged to collect as accurate and as detailed information as could be obtained on all aspects of Shoaan life on which the Italian Government could base its policy. In an effort to do this Antonelli travelled extensively in the Kingdom, accompanied Menelik to a few meetings with the Emperor Yohannes and followed the King on a number of campaigns. In this way Antonelli acquired a great deal of information about Shoa which he reported, one would like to believe, as accurately as he could. Antonelli himself was a very intelligent and well educated man, a shrewd observer, who seems to me to have

understood clearly Menelik's position in Shoa, especially with regard to the Emperor. I find his analysis of the political pattern in Shoa and his comments on events in general both meticulous and pertinent.

Finally I would like to refer to articles written by Italian travellers and also to Cecchi's invaluable three volume work on his travels in Shoa and in the Galla country. Cecchi, like Borelli, was primarily an explorer interested in scientific and geographical information, and whatever other information he recorded was incidental to his main interest.

Although in this study I have tried to give as coherent and comprehensive account of the Kingdom of Shoa as I could, much more remains to be done before the picture will be complete. The source material I have used is not nearly exhausted. The important question of land tenure, linked as it was with the expansion of Shoa, has only been touched upon. The church and its response to the activities of foreign evangelical missions in Shoa and in the conquered Galla country has not been touched at all and will no doubt serve as an interesting subject for research. Nor have I discussed the histories of the individual Galla Kingdoms or of Harar from the point where Dr. Abir left off. These have not been touched, not because they are uninteresting

in themselves, but because to discuss them as part of this study would have encumbered our main theme with many digressions. Nevertheless, the background to Menelik's imperial reign is, to my surprise, hardly known even to students of Ethiopian history. It is my hope that this study has brought that background to light and thereby has contributed to a better understanding of one of the most fascinating periods in the history of Ethiopia.

This research was made possible by a post-graduate scholarship granted to me by the University of Ghana, for which I am deeply grateful. My thanks also go to Professor Joseph Tubiana who helped me a great deal in Paris and was so kind as to visit me in hospital when I underwent an operation there. Finally, I would like to record my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Roland Oliver, for the encouragement and advice he was always ready to give me.

Abbreviations

Abyssinia Orig. Corresp.	Abyssinia Original Correspondence.
A.N.	Archives Nationales.
ASLR (Various)	Aden Secret Letters Received (Various).
ASMAI	Archivio Storico dell'ex-Ministero d'Africa Italiana.
ASSGI	Archivio Storico della Società Geo- grafica Italiana.
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale.
BSP	Bombay Secret Proceedings.
BSGI	Bolletino della Società Geografica Italiana.
CMR	Church Missionary Register.
CMSA	Church Missionary Society Archives.
CRA	Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia.
FO	Foreign Office.
IOL	India Office Library.
JAH	Journal of African History.
JRGS	Journal of the Royal Geographical Society.
BSKG	Bulletin de la Société Khédiviale de Géographie.
LG	Lantern Gallery.

LV	Libro Verde.
MAE (Paris)	Ministère Des Affaires Etrangères (Paris).
MAE	Ministro degli Affari Esteri.
MAEI	Ministero degli Affari Esteri d'Italia.
M. & D.	Memoires et Documents.
NAF	Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises.
NA	Nuova Antologia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti.
OM	Oriente Moderno.
R.des Deux Mondes	Revue des Deux Mondes.
RSE	Rassegna di Studi Etiopici.
SGI	Società Geografica Italiana.
S R nei Congressi	Scritture Riferite nei Congressi.

Chapter ITHE RISE OF THE DYNASTY

The 16th century marked a turning point in the history of the Empire of Ethiopia. On the one hand, it saw the climax of the medieval empire, extensive, powerful and fairly prosperous. On the other hand, it witnessed a series of events whose culminative effect was to reduce the size of the empire and weaken the Imperial authority to the point of near collapse. These were the war against the Muslims of the lowland regions, the invasion of the Galla, and religious disputes.

Lebna Dengel (1508-40) inherited an empire which extended from the river Baraka and Massawa in the north down to Laka Abaya (Margherita) in the south, and from Zeila on the coast to the Blue Nile in the West. The population of this empire was considerable and included Christians, Pagans and Muslims; despite the religious diversity of its population, the central authority as well as its local institutions was strong and respected. But already, even before 1520, the Empire was threatened with what turned out to be the first of a series of wars and invasions from whose disastrous

effects it could never completely extricate itself until the second half of the 19th century. This was the fifteen years of continuous warfare with the Muslims of Adal led by Ahmad Gran.

First established at Massawa about the 8th century the Muslims gradually expanded towards the Ethiopian plateau and by 1300 the majority of the people inhabiting the lowlands between the sea and the eastern Ethiopian plateau were Muslims,¹ and the Muslim state of Ifat had been established high up the Hawash valley on the eastern frontier of the province of Shoa. By about 1400 a number of Muslim states - Hadya, Fatajar, Ifat, Dawaro and Bali had been established to the east and south of the Ethiopian Massif.² In the 1320s the Christian empire and the Muslims came to open hostility; this turned out to be the beginning of a long conflict which continued into the 16th century. The struggle which broke out in the reign of Lebna Dengel must, therefore, be regarded as a continuation of this conflict. In 1516 Lebna Dengel defeated and killed the Emir

¹J. S. Trimingham: Islam in Ethiopia, (Oxford, 1962), p. 46.

²Trimingham: op.cit., pp. 62-3.

of Harar when the latter attacked Fatajar, which was one of the Muslim dependants of the Christian Empire. The Muslims, however, re-organised and led by Ahmad Gran, re-opened the struggle in 1527. Hitherto the Christians had been generally victorious but now the tide turned against them. This was due largely to the improved fire-power of the Muslims. Their proximity to the sea and their religious link with the Islamic world enabled the Muslims to import firearms from Arabia where firearms had been introduced about 1515 as a result of the expansion of the Turks. In the ensuing struggle the Muslims swept all before them and the Christian Empire was saved from a possible total extinction. by the arrival on the scene of some four hundred and fifty well armed Portuguese soldiers. The Portuguese had been sent from Portuguese India in response to an appeal for help which the Emperor Lebna Dengal had made to the King of Portugal. The effect of one and a half decades of continued defeat on the Christian Empire can hardly be over-emphasised. Among other things defeat weakened the power and prestige of the Imperial authority.

Lebna Dengel died in 1540, two years before the wars came to an end; although his immediate successor, Galawdewos

(1540-1559) and Sartsa Dengel (1563-97) did much to repair the material and moral damage caused by the wars, the Empire was now on the decline. The period 1603-1632 was marked by religious feuds resulting in civil wars which weakened still further the Imperial authority.

The participation of the Portuguese soldiers in the wars with the Muslims drew the attention of the Society of the Jesuits to Ethiopia, and Jesuit missionaries were sent into the country to win it to the Roman Catholic fold. Ethiopia which had been converted to Christianity in the 4th century had adopted the Monophysite doctrine very early in its religious history. The favours shown by the Emperor Za Dengal (1603-04) to the Jesuit missionary Pero Pais who reached Ethiopia in 1603 led to rebellions in which the Emperor was killed and which brought Susneyos to the throne (1607). However, Pais soon succeeded in converting Susneyos also to the Roman Catholic faith. The Emperor urged on, no doubt, by Affonso Mendes, the successor of Pais, issued a number of edicts prohibiting the age-old practices of the Ethiopian Church. These prohibitions drove the people to arms in defence of the religion of their fathers and the reign of Susneyos (1607-32) was thus consumed by religious civil wars.

Although the prohibited practices of the Ethiopian Church were restored in 1632 and the Jesuits subsequently expelled from the country by the successor of Susneyos, the civil wars of the period 1603-32 contributed to the weakness of the central authority and made its hold on the provinces tenuous.

The Empire was now in no position to offer effective resistance to any serious attack from outside; yet it was during the period from the 1530s onwards that whatever unity the Empire possessed was threatened with dissolution by migrations of the Galla. A detailed study of the role of the Galla in the domestic politics of the Empire of Ethiopia is yet to appear; what seems certain, however, is that the Galla migrations had far-reaching consequences on the Christian Empire. The Galla took possession of all the southern provinces of the medieval empire and the Wallo, Raya and Yajju tribes pushed on to settle on the central plateau. The effect of these migrations was two-fold. First, the Galla robbed the Empire of its southern provinces; secondly, the entry of the Galla tribes of the central plateau into the Imperial court at Gandar and into the politics of the empire in the 17th and 18th centuries accentuated the weakened position of the Imperial

power. Thus it was made even more difficult for the Imperial authority to conquer the invaders and re-establish its control over the Galla conquered southern provinces. The task of re-conquering the southern provinces therefore fell on a line of rulers which established itself in one of the mountain strongholds of Manz in the southern province of Shoa.

When the wars with the Muslims broke out the Galla appear to have been a loosely knit confederation of tribes occupying the valleys of the Webi and Juba rivers and extending westwards beyond Lake Abaya (Margherita) in the south of present day Ethiopia. About 1500 the expansion of the Isaq and Darod tribes of the Somali is thought to have driven them to advance northwards into Ethiopia¹ where effective resistance was offered by neither the Muslims nor the Christians both of whom had been weakened by the wars of Gran. The advance of the Galla was therefore rapid. After defeating the Emperor's army the invaders occupied Bali, Dawaro (1545-47) and Fatajar. For reasons already given, the strong initial resistance offered by the Emperor Galawdewos in 1554-5 could

¹Trimingham: op.cit., p.93.

not be followed up in the succeeding reigns, and the Galla swept forward over the Sidama states into Shoa and pushed on to the central plateau. By 1563 a third of the Empire had been overrun and by the opening of the 17th century, in spite of the military campaigns conducted by the Emperor Sartsa Dengal (1563-98) the effective frontiers of the Empire were limited to the Abay river with Galla groups established on the eastern spurs of the plateau.¹

The first time the Galla played any role in the politics of the court was in the first decade of the 17th century when Susneyos, who had lived for sometime among the Borana Galla, recruited an army of the Galla to fight his way to the Imperial throne. In the religious civil wars which distracted his reign he relied, no doubt, on his Galla army to maintain his position. It was, however, not until the second half of the 18th century that the Galla played a vital, and as it turned out for the Emperors, a disastrous role in the domestic politics of the Empire.

As a result of the Gran wars of the 16th century and the religious struggle of the 17th century the tendency towards

¹Trimingham: op.cit., p.94.

regional separatism and provincial independence had been sharpened. The assassination of the Emperor Iyasu I (1682-1706) ushered in a long series of royal murders and palace revolts whose effects could only be ruinous to what unity and strength now remained to the Empire. Upon the advice of his mother, the Empress Mentuab, the Emperor Iyasu II (1730-50) married the daughter of a Wallo Galla chief, probably in the hope of gaining, in the Wallo, allies against the separatist tendencies of the traditional chiefs. That this step was miscalculated was proved by subsequent events. On the death of Iyasu II in 1750 he was succeeded by Iyoas, his half-Galla son, a minor, whose Galla mother acted as the regent. As was to be expected, the regent depended on her Galla relatives for her government appointing Gallas to posts not only in the provinces but also at the court, and the "emperor became little more than a Galla puppet". The Galla ascendancy alienated the traditional Amhara ruling classes; and this accentuated the hostility of the Amhara nobles towards the Imperial court and hardened regional autonomy. The next one hundred years were consumed in bitter and bloody civil wars in which the Imperial authority sank to its nadir.

In the foregoing pages the main factors which affected the course of Ethiopian history between the 15th century and

the middle of the 19th century have been outlined briefly. This story is given a fuller treatment in most general historical works on the Empire of Ethiopia. However, hardly any attention has been paid to its constitutional undertones. Yet, the history of the period from about 1750 to the accession of Menelik II to the Imperial throne in 1889 makes it clear that the events outlined above had a constitutional significance. Since the present study is not directly concerned with the events just sketched a detailed treatment of the constitutional aspect cannot be attempted. Nevertheless, a few of the relevant points will be indicated in order to place the subject of this thesis in a proper perspective.

Viewed from the constitutional standpoint the history of Ethiopia from the 16th century to the accession of Menelik II presents a picture of a struggle for power between the central Imperial authority on the one hand and the traditional nobility on the other hand. A closer examination of the facts reveals changes in the pattern of alliances. During the wars between the Christian Empire and the Muslims of Adal the Imperial authority found allies in most of the traditional nobles who saw their Christian heritage threatened. During the re-

ligious civil wars, however, the Imperial power, inclined to support the cause of a "foreign brand" of Christianity, found itself opposed by the traditional leaders of the people who had been its pillar of strength in the conflict with the Muslims. Weakened by the wars against the Muslims, exhausted by the resistance to the Galla penetration and now the ranks of its traditional supporters thinned by religious disputes, the central authority fell on the newer elements in the society, the Galla, for support. This action introduced a more delicate issue into the struggle for it raised, more pointedly than before, the question of the traditional role and privileges of the Amhara princes in the government of the Empire. At this point the constitutional undertones of the previous struggles assume a clearer shape. And the history of the period from the reign of Iyasu II (1730-50) to the accession of Menelik II is first and foremost a constitutional history.

For the most part the nobles appear to have had the upper hand and provincialism got the better of Imperial centralization, but it is clear from Bruce's account that the Imperial authority did not concede defeat and struggled on to reassert its power and prestige. It was not until the middle of the 19th century, however, that the accession of a man of unusual military talents to the Imperial throne brought some success to the

central authority in its struggle against the provinces. Whatever may be said of his origins and claims to the Imperial throne, Theodros II brought vitality to the central authority after a century of decadence. His campaigns against the provincial nobility - his defeat of Birru and his son Birru Goshu of Godjam, of Ras Ali the ruler of Gondar and Amhara, of Ras Ubie of Tigre, and his conquest of Shoa - must all be seen as a continuation of the constitutional struggle, with the balance now in favour of the central authority. The upward trend of the fortunes of the Imperial power continued during the reign of Yohannes IV, and with the accession of Menelik II to the Imperial throne in 1889 the seal could be said to have been put on the victory of Imperial centralization over provincial independence.

The struggle between the central authority and the provincial rulers which dominated the national history of the Ethiopian Empire from about 1750 onwards, may be said to have been a magnification of the struggle which went on at the provincial level. In the provinces, an almost incessant contest was being fought between the provincial chiefs on the one hand, and the petty chieftains of the various districts or units which constituted the individual provinces. And in the provinces as at the national level, the issue was

one of centralization by the provincial chiefs as against the tendencies of the districts to be independent. This is not surprising for a provincial chief needed to have the whole of his province united behind him before he could confidently enter the constitutional struggle against the Imperial authority and hold his own against other provinces. In the provinces, however, unlike at the national level, it was the central provincial authority which, in general, won the struggle. Within the provinces, therefore, the period of the masafent (of Imperial weakness and provincial autonomy), as the period 1750-1850 has been described, was marked by territorial expansion and centralization by the provincial rulers. This explains the frequency of the inter-district and the inter-provincial wars and the changing frontiers which were so conspicuous a feature of the period. The process of provincial expansion and centralization achieved varying degrees of success in the different provinces. Perhaps the highest degree of success was achieved in the former Imperial province of Shoa which by 1750 had been almost completely occupied by the Galla. It seems clear, in view of what has been said above, that an appreciation of the developments which took place at the provincial level is necessary for an understanding of the history of Ethiopia as a whole.

from about 1750 to the accession of Menelik II. This is the best justification for researching into the history of Shoa, especially since in 1889 Shoa became the centre of a revived imperial authority.

Until about the end of the 16th century Shoa had played an important role in the politics of the Empire of Ethiopia. At the time of the Zagwe usurpation (10th-13th century) Shoa is said to have served as a place of refuge for the sole survivor of the Solomonic dynasty and his descendants; and it was from Shoa that Yekuno Amlak came to be restored to the Imperial throne in 1269. The Shoan towns of Tegulet and Debra Berhan served as centres of government for a number of the Emperors of the restored dynasty, and Debra Libanos was an important religious centre. By the middle of the 17th century, however, together with other southern provinces of the Empire Shoa was overrun by the Galla invaders. The Imperial court which had previously been peripatetic within the southern half of the Empire was transferred to the neighbourhood of Lake Tana by Sartsa Dengel about 1571; and the few Amharan families of Shoa who survived the Galla onslaught took refuge in a mountain stronghold in the district of Manz.¹ The Jesuit Manoel

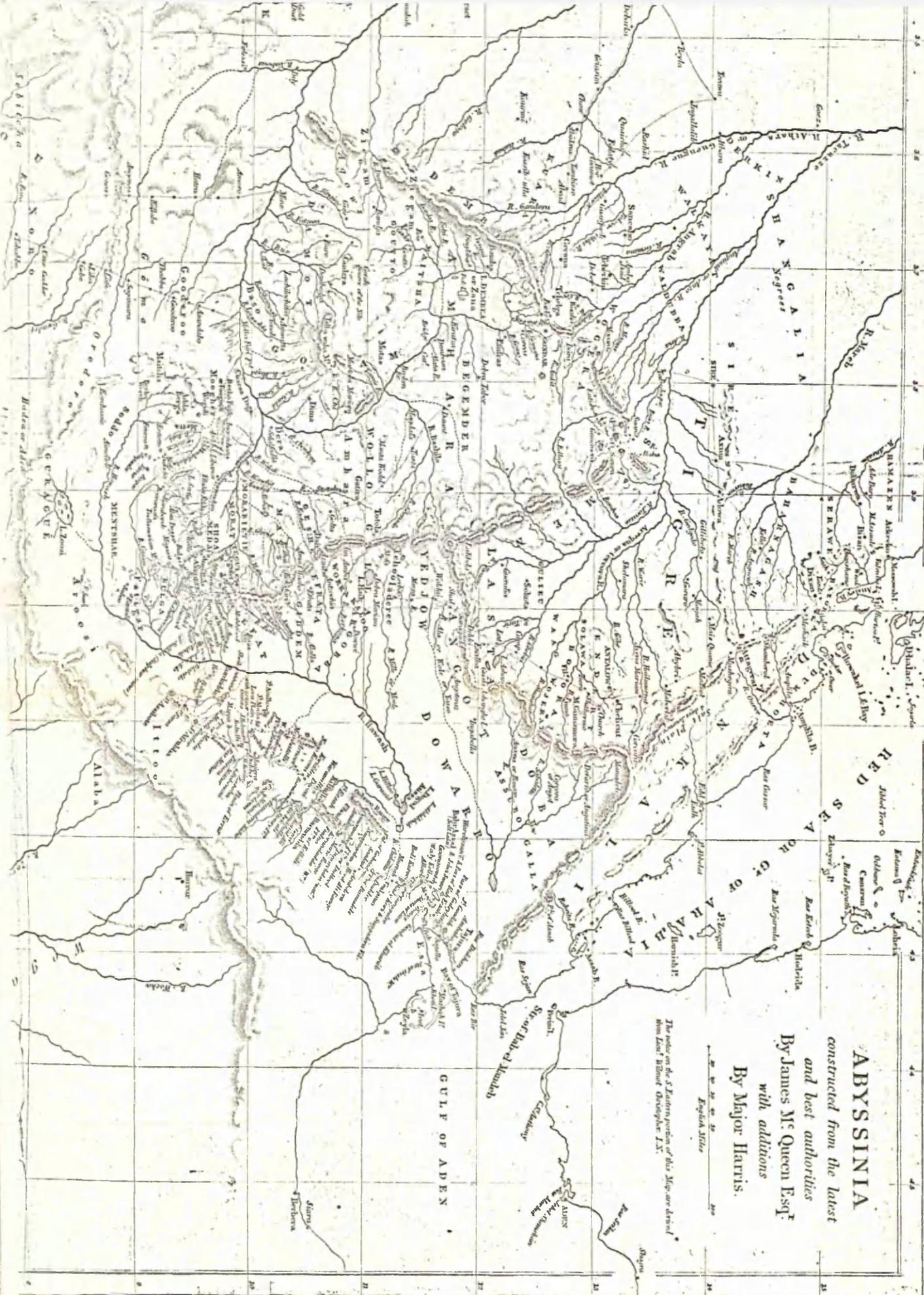
¹Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique du règne de Ménélik II Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie. Edt. Maurice de Coppet. (Paris 1930-32). Vol. I, pp. 62-3. See p. 16 below.

de Almeida who was in Ethiopia from 1624 to 1632, writing about 1628-29 says "... today the Gallas possess the greater part of Xaoa; some villages of Abyssinians still exist on a few ambas".¹ It was from one of these ambas in the district of Manz that the process of development and reconquest of Shoa began.

Among the factors which contributed to the successful development of this process is the geographical position of the district of Manz. Manz lies on a broad plateau about 10,000 feet above sea level and is bounded on all sides by steep mountains.² It was surrounded on all sides by various Galla tribes. In the north Manz was separated from other Christian provinces of the Empire by the Wallo Galla, a brave and fierce tribe who took possession of central Ethiopia at the time of the Galla invasions. The Wallo were divided into a number of independent groups mutually hostile. In the 18th century some of the Wallo groups became involved in the politics

¹Manuele de Almeida: "History of Ethiopia" in Some Records of Ethiopia, trans.: Beckingham and Huntingford. Hakluyt Society 1954. Book I, Chapter 3, p.19.

²D. N. Levine: "On the History and Culture of Manz" in Journal of Semitic Studies, Vol. IX, No. 1. Spring 1964. p. 204, n.1.



ABYSSINIA
*constructed from the latest
 and best authorities*
 By James M^c Queen Esq^r
with additions
 By Major Harris.

English Miles

The notes on the S Eastern portion of this Map are derived from Lieut. Robert O'Connell's J.R.

GULF OF ADEN

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of the court at Gondar and as a result nearly all the Galla tribes on the central plateau were drawn into the long series of civil wars which ensued in the northern Christian provinces. Manz was therefore cut off from the northern theatre of war, and in this isolation the Manzian rulers embarked on a policy of southward expansion which led to the reconquest of the former imperial provinces of Shoa from Galla occupation.

The student who seeks to reconstruct the history of Shoa before the reign of Sahla Selassie comes up against the problem of sources. It may be argued that as far as the possession of a written indigenous language is concerned, Ethiopia has had an advantage over almost all the African states. This is true, and over the centuries there has been an impressive output of literary works in the main Ethiopian languages. Nevertheless, the bulk of this literature is religious in content. Even this may not be as useless to the student of history as is sometimes thought, for non-historical literature has often been found to be an invaluable source material for historical writing. The difficulty here is that of accessibility. So far no systematic effort has been made to catalogue the mass of written material which

exists in the various monasteries, so that we do not know just how much of it will or will not be useful to the historian who is not interested in religious or monastic history. There are, of course, chronicles, but for Shoa in the 18th century the chronicles are of very limited usefulness. There is no chronicle of Shoa known to the present writer which was written in the 18th century. Of the two chronicles consulted extensively for this study, Walda Maryam's history of the reign of the Emperor Theodros was written in 1881 while Guèbrè Sellassié's chronicle of the reign of Menelik II is of a later date still. Both chronicles are very informative on their respective periods but regrettably lacking in detail on the events of the earlier reigns. This, of course, is the general problem of traditional historical material, especially if it is oral or if it is not recorded contemporaneous with the events it describes; the further back in time it gets the less detailed it becomes. In this respect the traditions told by the "Shoans" to the European travellers who visited the kingdom during our period have some slight advantage. Krapf, Rochet d'Héricourt and Harris all visited Shoa between 1839 and 1844 and Massaia, Cecchi and Soleillet between 1868 and 1884. Their accounts, especially those of the earlier travellers, may be said to have been com-

paratively nearer in time to the 18th century events than the chronicles. When it comes to the events witnessed simultaneously by both the Europeans and the Chroniclers, the foreigners may again be said to have written from a more detached, even if not altogether unaffected, position than the Chroniclers.

The first ruler and the founder of what was later to become the dynasty of Shoa was Nagassi Kristos Warada Qal commonly known as Nagassi.¹ Born to a wealthy proprietor² of Agantcha, one of the districts of Manz, Nagassi's valour and skill at arms soon won him many followers and after a series of battles with the neighbouring Amhara families he emerged as the principal chieftain in Manz. Among the chieftains against whom Nagassi fought appear to have been Mama, Lalo and Gera, three renowned warriors whose names are still remembered in Manzian traditions.³ These three chieftains are represented

¹D. N. Levine: Art. cit., p.208.

²A. Cecchi: Da Zeila alle frontiere de Caffa. Roma Tomo I, p. 237. The ancestry of Nagassi is traced by his descendants to the Solomonic dynasty through Yaq'ob, the 4th son of the Emperor Lebna Dengel (1508-40) who is said to have taken refuge in Manz during the Gran wars. One is not sure, however, of the names of the generations which link Nagassi to Yaq'ob. It appears from the accounts given by Harris (III, 7) Rochet (Second Voyage, 241), Krapf (J of I & K, 312) and Cecchi (1,237) that the male ancestors of Nagassi were of Galla stock and that this Solomonic connection is through his female ancestors.

³L. Krapf: Journal of Isenberg and Krapf... (Lond. 1843), p.299. cf. also Levine, Art. cit., p.208 n.l.

as having been appointed by one of the Emperors at Gondar, probably Iyasu I (1682-1706), as governors of different parts of Manz. By his battles Nagassi annexed the sub-divisions of Ajabar and Tarmabar to his native district of Agancha.¹ The paucity of the information available makes it difficult to analyse the purpose behind Nagassi's wars with any degree of confidence. Seen in the context of the contemporary situation in the northern Christian provinces, however, Nagassi's wars would appear to be a struggle for power and prestige in Manz alone; and like his contemporaries in the Christian provinces north of the Wallo Galla, Nagassi took advantage of the weakened position of the Imperial authority. With the successors of Nagassi, however, other factors entered the situation giving to their wars of conquest and expansion a new and nobler purpose. When Nagassi died about 1703 disputes arose as to which of his sons was to succeed to the position of political power which he had built for himself in Manz. In these disputes the Amhara nobles of Manz appear to have taken sides and to have deposed Akawa and installed Dana in his place. Sebastiyé entered the contest and succeeded in defeating his brother Dana

¹Krapf: op.cit., p.32.

and his supporters. Sebastiyé's victory over Dana meant more than a mere overthrow of one claimant by another. More important, it meant the rejection of the claims of the Amhara nobles of Manz to interfere and settle the succession in their own way. This claim has been implicit in their support for Dana against first Akawa and second Sebastiyé. As it turned out the victory of Sebastiyé was of far-reaching constitutional importance for the budding principality. On the one hand, it established the supremacy of the descendants of Nagassi over the other Amhara families in Manz. On the other hand, it made it possible for the inheritance to pass on from father to the son without much succession dispute. One would suspect that this latter result was made possible by the introduction into Manz of the age-old practice of incarcerating the male kinsmen of a reigning prince as a precaution against rebellions and succession disputes. This would remove from the scene all the hostile brothers and uncles of Sebastiyé thereby eliminating the possible legitimate opposition not only to himself but also to the accession of his son. Information collected by travellers in the 19th century indicates that a prince on succeeding to the "throne" immediately imprisoned all his brothers. This weapon of "preventive detention" as an instrument of power in It was the introduction of the budding principality which ensured that the succession passed from father to son. Indeed

by the opening of our period in 1813 the succession was not merely patrilineal but also a primogeniture.

Sebastiye not only maintained but strengthened the position which he inherited from his father. He married Tagunstyan, the daughter of Mama and thereby strengthened his hold over that part of Manz over which Mama had been the overlord. When he died about 1720 his son Abiye was acknowledged by the Manzian Amhara as the ruler of the whole of Manz. A hereditary dynasty was thus gradually emerging which owed its position largely to the valour and military skill of its members.

Abiye inherited both the policy and valour of his predecessors. He completed the conquest of Manz by reducing to complete submission Gole, the grandson of Gera, who had revived his claims to the lands over which his grandfather had exercised power. Abiye's position in Manz was thus stronger than that of his predecessors. By sheer military skill Nagassi and Sebastiye had acquired subjects, built up a considerable reputation and raised their family to a position of great prestige in Manz. Abiye succeeded to this enviable position and he must have felt himself in honour bound not merely to maintain but to extend the area over which his overlordship was accepted and to increase the number of his subjects. In pursuance of this aim, after con-

solidating his position in Manz, Abiye took the title of Maredazmatch¹ and directed his attention against the Galla tribes who had taken possession of the districts surrounding Manz. In his move against the Galla the political weakness and mutual hostility that were so marked a feature of the various Galla groups was doubtless an inducement.

At the time of their migrations the Galla were united by ties of blood and developed principles of political and social life. This sense of unity explains, in part at least, the success with which they overran the southern half of the Empire of Ethiopia. By 1720 the momentum of the migrations had practically come to an end; they had overrun almost half of the medieval empire and were already settling down in their newly-found home. At this point, however, the Galla began to lose the unity which they had so far possessed. The growth of their population and the need to adapt themselves to highland conditions brought their conflicting sectional interests to a head. The Galla, therefore, disintegrated into a number of petty groups, mutually hostile; this mutual hostility between the various Galla groups was a great ad-

¹Basically a military title; literally it means "commander who inspires awe", in practice a commander of reserves and might be equated to a colonel.

vantage to the rising Amhara principality of Manz.

Moving eastward towards the mediæval province of Ifat, Abiye, with a force of Manzian subjects, conquered the district of Harr-Amba and established a military colony there.¹ He died about 1745 fighting the Karaye Galla. In the twenty five years during which he exercised power Abiye consolidated his hold over the whole of Manz and, by leading the Amhara against the Galla, gave the Manzians an increased sense of unity. Abiye had also initiated the policy of forward advance against the Galla; the stage was thus set for the enormous expansion which Manz was to witness in the years which followed.

On the death of Abiye his son Amha Iyasus succeeded as the Maredazmatch of Manz; the Nagassi dynasty was by now so firmly established that the inheritance passed in unbroken succession from father to son for several generations to come. It has been said that the re-unification of Shoa started in

¹W. C. Harris: The Highlands of Aethiopia (Lond. 1844), Vol. III, p.8. Guebrè Sellassie: Chronique... Vol. I, p.58.

the period of Amha Iyasus.¹ This is overlooking some of the facts. It is true that Amha Iyasus was the first since the time of Nagassi to re-conquer a considerable number of districts which had been occupied by the Galla; by so doing he greatly extended the frontiers of his inheritance and went a long way towards the re-unification of Shoa; but the actual origins of the frontal attack against the Galla which finally resulted in the re-unification of Shoa must be seen in Abiye's struggle with the Karaye. It was this struggle which led to the reconquest of Harr-amba from the Galla. The forward advance against the Galla was given impetus during the period of Amha Iyasus. The new maredazmatch imported a number of matchlocks from Gondar which improved his fighting power.

Contact between the rising southern province of Shoa and the Christian provinces north of the Wallo does not appear to have been completely cut off inspite of the confused poli-

¹M. Abir: "Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Regions". London Ph. D. Thesis 1964, p. 356. So far this is the only study on Ethiopia which deals with some of the "lost" provinces of the Empire in the first half of the 19th century. Of the "Amhara" provinces it deals with only Shoa; but it is particularly useful for the five Maca Galla kingdoms which developed in the Gibe-Ona-Didessa region.

tical situation in the northern provinces. Nagassi, the founder of the Shoan dynasty, is said to have gone to the Emperor's court at Gondar, presumably to pay his tribute to the Emperor and to receive at his hands the investiture acknowledging him as the principal chieftain in Manz,¹ and according to tradition he died on his way back from Gondar. Amha Iyasus on coming to power in Manz paid a visit to Gondar, where he was met by the Scottish traveller, James Bruce, in 1771. Bruce referred to Amha Iyasus as the "son of the governor of Shoa" and explained that the Shoan prince "had a commission from his father, governor of Shoa, to detach Gusho, if possible, from his alliance with Powussen". Whatever may have been the purpose of the visit, it is a mistake to describe Amha Iyasus in 1771 as the "son of the governor of Shoa". All the sources are agreed on the fact that Abiye, the father of Amha Iyasus, ruled as "governor of Shoa" for twenty five years from about 1720 and died about 1745. Thus in 1771 when Amha Iyasus visited Gondar he was not an emissary of his father the governor, but was in fact himself the governor. Bruce describes the audience which the

¹Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p. 238. D. N. Levine: art. cit., p.208.

Manzian maredazmatch had with both the Emperor Tekla Haymanot II and Ras Mikael Sehul, governor of Tigre and the dominant personality in the north at the time, and remarks that the Shoan ruler was treated more like an independent and ally sovereign than a vassal. The Scottish traveller thought that Amha Iyasus "brought, in imitation of old times, a tribute to the King (Emperor), as a testimony of the loyalty of the faithful province of Shoa" and "a present in gold" to Ras Michael. He goes on to say that "no words concerning the government of Shoa passed, nor any proclamation relative to the state of the province; and this silence was equal to declaring it independent, as indeed it had been considered as such a long time before".¹ It is possible, however, that what Bruce considered as "tribute" and the "present in gold" were meant to induce both the Emperor and the Ras to furnish Amha Iyasus with matchlocks.

The state of armament in the Christian provinces north of the Wallo Galla was far better than was the case in the rising

¹James Bruce: Travels to discover the source of the Nile, 1790 Edition, Vol. III, pp. 254-6.

province of Shoa. Indeed, but for the weakness of the Imperial authority, their pre-occupation with civil wars and the geographical position of the Wallo Galla, the Emperor or someother of the Christian princes could successfully have interfered with and upset the development which was taking place in Shoa. Until the 16th century lances and shields, bows and arrows were the weapons used by the Ethiopian army. In the 16th century the wars against the Muslims and the Turkish occupation of Massawa (1557) brought about a revolution in armament in Ethiopia. The Muslims, because of their proximity to the sea and their religious links with the Muslim world were able to import firearms from Arabia, where as a result of Turkish expansion firearms had been introduced about 1515. In the first campaign the Muslims are said to have counted among their forces two hundred cavalry men armed with matchlocks.¹ The increasing firepower of the Muslims is reflected in the crushing defeats which they inflicted on the numerically superior forces of the Emperor. The Portuguese soldiers who came to succour the Christians against the Muslims brought,

¹Arab-Faqih quoted in Pankhurst: An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia (Lond. 1961), p.161.

according to Castanhoso, over six hundred matchlocks as well as eight field pieces and one hundred swivel guns.¹ Some or possibly all of these firearms must have been left behind in the country on the termination of the war. Also it was to be expected that on the final defeat of the Muslims some of their firearms would fall into the hands of the Christians as booty. In this way firearms were introduced into Ethiopia. The Turkish occupation of Massawa made possible the importation of firearms from that port; but in the course of time the Turks instituted a blockade aimed against the importation of arms into Ethiopia.² Despite this blockade increasing quantities of firearms continued to reach Ethiopia from the Massawa region "partly as gifts to the Emperor and his governors, partly as contraband and partly as booty captured in encounters with the Turkish raiding parties, no fewer than two hundred muskets being on one occasion acquired in this way."³ The acquisition of firearms in this way appears to have continued

¹Castanhoso quoted in Pankhurst: op.cit., pp. 162-3.

²Beccari quoted in Pankhurst: op.cit., p.163.

³Pankhurst: op.cit., p.165. Also see Pankhurst: "Fire-arms in Ethiopian History (1800-1935)" in Ethiopian Observer, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1962.

into the 19th century. In the second quarter of the 17th century Almeida estimated that the Emperor and his governors had more than one thousand five hundred muskets, adding however, that fewer than six hundred musketeers were found on expeditions and that most of these musketeers were not skilled.¹ By 1771 Bruce estimated that Tigre, the province nearest to Massawa, could muster not less than six thousand matchlocks and that the Emperor's household troops at Gondar counted some two thousand matchlocks among its number.² In June 1809 Nathaniel Pearce described the state of armament in the provinces north of the Wallo Galla: Ras Walda Selassie, the then ruler of Tigre, had some five thousand five hundred matchlocks and his chiefs a further three thousand four hundred; the ruler of Godjam had about five hundred guns; Gugsä of Gondar about four hundred and fifty; Ras Aylo of Lasta about one hundred, and Ras Gabriel of Samien only "a few".³

¹Almeida: "History of Ethiopia" in Beckingham and Huntingford: op.cit., Bk. I, Ch. 18, p.77.

²Bruce: op.cit. (Lond. 1790), Vol. III, p.308.

³N. Pearce: quoted by Pankhurst in Ethiopian Observer, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1962, p.135.

In Shoa, on the other hand, firearms were very scarce in the 18th century and despite the increasing quantities which Sahla Selassie (1813-47) acquired over the years, firearms continued to be relatively scarce until the time of Menelik II (1865-89). Bruce who saw the contingent of Shoan troops which followed Amha Iyasus to Gondar in 1771 described their weapons as consisting of a lance ten feet long and two light javelins.¹ With the matchlocks imported from Gondar, however, Amha Iyasus gained an advantage over his Galla enemies whose weapons are described as consisting of lances or poles sharpened at the end and hardened in the fire, and shields made of bulls' hides which because they were fashioned from a singlefold were liable to warp in the heat or become pliable in wet weather.² In his wars against the Galla, therefore, Amha Iyasus had greater successes than his father.

Amha Iyasus struck first against the Karaye Galla, at whose hands his father had met his death, and quickly subju-

¹Bruce: op.cit., Vol. IV, p.18.

²Ibid., Vol. II, p.220. Also Krapf: Travels Researches and Missionary Labours during Eighteen Years' Residence in East Africa (Lond. 1860), p.74.

gated them. He carried his wars of conquest over the whole of what had been the eastern part of the Imperial province of Shoa as far as the left bank of the river Hawash conquering among others the province of Ankober. Following his father's example, Amha Iyasus established military outposts in the provinces which he re-conquered from the Galla to serve as bases for operations further afield. Thus he founded Astit and Ankober in the province of that name and built churches in both places. On founding the outpost which developed into the town of Ankober, Amha Iyasus made it his official residence/while his family continued to live at his private residence/at Harr-amba.¹ The conquest of the province of Ankober marked an important stage in the rise of Shoa; it brought the Manzian rulers to the centre of the Shoan plateau thus opening the way to the conquest of the provinces to the west and south of the plateau. Having strengthened his hold on the newly acquired provinces, Amha Iyasus turned west and carried war into the plains between Ankober and Debra Berhan, pushing on to establish an outpost in the province of Teguelet. He even made incursions into the province

¹Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 58-9. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.240. Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.8. Ankober continued to be the capital of Shoa until Menelik founded Antoto (Addis Ababa) as a new capital in the 1880s.

of Morabiete but the final conquest of this province was the work of his son and successor Asfa Wassan.

Amha Iyasus died about 1775 having been maredazmatch of Manz for over thirty years; during this period he successfully continued the advance against the Galla which his father had started and greatly extended the frontiers of Manz. The rise of Shoa was fast becoming an accomplished fact.

When Amha Iyasus died, his son Asfa Wassan succeeded him as the maredazmatch of the rising province of Shoa. The new ruler was a true scion of the Nagassi line; he is described in the sources as a warrior of unparalleled skill.¹ His period of rule was marked not only by rapid expansion of Shoa but also by administrative organization. His predecessors had subjugated all the provinces east and south-east of Manz as far as Ankober. Asfa Wassan's conquests were made in the north, north-west and west of Manz. In the north, a little to the east, Asfa Wassan annexed Efrata, the southern part of the stretch of territory which lies between the province of Goddem and the

¹Harris: op.cit., III, p.9. Guèbrè Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.62. Rochet d'Hericourt: Second Voyage sur les Deux Rives de la Mer Rouge... et le royaume de Choa. (Paris 1846) p.243.

Berkona river. In the north-west the southern district of the province of Geshe was subjugated; the northern district of this province appears to have remained in the possession of the Borana or Tuloma Galla until the 1830s when it was annexed, after a number of campaigns by the then governor of the southern district.¹ It is in the west, however, that the greatest addition was made by Asfa Wassan. After strengthening his hold over the Galla who occupied the plain between Ankober and Debra Berhan, and who had been conquered by his father, Asfa Wassan, carried war into the province of Morabiete. Dechen, the ruler of the province, was defeated and Morabiete was annexed as part of Shoa. According to Krapf, Dechen was a descendant of Demetrios, the person who appears in the Chronicle of Iyasu I (1682-1706) as the governor of Morabiete, and probably a contemporary of Nagassi.² The defeat of Tzedoo³ the hereditary ruler of Morat, and the subsequent annexation of

¹Krapf: Journal of Isenberg and Krapf (Lond. 1843), pp. 315, 320. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 240, 242.

²Krapf: Journal cit., p.300. See also Paul Soleillet: Voyages en Ethiopie (Rouen 1886), p.280. I Guidi: "Annales Iyasu I" in Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Roma, Vol. 23.

³Krapf: Journal cit., p.300. This name appears in Harris (III, 36) as Zeddoo and in Cecchi (I, 241) as Todu. For the revolt see below.

his province appear to have followed a rebellion which broke out against Asfa Wassan in his conquered territory and to which Tzedoo gave his support. By these conquests the frontiers of Shoa were greatly extended. In the north-west the frontier touched the south bank of the Adabay river; in the south, by conquering Morat and its southern district, the frontier was brought to the territory of the Awberi Galla within a few miles of the point where Angolala was later to be founded.¹

By the time of Asfa Wassan the founding of towns and building of churches in the districts which were re-conquered from the Galla had become an established policy. Thus Asfa Wassan founded Zella Dengai and built a church which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary.² The churches which were built in the newly-conquered districts were meant to serve a dual purpose; first, to provide for the religious needs of the Christian Amhara who settled in those provinces as troops and colonists; secondly, to facilitate the conversion of the Galla to Christianity. Although there does not seem to have been a systematic policy of converting the Galla to the Ethiopian Church, examples are

¹Soleillet: op.cit., pp. 270-1. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 240-1.

²Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 65-6. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.242.

not found wanting of instances where influential Galla and even a whole group of Galla were converted to Christianity.¹

The rise of Manz and its gradual expansion had reached a stage where its rudimentary administrative system no longer sufficed. Hitherto the administrative burden had been light; it consisted mainly in the maintenance of order and peace in the expanding province, a duty which, because of the limited extent of the province, the maredazmatch could personally perform with the help of his army. With the conquests of Amha Iyasus and Asfa Wassan, however, the size of the province was more than doubled, its population increased, and the number of people who could be recruited into the fighting force of the maredzmatch had correspondingly increased. The maredazmatch could no longer lead the army alone or discharge the semi-civil duty of maintaining law and order in his province single handed. Asfa Wassan clearly understood the situation and accordingly established a more elaborate administrative machinery; it was this which formed the basis for the well-defined administrative set up which was described

¹Krapf: Journal cit., p.300. Haris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.37.

by European travellers who visited Shoa in the reign of Sahla Selassie (1813-47). The "country" was divided into four main provinces, probably Ifat, Ankober, Manz and Morabiete. Each of the provinces was subdivided into a number of districts; for example, the province of Ifat comprised Ifat proper, Geddem and Efrata; Manz maintained its former divisions into Lalomededer, Mamamededer and Geramededer; and the province of Morabiete must have included Geshe to its north and Morat to the south.¹

A governor was appointed to rule each of these districts in the name and on behalf of the maredazmatch. It was the duty of the governors to raise a local army and follow the maredazmatch in his wars of conquest; the governors had also a duty to maintain order in their various districts with the help of the army under their control. No information is offered in the sources as to who were appointed governors and only three of them are mentioned by name, Wassan Sagad, the heir apparent, Marie and Negdi. All three appear to have engaged in rebellions against the maredazmatch which is probably the reason why they were the only ones to be remembered by name. As part of the

¹Soleillet: Voyages, pp. 270-1. J. L. Morié: Histoire de l'Ethiopie (Nubie et Abyssinie) depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours. (Paris 1904), Vol. II, pp. 411-2.

administrative organization, Asfa Wassan issued laws to regulate the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. One of these laws, which appears to have been unpopular, forbade the subjects to manufacture or drink hydromel (a kind of mead), reserving this only to the maredazmatch and at his option to the favourite governors.¹

Hitherto the rise of Shoa had been on the whole smooth and devoid of serious reverses. Abiye indeed fell while fighting the Galla, and it is conceivable that the newly conquered and outlying Galla districts may have revolted from time to time only to be suppressed. In the reign of Asfa Wassan, however, the sources record revolts which are said to have threatened the security of the maredazmatch and the very development which his predecessors had done so much to bring about. Two of the district governors rebelled and assembling the soldiers under their immediate command advanced against the maredazmatch. The cause of the rebellion is not known for certain; probably the rebel governors resented the "despotic laws" which Asfa Wassan had been issuing. Whatever their reasons the rebels must have been urged on by a sense

¹Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.9. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.240. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p.243.

of power and independence which their position as governors gave them, and also by the confidence and the support which they enjoyed of the inhabitants of the districts under their rule. In what is described as a fierce and bloody battle the rebels were defeated and one of the two leaders was killed. The other appears to have escaped to Morat, then independent, where having allied with Tzedoo, the hereditary ruler of that province, he collected fresh forces and resumed the struggle. Again the rebel army was defeated and its leader captured and executed.¹ It was probably at this time that Morat was conquered and annexed to Shoa.

Asfa Wassan was to face another revolt which is said to have been led by his own son and heir apparent, Wassan Saggad. It is not clear from the sources what the object of this revolt was or what must have led the heir apparent to take part in a revolt against his father. Perhaps this revolt, like the first one, was an expression of the resentment of the people, or at least, of the rebels at the stringent laws which Asfa Wassan continued to pass. This revolt was also suppressed and Wassan Saggad was captured and imprisoned. The failure of these re-

¹Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.9. Rochet d'Héricourt: op.cit., p.243. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 241-2. Cecchi gives the names of the rebel governors as Marie and Negdi.

volts left Asfa Wassan more secure and more powerful than before in his provinces; when he died towards the end of 1808, he left to his successor a "country" of considerable extent whose ruler was almost absolute.

On the death of Asfa Wassan his son Wassan Saggad, the one-time rebel, succeeded as the maredazmatch of Shoa. He enjoyed a brief but exceedingly active reign of four and a half years during which he extended the frontiers of his inheritance far beyond the limits bequeathed to him by his father and greatly added to the absolutism of the ruler by enacting laws as despotic as those of his father.¹ Becoming rich and powerful, Wassan Saggad adopted the title of Ras². His marriage with Zenama Warq, the granddaughter of Goli and a descendant of Gera, cemented the bond of unity which linked the dynasty to the Amhara descendants of Gera, the first governor of the Manzian district of Gerameder.³ Already during

¹Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.11.

²Also basically a military title, Rasis the third highest title in Ethiopia after Negusa Nagast (Emperor) and Negus (king).

³Dynastic marriages were an important weapon in the rise of the Nagassi family to power. Sebastiyé, the successor of Nagassi, by his marriage to Tagunstyan, the daughter of Mama, linked the Amhara descendants of Mama, the first governor of

(cont.)

his father's reign Wassan Saggad had shown his valour and military skill, and had played an outstanding part in the conquest of the province of Morabiete. As governor of the border district of Geddem he continuously fought his Yejju Galla neighbours and the result of these campaigns was the annexation of the district of Efrata. In one of these campaigns Wassan Saggad was taken prisoner by the Yejju but was later ransomed.¹

After his accession Wassan Saggad continued his war of conquest, and was to enhance greatly the reputation of the

(cont.) the Manzian district of Mamameder and a contemporary of Nagassi, to the interests of his family. Asfa Wassan married Waizero Attemoch Houno, a lady represented in the sources as a Solomonic princess, but more likely a Manzian Amhara, and thereby won the loyal support of her family for the Nagassi dynasty. Sahla Selassie, the successor of Wassan Saggad, beside his Amhara wife, had a number of Galla concubines by whom he had numerous illegitimate daughters. It became part of his policy sometimes to win, at other times to maintain, the loyalty or friendship of a powerful and influential neighbour by the hand of a princess. With his own subject, the offer of the hand of an illegitimate princess was an expression of great honour and highest favour in his royal heart. The marriage of Menelik's daughter Waizero Zauditu to Ras Areya Selassie, the only legitimate son of the Emperor Yohannes, in 1882 and Menelik's own marriage to Taitu, the daughter of a Yejju Galla chief in 1883 are both examples of the stabilizing role played by marriage alliances in regulating Shoa's relations with her neighbours. (See Ch. III)

¹Sellassé: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 64, 66. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.241.

army and of the country which he inherited. His conquests were made mainly to the southwest of the frontier bequeathed to him by his father. There he conquered the Woberi (Awberi), the Gilale and part of the Abitchu Galla tribes, thus extending the frontier nearly to the Chiachia river.¹ In the north-west he pacified the district around Debra Libanos and advanced northwards to campaign against the Wallo tribes which bordered on his northern frontier. Wassan Saggad's northern campaigns have been represented in the sources as part of a grand scheme which he conceived for the conquest of the whole of northern Ethiopia and unite it with his province of Shoa.² Wassan Saggad was the strongest ruler of Shoa until his time, and from the point of view of the loyalty of the subjects and unity of the country, probably the most powerful in Ethiopia as a whole. He commanded the confidence and loyalty of all sections of the society under his control which now comprised Christians, Muslims and pagans. In the grand scheme of con-

¹Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.37. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.243.

²Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I., p.69. Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.11. Cecchi, op.cit. Tomo I, p. 243.

conquest he may have been inspired by the glorious past of the medieval empire of Abyssinia, an inspiration which must have come to him through the traditions of the Church; thus he determined to restore the empire to its past glories.¹

In this ambition he was undoubtedly influenced by the extremely weakened position of the Emperor at Gondar and the confused political conditions in all the provinces from Wallo through Gondar and Begamder as far as Tigre.² It was probably under the influence of this inspiration and determination that Wassan Saggad refounded in Shoa a number of towns as well as churches which had been destroyed during either the Gran wars or the Galla invasions. For example, he rebuilt Debra Berhan and erected a church there which he dedicated to the Trinity, and at Debra Libanos he restored the church of the Virgin Mary; he also built new churches at Sella Dengai and at Kondi, a town which he founded.³ The execution of the grand scheme, however, was brought to an abrupt end by his sudden death.

¹In this connection it may be noted that the man who was the father confessor to both Asfa Wassan and Wassan Saggad was a priest from Gondar where the old traditions were better known. The glories of the medieval empire became a greater influence on the policy of Sahla Selassie and of Menelik. See below, and Chapter III.

²See above, pp. 1 -12

³Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I., pp. 67-8. Cecchi; op.cit., Tomo I, p. 243.

In the sphere of administration, Ras Wassan Saggad built on the foundations laid by his father. Realising that the strength of his position as well as the security of his country depended on the unity and loyalty of his subjects, Wassan Saggad followed a policy of religious toleration and of social equality. Thus he appointed as governors of the districts and to positions of trust at his court those who proved loyal to him, Amhara Christian, pagan Galla or Muslim Afar, regardless of the religion or tribal background of the people so appointed.¹ For example, all the eastern districts of Shoa which were inhabited mainly by Muslims, were given to Muslim governors. Among these was Walasma Mohammed, the functionary who, under Sahla Selassie, became the "Governor General of the Eastern Provinces". Far from compromising the position of Wassan Saggad, this was a display of political ingenuity which, for as long as the governors were loyal, greatly strengthened his control over the Muslim element in the society. By his policy of social equality Wassan Saggad built up, from among the different social groups a body of servants united by bonds of loyalty and devotion to both the person and the ideals

¹Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p. 243.

of the Ras and depending on him for their position and wealth. Depending on the loyalty of this group of servants Wassan Saggad passed a number of laws which exalted the position and power of the Ras and thus greatly added to the absolutism of the ruler.¹

The policy of social equality followed by Wassan Saggad was, however, resented by the Amhara, who wished to revenge themselves on the Galla and the Afar by treating them as social inferiors;; again his policy of religious toleration was disliked by the clergy. The disgruntled Amhara made common cause with the clergy and, finding excuse in the despotic laws which continued to be issued, fomented a conspiracy and secured the assassination of the Ras towards the end of 1812. Nevertheless, the loyalty of the great majority of his subjects outlived him and was to be the greatest weapon of his successor in the disturbances which followed his death. Ruling for less than five years Wassan Saggad, by his personal valour and the strength of his army, raised Shoa to a position of great respect among the neighbouring Galla tribes. The wealth and power of both the ruler and the state were known in the distant pro-

¹Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, p.11. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p. 244.

vinces of Gondar and Tigre. So secure and powerful was the central authority in Shoa that Henry Salt, writing from Tigre, referred to the province as "the kingdom of Shoa" and described it as being "... entirely independent of the kingdom of Abyssinia proper".¹ The rise of Shoa may now be said to have become an accomplished fact.

When the news of the death of the Ras reached the outlying districts, the Galla rose in rebellion. Throughout the development of Shoa the death of a ruler was an occasion for revolt in one Galla province or another. While the Shoan Amhara as a group were loyal not merely to the person of the ruler but also to the ideas for which the dynasty stood, the Galla were attached more to the person of the ruler than to any ideals for which the dynasty stood. The attitude of the Galla was due partly to the fact that, living as they did in mutual hostility with their fellow Galla, those who were subject to Shoa found, in their connection with the Shoan rulers, an opportunity to attack their hostile neighbours. Thus "while there is no king there is no law" appears to have been the maxim of the Shoan Galla. It was, therefore, a first necessity for each new ruler to suppress

¹F.O. 1/1: Henry Salt to F.O. 22.8.1811.

the rebellious districts and let his power be felt by the Galla before embarking on any definite policy, and this is what Sahla Selassie also had to do. Many of the outlying districts took advantage of the death of the Ras to re-assert their independence and the Abitchu Galla even marched on Debra Berhan. The young Ras (he was aged eighteen years) displayed great tact in those difficult days and succeeded in winning over some of the Galla chiefs by diplomacy; with their help and with the help of the loyal subjects of his father, Sahla Selassie suppressed the revolts and re-established the power of the central authority over all the districts.

Cecchi claims that Sahla Selassie came to power by usurping the rights of his elder brother called Bacurrege and explains how this came about as follows. When Wassan Saggad was assassinated, Bacurrege, who was then a governor, in one of the provinces, was kept busy suppressing the Galla insurrections which his father's death occasioned and was therefore unable to reach the capital in time. Meanwhile, the younger brother, Sahla Selassie, then studying at Sella Dengai, presented himself before the elders and leaders of the country and was proclaimed Ras of the country.¹ This point

¹Cecchi: Da Zeila, Tomo I, p.244. This point of view was accepted by M. Abir in his Ph. D. Thesis cited in an earlier reference.

of view is not corroborated in any of our sources; moreover it fails to take into account the principles which governed succession in the Shoan dynasty. In theory as well as in practice succession in the Nagassi dynasty had, since the time of Sebastiyé, become strict primogeniture; that is, the inheritance descended on the eldest son by the woman who was the lawful wife according to the ^{rites} rights of the Ethiopian Church. The claim that "the crown is not hereditary, but the king nominates his successor"¹ is simply not correct. The requirements emphasized the legality of the marriage because in general the rulers had, besides the legal wife, secondary wives and sometimes several concubines as well. The children of a secondary wife had claims on the succession only when the lawful wife had no children, while the children of an ordinary concubine had no claims on the throne at all. It is clear from these principles that the son of a legitimate wife who might be younger had better claims on the succession than his half-brother, the son of an "illegitimate" wife, who might be the elder. We know that Waizero Zenama Warq was the legitimate wife of Wassan Saggadm and that Sahla Selassie was

¹Charles Johnston: Travels in Southern Abyssinia through the country of Adal to the kingdom of Shoa (Lond. 1844), Vol. II, p. 295. Harris: op.cit., Vol. III, pp. 13, 15.

a son by this marriage. What we do not know - and Cecchi himself gives ~~an~~ indication ~~on~~ this - is whether Zenama Warq had an elder son called Bacurrege, although, according to Harris, Sahla Selassie had brothers.¹ Moreover, it could hardly be expected that the Malafia Agafari whose duty it was to crown the king, together with the other Amhara nobles, all of whom were conversant with the principles governing succession, would have consented to crown the younger son over and above the head of a legitimate elder son simply because the elder son was away from the capital. It is likely that Bacurrege, if there was any child of Wassan Saggad's known by that name, was the son of an "illegitimate" wife or even of a concubine. In the light of these arguments and in the absence of further information, the claim that Sahla Selassie usurped the rights of his elder brother must be rejected as unreliable.

The thirty-four years during which Sahla Selassie ruled, first as the Ras, and then as the Negus (king) of Shoa marked the climax of the development which had started with Nagassi.

¹IOL: B.S.P. IG. 204 No. 1172. Harris, 31.10.1842.

His reign was remarkable first, for the coming of Europeans into Shoa and secondly, for the extensive territorial annexations which were made as a result of Sahla Selassie's campaigns of conquest and expansion.

During the reign of Sahla Selassie, for the first time in our period, Shoa was visited by Europeans. These were of two types: the missionary whose avowed interest was evangelical, and the ordinary traveller whose interest lay in adventure, in exploring the hitherto un-explored regions and opening up unknown sources of knowledge to the scientific world, and in exploring the commercial potential of the regions through which he travelled. Two missionaries and quite a few of the ordinary travellers visited Shoa at this time. However, from the point of view of Sahla Selassie and his country, the most important of these travellers were the Protestant missionary Krapf, the French adventurer Rochet d'Héricourt and the mission which was led by the Englishman Captain W. C. Harris.

While in Tigre, the Protestant missionaries Krapf and Isenberg had received an invitation from Sahla Selassie to visit Shoa. When early in 1858 they were expelled by Ubie, the ruler of Tigre, they decided to go to Shoa where they

arrived, by way of Zeila and Tadjura, in June 1839. No doubt Krapf and his friend considered the invitation as a favourable opportunity for their evangelical work, but Sahla Selassie had different motives. Sahla Selassie had come to contemplate plans for making Shoa a powerful nation; to be able to execute his plans successfully he felt he needed the help of civilized Europe. He had come to believe that Europe could help him in the execution of his plans as a result of his awareness of the part that was being played by Europeans in Tigre. The rulers of Tigre, Walad Selassie and Sabagadis had, as a result of visits paid to their country by Englishmen, entered into contact with the British Government and had received some matchlocks. Ubie was also in touch with England as well as France.¹ Sahla Selassie did not want to be left behind in the race to make their provinces powerful. That this was so is reflected in the use to which he put Krapf - as an adviser and a channel through whom he could enter into relations with Britain. In this latter objective Sahla Selassie was not disappointed, for upon Krapf's advice he wrote to the

¹F.O. 1/1: 1/2; 1/3 passim.

British Resident in Aden asking for friendship.¹ The British Government anxious to "establish commercial intercourse with the different chieftains of Abyssinia" welcomed the opportunity to enter into relations with the ruler of Shoa. Under the authority of the Bombay Government a mission led by Captain Harris was sent to Shoa in 1841.

The object of the mission was first and foremost com- to enter into a convention with the king of Shoa for securing a free and mercial. It was "to endeavour/unrestricted commercial inter- course with the territories described to be under his authority; to endeavour to form similar conventions of commerce and friend- ship with the chiefs of the country on the.... . road from Tadjurajo to Shoa and also with the rulers of the countries adjacent to and beyond Shoa".² Of the nine objectives set forth in the instruction given to Captain Harris, six are directly commercial, one relates to scientific researches and one to the abolition of the slave trade; the one objective which does not fall clearly into any category enjoins on the mission "to report the probable advantages which the British

¹F.O. 1/3 Krapf to Campbell dated Ankober in Shoa 3.7.1840. I.O.L: B.S.P. LG 159 No. 1486^c Sahela Selassie to Resident at Aden.

²IOL: B.S.P. LG 159 No. 1479: Willoughby's Instructions to Harris, dated 24.4.1841, para. 12.

Government is likely to derive from the continued cultivation of friendly relations with Shoa and the neighbouring countries". It hardly needs to be said that those aspects of the mission's objective which may be regarded as scientific and philanthropic also had commercial undertones. Indeed Willoughby set the seal on the commercial nature of the mission when he added that "the Governor in Council has been led to suppose that ultimately an extensive field for commercial enterprise may be opened to the British merchant in this portion of Africa".¹

Once in Shoa, Captain Harris and his men set to work to achieve the purpose for which they were sent. A treaty of commerce and friendship was signed between Harris and Sahla Selassie in November 1841. The treaty, however, remained a dead letter because Shoa's lack of a seaport and the difficulties involved in carrying goods from Shoa to the coast at Zeila or Tadjura and vice versa were considered too great to make such commerce profitable.² As it was later to be

¹IOL: B.S.P. LG 159 No. 1479: Willoughby's Instructions to Harris, dated 24.4.1841, para 14. For the background to the Mission and the terms of the Treaty see Ullendorff and Beckenham "The first Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty" in Journal of Semitic Studies, Vol. 9 No. 1, Spring 1964, pp. 187-199.

²IOL: B.S.P. LG 184 No. 1436 Maddock (Sec. to Govt. of India) to Willoughby (Sec. to Bombay Govt.) 13.12.1841. LG 191 No. 2663A: same to same 13.7.1842. Krapf: Travels, p.31.

demonstrated, these difficulties could have been at least mitigated by entering into treaties of friendship with the chiefs of the Afar tribes through whose country the routes from Shoa to the coast lay. This, in any case, was part of the instructions given to Harris before the mission left India. As it turned out, the mission was not allowed to stay long enough to do this because it was considered by the "Governor-General in Council of India" that there were no "...grounds for supposing that the mission to Shoa would ever lead to the acquisition of advantages commensurate with the expense it occasioned".¹ Although a considerable body of scientific and geographical information was gathered, ^{the trade in slaves beyond collecting information} nothing was done about/ about it. In fact the slave trade and slavery were not even mentioned in the treaty of commerce and friendship which was signed by Harris, on behalf of the Indian Government or the British Government, and the ruler of Shoa. This aspect of Harris's instruction was left out of the treaty because, as Harris explained, "it was neither politic nor practicable at this stage of proceedings to make the smallest allusion to the suppression of slavery towards the attainment of which....

¹LG 191 No. 2663^A. Maddock to Willoughby 13.7.1842. Para. 2.

object some higher boon must be extended than the prospective advantages of a commercial intercourse with Great Britain....."¹
From the point of view of the Government of India, therefore, the mission may be said to have been a failure. When it withdrew from Shoa early in February 1843, relations between Shoa and Britain were, for all practical purposes, closed for the rest of our period.

For Sahla Selassie, however, the Harris mission was not without its usefulness. Although his hope of seeing the Arts and Science introduced into his country remained unfulfilled, he obtained a considerable stock of firearms from the mission. Whatever may be said of the ability of the "Shoan" soldier to use these firearms in war, the fact still remains that the possession of firearms increased the prestige of Sahla Selassie in the eyes not only of his subjects but also of his Galla enemy.

The same desire for European help which had induced Sahla Selassie to seek the friendship of the British Government led him to take into confidence a French adventurer, Rochet D'Héricourt who first arrived in Shoa in October 1839. Sahla

¹LG 189 No. 2060^G. Harris, 5.1.1842. para.2.

Selassie hoped that through Rochet he would make contact with France, and he charged the Frenchman with a mission to propose to the French President friendship between France and Shoa. It appears that Rochet d'Héricourt had elaborate plans for establishing not just a French colony of traders in Shoa but in fact a French protectorate over Shoa.¹ Rochet's plans met with no encouragement from the French Government, and a commercial treaty which Rochet made with Sahla Selassie, like the one negotiated by Harris, was never put into effect.² Except some firearms and other presents sent to him by the French Government to reciprocate those which he had sent to the French President, nothing came out of Sahla Selassie's expectations from France. Thus despite his efforts, when Sahla Selassie died he left behind him hardly any signs of European civilization in Shoa.

Besides the visit of Europeans, the reign of Sahla Selassie was remarkable for the territorial acquisitions which Shoa made at the expense of her Galla neighbours. By

¹F.O. 1/3: Krapf to Campbell, dated Ankober 3.7.1840.

²For the treaty see Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, pp. 375-8.

the time of Sahla Selassie, the campaigns of conquest which his ancestors had initiated had become an established policy of the dynasty and were conducted two or three times annually. It was by these regular campaigns that Sahla Selassie extended his frontiers. The remarkable successes which attended his campaigns were due to two main factors; the first of which was the numerical superiority of the "Shoan" army over the Galla enemy. The conquests of the earlier rulers had reached a stage where Shoa could put a considerable force to the battlefield. In the early 1840s it was estimated that Sahla Selassie could muster an army of thirty to fifty thousand men.¹ The mutual hostility of the various Galla tribes meant that any group which found itself attacked by Shoa could not seek help from its neighbours. Indeed some of the tribes allied with Shoa against their fellow Galla. Thus Shoa could always put into the field a force numerically superior to any that her Galla enemy could muster. This superiority was a great advantage to Shoa at a time when the shield and the lance were a common factor to both the invader and the invaded. The second factor

¹Krapf: Travels, p. 35. Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la Côte Orientale de la Mer Rouge..... (Paris (1841) p.233.

which made for the success of Shoa's campaigns of conquest was her possession of firearms. It has already been mentioned that the state of armament in the northern provinces of the Empire was far superior to that of Shoa and that it was from the north that Shoa obtained its matchlocks. This situation remained unchanged throughout the reign of Sahla Selassie. The northern princes continued to increase their stock of firearms and Sahla Selassie continued to import matchlocks from Gondar and Tigre.¹ Sahla Selassie was on friendly terms both with Sabagadis who governed Tigre from about 1823 until he was overthrown by Ubie in 1831, and with Ras Ali, the ruler of Gondar from about 1834 to 1854;² he could therefore import increasing quantities of firearms from his friends in the north. When, after 1835, European travellers began to visit Shoa by way of Tadjura and the Afar country, another avenue for acquisition of firearms was opened to Sahla Selassie. Between 1839 and 1844 his stock of firearms was increased by the presents of pistols offered him by the European travellers, and

¹Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.37.

²IOL: B.S.P. LG 189 No. 2060^K, Harris, 28.2.1842, para. 7. Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la Côte Orientale de la Mer Rouge, p. 184, under the date 6.10.1839.

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 Bombay Government. It must be emphasized, however, that this supply of European firearms though increasing over the years, was still limited and, in any case, only a few of the ruler's subjects knew how to use them; thus the firearms could not have contributed appreciably to the fighting strength of his army. Nevertheless, the mere possession of these improved firearms and the fear that they might be made use of at any time greatly strengthened the hand of Sahla Selassie against his Galla enemies who had no firearms at all.

As has already been hinted at, the success of Sahla Selassie's campaigns was also affected by the disunity which marked the various Galla tribes bordering on Shoa. It was mentioned earlier on that the difficult mountainous terrain and the river valleys coupled with growth in population soon led to the disintegration of the Galla, hitherto loosely united, into small independent tribal groups hostile to one another. The disunity between the different Galla tribes was greatly exploited by Sahla Selassie who used not only methods of war but also diplomacy to win to his side many Galla chiefs with whose help he advanced his conquest further afield.¹

¹B.S.P. LG 189 No. 2060 K, Harris, 28.2.1842, para. 5.

There are many examples in the sources of instances where diplomacy was used instead of war to annex a new district. Sahla Selassie summed up his diplomatic methods in a speech he was reported to have made to Harris when he heard that Krapf had been robbed by Adara Bille, a powerful Wallo Galla chief, with whose territories Shoa shared a northern frontier.

"... I have no power over Adara Bille. I give him cloths every year, and have asked his daughter in marriage because I wish to secure his friendship....."¹

Like his father before him, the major conquests of Sahla Selassie were made in the south and south-west. But the few conquests which he made in the north-west and north-east were by no means insignificant. In the north-east, continuing his father's campaigns in Efrata, Sahla Selassie advanced his effective frontier to the natural boundary of the Berkona river, thus incorporating in his dominion the southern province of Argoba.² In the north-west Sahla Selassie completed the conquest of the province of Geshe, the southern part of which had been conquered by Asfa Wassan, by defeating the Debra^r and Tuloma

¹B.S.P. IG 193 No. 2918^A, Harris, 8.5.1842, para. 19.

²Harris: The Highlands, Vol. II, p. 343.

Galla inhabitants and annexing the northern district of Mesaraser.¹ By these conquests the northern frontier of Shoa was brought to the upper reaches of the Wonshit (Wancit) river and directly into contact with the Wallo Galla with whom Sahla Selassie was to maintain uneasy relationship throughout his reign. The outstanding part played by Ato Sammu Negus, the governor of southern Geshe in the conquest of Mesaraser, and by the governors of Geddem and Efrata in the conquest of Argoba, and subsequently in maintaining these conquests, may be said to typify the devoted services rendered to Sahla Selassie by his officials.

Shoan frontiers in the west, north and east had been brought more or less to well-marked boundaries and Sahla Selassie's attention was directed to the south and south-west. A number of factors attracted him to this direction; the disunity in this area and the military weakness of its Galla inhabitants were the least important of these factors. More important was the commercial reward which the area promised. The area south of Godjam stretching from the south bank of

¹Krapf: Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.320. IOL: B.S.P. LG 189 No. 2060^D, Harris, 27.11.1841, para. 41.

the Abay river as far as Kaffa, inhabited mainly by Maca Galla, and the Sidama area south of the Hawash river between the Omo river in the west and the headwaters of the Webi Shabella in the east, were the richest in the whole of Ethiopia. It was from these regions that the gold, ivory, civet, gum, coffee and other products which constituted the main articles of export came.¹ By about the 1830s the revival of trade in the Red Sea in the early decades of the 19th century had begun to have repercussions in Ethiopia, and in response to the growing demand for "Abyssinian products", Ethiopian merchants, mostly Muslims, were organizing regular caravans to the rich south and south-western provinces. Hitherto the most frequented route by which the products from these regions reached the coast was that which led from Massawa through Tigre and Gondar to Godjam and across the southern bend of the Abay river to the Maca country. Sahla Selassie, the most enlightened Shoa ruler till his time, could not be an idle onlooker and let all this trade fall to

¹F.O. 1/4: Plowden, 20.8.1847. B.N. (Paris) N.A.F. 21302, pp. 316-7, d'Abbadie; N.A.F. 21303, p.383, d'Abbadie. For a detailed discussion on the trade of this area and of Shoa in this period see Chapter V.

the advantage of the northern princes. He determined therefore to push his conquests further and further towards these rich provinces in order to divert, at least, part of the trade through Shoa to the seaports of Tadjura and Zeila, and to profit by taxes on the goods passing through his dominion.¹ In the 1840s, therefore, as a result of Sahla Selassie's conquests in the south and the south-west, and the friendly relations which he kept with the Afar princes, the route from Tadjura and Zeila through Shoa to the Gibere region or the Maca country became open and was growing in commercial importance. The Shoa ruler amassed considerable wealth from the transit trade of his country by imposing an import duty of ten per cent in kind on every caravan of merchandise and an import and export duty of four amole upon every slave that passed through his country.² Sahla Selassie followed a policy of monopoly in such lucrative items of trade as gold and ivory and piled up for himself huge stocks of both, which he used as occasional presents to his favourite subjects and as "medals" in recognition of faithful service rendered by his subjects.³

¹ IOL: B.S.P.: LG 189 No. 2060^G, Harris, 5.1.1842.

² Ibid. An amole was a piece of block salt used as currency; its value was equivalent to 2^l/2^d.

³ LG 189 No. 2060^G, Harris, 5.1.1842, paras. 21 & 22.

Another important factor which attracted Sahla Selassie to the south and south-west was the noble desire to re-unite, under the rule of Shoa, the scattered Christian populations which marked the limit of the medieval empire of his ancestors. This was the same policy as his father's grand scheme but executed in a different direction. Before the Galla invasion the region described above as the richest part of Ethiopia was inhabited by people of Kushitic origin called Sidama.¹ and formed part of the Empire of Ethiopia. Various Emperors undertook missionary activities in this area and in the reign of the Emperor Sarsa Dengel (1563-97) nearly the whole area was converted to Christianity. With the occupation of these provinces by the pagan Galla, Christianity in the area fell into abeyance and Christian churches were turned into pagan temples. Nevertheless, Christian practices appear to have been kept up throughout the centuries in a few families scattered over the whole region and Krapf speaks of Christians and "priests" coming from among other places, Gurage and Enarya to ask for priests and religious books in Shoa.² The tradition that the treasures and

1. Trimmingham: *Islam in Ethiopia*. p.179; Beckingham and Huntingford: *Some Records of Ethiopia*. p.16

² *Journal of Isenberg and Krapf*, pp. 178-181. See also d'Abbadie in *Annales de la Pop. de la Foi*. xvii, p.279 quoted in Trimmingham, *op.cit.*, p. 109 n.3. The present writer found the original of d'Abbadie's letter in the Archives of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, in the series: *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi* Vol. 4, pp. 439-440. To appreciate the significance of the details given one has to remember that d'Abbadie was at this time

valuable manuscripts of the ancient Abyssinian Emperors were deposited on an island in lake Zuai during the Muslim invasions of the 16th century was very popular in Shoa at this time; the rescuing of these treasures as well as the reuniting of the pockets of Christians living in the predominantly pagan occupied provinces were said to have been Sahla Sellasie's greatest ambitions.¹

Inspired by the glories of the medieval empire and urged on by the political disunity of the area, as well as by the prospects of rich gains, Sahla Selassie conducted campaigns towards the south and the south-west. In the south the "Shoan" army conquered the southern Karaye, the Galan and the Gombitchu Galla and thus brought Shoan frontiers to the Hawash river. In the south-west Sahla Selassie's armies overran the Abitchu country where a frontier post was erected. This outpost, which was erected early in the 1830s, developed into the town of Angolala, which was described in the 1840s as the second capital of the county and the ruler's favourite winter residence.²

(cont.) (1840s) advocating the establishment of a Catholic mission among the Galla, and he used as one of his arguments the survival of Christianity in the Galla country.

¹Harris: The Highlands, vol. III, p.37. Krapf: Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, pp. 179-80.

²IG 189 No. 2060, Harris 14.10.1842, parag. 19.

By the 1840s the effective western frontier of Shoa had reached the headwaters of the Hawash river; beyond the river in the same direction the Liban tribes and the Nonno were tributary to Shoa. South of the Hawash the effective frontier might even be said to have included the Soddo Galla, in whose country Sahla Selassie built an outpost at Cholie and beyond whom his influence reached as far as Aimelele in the northern district of Gurage.¹ By these conquests Sahla Selassie more than doubled the area of the country bequeathed to him by his father. In the 1840s the area of the Shoa was estimated at one hundred and fifty miles in length by ninety miles in breadth and its total population at two and a half millions of which one million were Amhara Christians and the rest pagan and Muslim Galla and a few Muslim Afar.² Firmly secure in the government of Shoa, enriched by the flourishing transit trade of his country and made powerful by the possession of a large and devoted army and as well as by the loyalty of his subjects, Sahla Selassie, about 1839, adopted the extremely

¹LG 189, No. 2060^I, Harris 31.1.1842, para. 21. LG 189, No. 2060K, Harris 28.2.1842.

²LG. 204, No. 1216 Graham. Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.28.

enviable title of Negus (king) of Shoa without bothering to secure the approval of the puppet Emperor at Gondar.¹ Neither the Emperor nor any of the governors of the northern provinces had either the free hand or the military strength to compel Sahla Selassie to relinquish this important and meaningful title; and from that time all bonds of allegiance which subordinated Shoa to the Emperor at Gondar may be said to have been broken. Sahla Selassie was now in theory as well as in practice the king of an independent kingdom of Shoa.

The reign of Sahla Selassie saw one serious crisis about 1838.² It was a rebellion by Ato Medako (Metako) a man described as "one of Sahla Selassie's most favourite generals!" Medako had risen to this position of favour by sheer "military talents combined with undaunted personal intrepidity in the presence of the enemy". However, his aspirations to the hand of a royal princess led to his being deprived of the governorship which he held. Angry at this deprivation Medako fled to the "subjugated though disaffected Galla" from whom he raised a large force and marched against

¹MAE (Paris): M & D (Afrique) Vol. 13, p.9. Antoine d'Abbadie to M. Le Directeur de la Division Commerciale au MAE. 14.7.1839. Here he wrote: "Le Marodazmatch Sahla Selassie est se fait le maitre independant du Chawa. Il a pris le titre du roi qui n'est pas reconneue par le clergé et les nobles de Gondar..."

²Harris writing in 1842 said the rebellion occurred "About four years ago".

Angolala. Medako was however defeated, captured and imprisoned at Guncho from where he managed to escape and for the second time raised the standard of rebellion. In the encounter which followed Medako was again defeated, captured and executed for high treason.¹ That Sahla Selassie was able to weather this storm which had threatenèd to upset his otherwise peaceful reign was due to the devotion of his subjects, especially the Manzians, who at this critical moment, rallied to the rescue of the ruler.

The administration of the kingdom of Shoa in the 1840s was elaborate and may be considered as the culmination of the administrative experiments which were made by the predecessors of Sahla Selassie. In the reign of Sahla Selassie the great expansion of Shoa resulted in increase in the number of provinces. The eastern block extending from the eastern slope of the mountain range on which Ankober stands to the Hawash river, and stretching from Argoba and Efrata in the north to Bulga in the south, was inhabited mainly by Muslims. The central block of provinces including Manz, Tegulet and Ankobar was occupied by Amhara Christians, and the western and southern provinces were wholly occupied by the Galla sub-

¹LG 189 No. 2060 Harris, 14.10.1842, paras. 31-34. 'As a result of Metako's escape from prison "Wallasma Mohamed the state gaoler lost the whole of his property and was suspended from office for two years". Para 33. Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, pp. 301-2. Harris: The Highlands, Vol. II, pp. 132-3.

jects of Shoa. Each province was divided into a number of districts and the districts were subdivided into smaller units whose heads were known as shums. In 1842 it was estimated that there were fifty one districts and about four hundred "shumates".¹ Each of these districts was ruled by a sub-governor immediately subject to the governor of the province in which the district was situated, but directly responsible to the king. The duties of the officials were both civil and military. The whole set up was an absolutism controlled from the centre by the king who personally appointed all the important officials and watched over their actions by an intricate spy system.² An official continued in office as long as the king had confidence in him. It would seem that tenure in office was very precarious; in practice, however, the king was such an absolute master of the country that he could afford to be lenient without having to fear for his position. All that was good in Sahla Selassie's character was given due emphasis by the Europeans who visited

¹Krapf: Journal, p.90.

²Krapf: Travels, p.91. See Chapter IV for a detailed discussion of the governmental machinery of Shoa.

Shoa in his time.¹ While he overlooked many minor failings in his officials but punished serious offences heavily with deprivation, confiscation and chains, he rewarded lavishly loyalty and devoted service with positions of power, lands, servants and occasionally the hand of a princess. He was sympathetic and genuinely concerned with the welfare of his subjects. Each subject, rich or poor, slave or free-man, had equal and easy access to the king, who listened to their complaints with sympathy. His concern for the welfare of his subjects is reflected in the alms which he frequently gave to the poor, in the number of people who were fed from the royal kitchen and in the distribution of food from the royal granaries to all his subjects in time of crop failure.² When he wrote in his letter of July 1840 to Captain Haines³ that "... God has given me a good and large kingdom but Arts and Sciences are not yet come into my country as they are in yours..." he summed up his desire to improve

¹See for example: LG 206, No. 1600 Graham, para. 12. Charles Johnston: Travels, II, p.142. MAE (Paris): M & D (Afrique) Vol. 13, p. 279 Rochet d'Héricourt.

²LG 206 No.1600 Graham, paras. 13-15. Johnston: op.cit., Vol. II, p.160.

³LG 159 No. 1486^G: Haines to Secretary to the Bombay Government 25.9.1840 (enclosing Sahla Selassie to Haines dated July 1840).

the lot of his subjects and make them a happy and prosperous people. Sahla Selassie's judicious and humane character won for the Crown the loyalty and confidence of all his subjects, Christian, pagan and Muslim alike. The loyal support which the subjects gave to Sahla Selassie was undoubtedly a potent factor in the development of the "Rasship" which he inherited into an absolute monarchy. Although the king wielded absolute power "a stranger... soon perceives Sahla Selassie to be superior to the temptation of abusing that power which he possesses"¹ and his despotism was indeed benevolent.

The reign of Sahla Selassie marked the culmination of the development which originated with Nagassi. This development passed through many difficult moments when it seemed as if it would break down. Through the valour and military skill of the family as a whole, the weakness of the Galla tribes, the loyalty of their Amhara subjects and the administrative skill of the last few rulers as well as the judicious character of Sahla Selassie a powerful monarchical state was built up in Shoa which was undoubtedly the most stable in the whole of the Ethiopian region. In contrast

¹Charles Johnston: op.cit., Vol. II, p.189.

to Sahla Selassie's period the twenty years which followed his death were a period of decline. Nevertheless, it is the measure of the success of his reign that during these years of decline, the sense of unity and loyalty which marked his reign survived the difficult times and preserved the essential features of the state intact to form a foundation for the great developments which Shoa was to witness under Menelik II.

Chapter: II

THE PERIOD OF DECLINE

The reign of Sahla Selassie was a golden age for Shoa; the monarchy was more firmly established than ever before, and though he exercised absolute authority, the king enjoyed the confidence and respect of all his subjects. Sahla Selassie himself was a benevolent monarch who laboured unceasingly to improve the lot of his subjects. The administrative machinery of the kingdom was probably the most efficient in the whole of the Ethiopian region; justice, law and order were its distinguishing features. Under this reign the "Shoans" pursued their various occupations in peace, and both agriculture and commerce grew and prospered.

Sahla Selassie died in 1847¹ and was succeeded by his eldest legitimate son, Haile Malakot, then aged about twenty two years. The young king was represented to be "a man of talent and great firmness".² The death of Sahla Selassie was

¹Propaganda Archives: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi Vol. 5 (Africa Centrale, Etiopia Arabia) p.8. Padre Guglielmo al Procuratore Generale die Cappuccini, dated Aden 28.3.1848. A. Cecchi (Da Zeila, I, 248) says October 1847.

²IOI: Aden Secret Letters Received (Various) Vol. 30, pp. 143-4. Lieut. Cruttenden to Captain Haines, 4.4.1848. Cruttenden, the Assistant Resident at Aden, went on one of his periodic visits to the ports in the Red Sea and Somali coasts, and derived the information at Berbera from an Afar chief called Mohamed Ali who was a regular trader to Shoa

followed by disturbances in some parts of the kingdom. The Galla tribes living outside the frontiers of the country, no longer deterred by the fear of the old king and taking advantage of the youth and inexperience of his successor attacked the inhabitants of the peripheral districts of Shoa. Also the Galla inhabitants of some of the outlying districts rose in rebellion. With the help of his father's faithful soldiers, Haile Malakot suppressed the revolts and re-established law and order throughout the kingdom. The thoroughness with which these revolts were put down was a warning to the Galla that Haile Malakot was determined "to tread the footsteps of his great father Sahla Selassie".¹ He showed this determination in both his domestic and foreign policies. Externally, he sought to re-open relations with the British in Aden. In 1849 Haile Malakot sent a letter and gifts to the British Resident in Aden for the Queen of England and requested artisans and firearms.² Although nothing sub-

¹IOL: Aden Secret Letters Received (Various) Vol. 30.
Ibid. Same to same.

²F.O. 1/5: Murray to Palmerston, 21.5.1849. Enclosure Palmerston to the King of Shoa, 4.7.1849.
F.O. 1/6: Political Agent at Aden to Secretary to the Bombay Government, 10.9.1850.

stantial came out of this effort, Haile Malakot's approach to the British indicated an attempt to continue his father's enlightened policy. At home, the king strenuously fought and successfully held down the Galla tribes who menaced the province of Angolala.¹ His reign was, however, destined to be short; he died early in December 1855, and with his death the kingdom of Shoa entered on a period of inter-regnum and of decline.

Compared with the reign of Sahla Selassie before it and that of Menelik after it, the period from the accession of Haile Malakot to the accession of Menelik in 1865 is one about which not much is known. No Europeans visited Shoa during this period, and although Europeans were in other parts of the Empire they did not appear to have known much about events in Shoa. For the reconstruction of the history of Shoa during this period, therefore, one has to rely on local sources, of which there are not many, and to cross-check them partly with what information came through to the Europeans then in other parts of the Empire, and partly with

¹F.O.1/6: Political Agent at Aden to Secretary to the Bombay Government 10.9.1850. A.S.S.G.I.: Cartoni VIC. Chiarini: "Memoria.... sulla storia recente dello Scioa dalla morte di Sahle Salassie sino ad oggi" dated 23.11.1877.

the accounts collected in Shoa by Cecchi and other Europeans who visited the kingdom in the 1870s. Guébré Sellasié's Chronicle of Menelik's reign which was mentioned in the last chapter, Alaka Walda Maryam's chronicle of the reign of the Emperor Theodoros II, and the chronicle of the same Emperor's reign believed to have been written by a dabtara (scribe) called Zanab (Zeneb) - these three chronicles constitute our main sources for this period. Walda Maryam's chronicle was edited and translated into French by C. Mindon-Vidailhet in 1904-5.¹ The Amharic text of dabtara Zanab's chronicle was edited in 1902 by Enno Littman from a manuscript which has come to be known as the Berlin Manuscript.² Littmann's text was in turn translated into Italian by M. M. Moreno in 1942.³

¹H. Weld Blundell appears to have had another copy of the manuscript of this chronicle, a partial translation of which he published in the Journal of the African Society, VI, 1906-7.

²The manuscript was brought from Ethiopia to Germany by the missionary Martin Flad. This appears to be the only copy yet known.

³M. M. Moreno: "La Cronaca di Re Teodoro attribuita al dabtara 'Zaneb'" in Rassegna di Studi Etiopici, Vol. II, 1942, pp. 143-80.

All that is known of Alaka Walda Maryam is what he himself tells us in his chronicle. He was a monk from Shoa, and appears to have been one of the men imprisoned at Magdala by Theodros. He mentions that he was with the Abuna and was much loved by him. This would suggest that Walda Maryam was one of the Shoan clergy who believed in the doctrine of two births which was favoured by the Abuna.¹ Of course, it is possible that Walda Maryam was one of the Shoan chiefs taken captive to Magdala on the conquest of Shoa by Theodros, although it is not known for certain if religious leaders were among those taken captives. Walda Maryam was thus an eyewitness of the events he describes and may well have taken an active part in some of them. His account of the Emperor's life before about 1850 is extremely sketchy. From about 1850 onwards, however, the account becomes more detailed, although not nearly as detailed as it could have been. For example, he does not give us any idea as to the value of the tribute which Shoa or any other conquered province paid to the Emperor. And his account of the

¹See below.

struggle between Kassa (as Theodore then was) and Birru Goshu of Godjam is rather simplified. On the whole Walda Maryam is less detailed about events in other parts of the Empire than about those in Shoa. Nevertheless, when all allowances are made, this chronicle, which was written in 1881, remains one of the best contemporary accounts of the reign of the Emperor Theodoros.

According to Flad who brought the manuscript to Europe, dabtara Zanab who wrote the other chronicle knew the Emperor intimately. This chronicle was written during Theodoros's reign, but it is not known if it was intended to be an official chronicle. Although it only goes up to about 1860 it has this value that it supplies Walda Maryam's omission in the early part of Theodoros's life. The chronicle has a simplified account of the history of the northern provinces of the Empire from 1800 to the 1840s. His account of Kassa's early life is fairly detailed and agrees in many respects with those of Henry Dufton and other European travellers. Could he have been an informant for some of the travellers? On events in Shoa however, this chronicle tends to be very sketchy compared to Walda Maryam. Taken together however the chronicle of Walda Maryam and that of dabtara Zanab provide a useful indigenous source material for the history of the reign

of Emperor Theodros. Their usefulness is enhanced by the fact that the authors saw, at first hand, the events which they wrote about, and wrote at a time when they could still remember the details.

The inter-regnum and its consequent decline were the direct result of the political changes which had been taking place in the northern provinces of the Empire of Ethiopia during the previous three or four years. In the last chapter it was mentioned that the Empire entered on a period of decline in the 18th century, and that the provincial governors vied with one another to increase their territory and power. This process continued into the 19th century and throughout the first half of the century the northern provinces were a theatre of internecine war whose vicissitudes reflected both the political and territorial strength of the contending parties. It is outside the scope of this thesis to trace in detail the numerous battles, treaties, alliances and treacheries by which changes were brought about. Suffice it to say that by 1841 four large provinces had emerged out of the struggle: in the north was Tigre under the rule of Dedjazmatch Ubie (Wube); in the centre was the province of Amhara under Ras Ali; south of Amhara was the province of Godjam and Damot ruled over by

Dedjazmatch Goshu; to the east of Amhara and directly north of the Wallo Galla was the province of Lasta ruled by a nominee of Ras Ali. The Wallo Galla, to the south of Lasta, were virtually independent. All these provinces were dependent on the Ras¹ who ruled from Gondar in the name of the titular Emperor; but this dependence on the Ras was more nominal than real, and a desultory war continued to be carried on between the Ras and his nominal vassals. Such was the state of affairs when about 1852 a revolt by Kassa, one of the petty vassals of the Ras, brought about changes of far-reaching consequence in the decadent Empire.

The story of Kassa's rise to power as Emperor Theodros II, of his reforms, his later excesses and his tragic death is too well known to be repeated in this thesis. Attention must, however, be drawn to the fact that Kassa's early struggle in his native district of Kwara (Quara) against the Muslim soldiers of Egypt who menaced the north-western frontier of the Empire sharpened both his religious and nationalist sentiments. It was his experiences in these campaigns which made

¹Ras is the third highest title in Ethiopia, both civil and military, after negus (king) and negusa nagast (emperor).

him determine to re-unite and strengthen the divided Empire and to lead his Christian soldiers in a crusade to drive the Turks away from the Holy Land. Kassa's military offensive against the various provincial governors of the Empire in the first half of the 1850s was the first step towards achieving his objective. In February 1855 when he was crowned Emperor as Thedros II he brought vitality and dignity to the Imperial power, and for the first time in over one hundred years policy and guidance came from the central authority.

As Emperor, Thedros's authority was limited, in May 1855, to the northern provinces of the Empire. The central Ethiopian plateau was occupied by the Wallo Galla, Muslims by religion, nominally dependent on the authority at Gondar but, as has been said above, virtually independent. South of the Wallo lay the independent kingdom of Shoa, paying no allegiance whatsoever to the political authorities at Gondar. Both Wallo and Shoa lay within the boundaries of the former Empire of Abyssinia; and if Thedros was to restore the unity of the Empire and make the authority of his government felt throughout it, the conquest of the Wallo and of Shoa was imperative.

The struggle against the Wallo Galla began in June 1855. In this campaign, as in those conducted earlier in the northern

provinces, Theodros defeated his opponents and captured a number of the leading men including one of the ruling princes, Amedie Ali Liben, the son of Queen Warqitu (Warquet). However, a series of revolts was to break out later and twice during his reign Theodros made unsuccessful attempts to pacify the Wallo country.

With the defeat of the Wallo, the Emperor continued his march southwards to Shoa. The king of Shoa, Haile Malakot, made every preparation to defend his kingdom. He must have anticipated the designs of the Emperor who, in 1854, was said to have sent a message to the Shoan king ordering him to come to Gondar to do him homage.¹ Thus when Theodros crossed the Wallo-Shoan frontier into the province of Geshe the "Shoans" were ready to oppose him. The first battle of Theodros Shoan war, which lasted nearly five months, was fought early in October 1855.² The "Shoan" forces consisted partly of the local Geshe troops commanded by the governor of the province,

¹Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia. p. 94, No. 177, Plowden to the Earl of Clarendon, 10.7.1854.

²Walda Maryam: Chronique de Théodoros II, Roi des Rois d'Éthiopie Edt. & trans. C. Mondon-Vidailhet, Paris 1905. p.10.

Habta Maryam, and partly of soldiers from the neighbouring province of Geddem under the command of Ato Sammou-Negous, the governor of Geddem. A fierce battle ensued which lasted a whole day and appears to have continued throughout the night into the next day when Habta Maryam was captured; Ato Sammou-Negous either escaped or was killed.¹ Theodros indeed won the victory, but it was by no means an easy victory.

The news of the defeat of Habta Maryam caused panic in the governing circles of Shoa. This panic was heightened by the additional news that the forces of the Emperor were vastly superior to those of the kingdom. The danger which faced Shoa could not be under-estimated and Haile Malakot is said to have convened a council of his generals and chief men to decide the best course of action to follow. Some of the "counsellors", led by Ato Beddelu, governor of Efrata, advised submission without further resistance, but the Assembly appears to have been swayed by a group led by the king's younger

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., ibid. Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique du règne de Menelik II, Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie. Edt. & trans. M. de Coppet. Paris 1930-2. Vol. I, pp. 82-3.

brother, Prince Seifou Selassie, then governor of Morabiete, who favoured vigorous and sustained resistance.¹

It has been estimated that the "Shoan" army during this war "... consisted of upwards of fifty thousand brave and valiant troops", and that this was numerically "superior to that of the king" (Theodros).² In June 1855 Plowden estimated that on assembling "all the forces of Christian Abyssinia, Teegray included... [Theodros] may have from fifty to sixty thousand men of all arms". Earlier he had reported that the Emperor "has fifty thousand men and has ordered apart of them to march against the Mohamedan Gallas who had assembled in great force in the province of Worra-Haimano in defence of their faith".³ Considering the number left to garrison Magdala on the conquest of Worra-Haimano, and those who died in the war against the Wallo as well as on the march from Gondar to Shoa, the Emperor's army could not have numbered more than forty thousand soldiers.

¹A. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.251.

²H. A. Stern: Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia Lond. 1862. p.76. Rev. Stern, it will be remembered, was one of the European missionaries who worked in the Empire during this period. He was also among the Europeans detained by Theodros at Magdala; his books are among the best contemporary accounts of the reign of Theodros.

³F.O. 1/9: Plowden to the Earl of Clarendon, 25.6.1855. Enclosure same to same, 7.4.1855.

The superiority of the Imperial forces, ~~then~~ could not have lain in their numbers; it lay in their discipline, endurance, experience and armament. Of the Imperial forces there must have been a well-trained and highly experienced core of at least a thousand soldiers who had fought with the Emperor from the early years of his military career. The rest, consisting of soldiers from the various northern provinces, had gained their military training in the incessant inter-provincial wars which had, for so long, ravaged the northern provinces. As regards armament, as was pointed out in the last chapter, the north was much better supplied with matchlocks and other firearms than Shoa was, and on the defeat of Dedjazmatch Oubie of Tigre, as many as seven thousand muskets and two cannon fell to the lot of Theodros.¹

The "Shoans", on the other hand, possessed a limited supply of matchlocks and only a handful of rifles, to the use of which they were ill-accustomed. Although these were enough to send their Galla neighbours reeling, they were insignificant against an army as well equipped as that which followed Theodros. Nor could the "Shoans" rely much on their numerical

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.8. F.O.1/9: Plowden to Earl of Clarendon 25.6.1855. Enclosure. Zaneb: Moreno's Translation in Rassegna di Studi Etiopici, Vol. II, 1942, p.160.

superiority, military discipline, valour and endurance, since their wars of conquest against the neighbouring Galla, which were all the military experience they had had, were more of surprise raids than of serious and sustained encounters.

After his victory at Geshe, Theodros continued his march to Manz where the governors of that province, Geddem and Efrata submitted without striking a blow. It will be wrong to regard the submission of these governors simply as an act of treachery. One might argue that they were rather hasty in taking that action. Nevertheless, submission was the only reasonable course of action open to a people who, though proud of their independence, were militarily weak and found themselves matched against a vastly superior enemy which was led by an Emperor whose valour and military skill they had just cause to dread. The submission of these provinces, however, had effects upon both the invader and the invaded. Those who submitted either joined forces with the invaders against their king and fellow Shoans, or, at best, remained neutral in the contest; in either case, their action considerably facilitated the task of the invader. For Haile Malakot and his generals, on the other hand, the effect of the action of the northern governors was to deprive them of a considerable portion of

the total armed men they could muster against the invader. Further, it could hardly have failed to weaken their morale.

The rest of the kingdom rallied round the king to offer a strong and determined resistance to the Emperor. In the encounter which followed the Shoans fought bravely but the superior discipline and armament of the Imperial forces won them the day. Haile Malakot and a number of his officials withdrew to Ankober; two days later, upon the advice of his officials the king set fire to that part of the city where the royal granary was situated.¹ It is not clear what this was intended to achieve. Perhaps it was meant to deprive the invading army of provisions when they entered the city. If this was so, the king was ill-advised; for the invading army could easily pillage individual homes for food. Shortly after this incident Haile Malakot fell ill and died at the beginning of December 1855.² It is difficult not to think that desperation, exhaustion and the humiliating realization that the independent kingdom which seven generations of his ancestors had laboured to build should fall during his reign,

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.13. A. Cecchi (op.cit., I, 253) mistakenly says that it was Debra Berhan and not Ankober which was burnt.

²Walda Maryam: op.cit. ibid. The chronicler is very specific on the date: 30 Hedar, Friday night, in the 8th year of his reign.

contributed to the illness from which Haile Malakot was unable to recover.

The Shoan chiefs and their soldiers were undoubtedly demoralised by the sudden death of their king at this critical moment. Yet, it was in these difficult circumstances that the achievements of Sahla Selassie and his predecessors made themselves felt. The benevolent rule of Sahla Selassie had, in general, united the Crown and the people in the knowledge that the independence of the kingdom meant for them a prosperous and peaceful life. Now they stood to lose this independence at the hands of the invader and it was for them, although without a king, to fight in defence of the independence of their kingdom. Their difficulty was complicated by the fact that the heir to the Shoan throne, Prince Menelik, was only about eleven years old and incapable of giving the kingdom the leadership it needed. His safety was the most immediate problem for the leaders of the kingdom. The Emperor also realized what the freedom and safety of the prince meant for the success of his campaign, and he devoted his tactics to capturing Menelik. The next phase of the struggle, therefore, was one in which the "Shoan" chiefs sought to prevent the Emperor from capturing Menelik.

On the death of Haile Malakot, his half brother, Ato

Dargue and Ato Andargatchaw took upon themselves the task of leading the country in the war against the invaders. Their first plan was to take Prince Menelik to a safe hiding place in the distant province of Bulga. After three brief stops they climbed the Chaka mountain chain through a gorge and descended at the eastern end into the plain which stretches to the province of Mindjar. The Emperor on the other hand followed a route which passes southwest of Ankober, and leaving the city to his left pursued the Shoans to Bulga; he camped his troops on the river Kassam which forms the boundary between the province of Bulga and that of Mindjar. His plan appears to have been to catch up with the Shoan forces, to follow up his early successes with a crushing defeat and capture the heir to the Shoan throne. Having sent one of his generals, Ras Engheda, with an army by a north-eastern route to intercept the Shoans and prevent them from reaching Ankober by an eastern route Theodros himself pursued the enemy by a south-eastern route.¹

Ras Engheda and his men climbed the Chaka range and

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., pp. 13-14. Cecchi: op.cit., I, p.255. Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique, I, p.86.

descended eastwards to the plains of Barakat where they encountered the Shoan forces. It was about the middle of November that the opposing forces joined battle. The Imperial forces withdrew from the first encounter with heavy losses; in the second encounter, however, Ras Engheda succeeded in forcing the Shoans to withdraw with considerable losses.¹ The Shoans were now in a precarious situation; their way to the north was barred by Ras Engheda; at the same time Theodros and the men under his command were pursuing them from the south-east. They soon realized the hopelessness of their situation and sued for peace, handing over Prince Menelik as a hostage to the Emperor. Theodros received the prince with manifest satisfaction for his surrender meant the end of the resistance which had taken a heavy toll of the Imperial forces.

After the surrender of Menelik and his chiefs, the Imperial forces had to hasten back to Angolala province where the Galla were still in arms against the Emperor.² From here

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.14. Cecchi; ibid.

²C.R.A. p.269, No. 469. Plowden to Earl of Clarendon 22.12.1855. The Galla, he reports, suffered "1000 of their number dead on the field, besides wounded and prisoners", and adds that "the king (Theodros) has sent messengers to all parts of Abyssinia to announce his complete success in Shoa".

the Emperor went to Ankober to receive homage from the clergy. With the submission of both the army and the clergy, the independence of Shoa became a thing of the past, and the Emperor's last act was the settlement of the administrative question. This he did towards the end of February 1856.

Until the time of Wassan Saggad, the sixth ruler of Shoa, who adopted the title of Ras and thereby accelerated the process of Shoa's independence, Shoa was considered as an integral part of the Empire, and its ruler was regarded as a vassal of the Emperor at Gondar. The title of the ruler of Shoa was then Maredazmatch. Now that the kingdom of Shoa had been conquered and the heir to the Shoa throne was a prisoner in the hands of the Emperor, Theodros re-introduced the old title. Haile Mikael, one of the illegitimate sons of Sahla Selassie, was appointed governor over the whole of Shoa. In appointing a Shoa "prince" to govern the conquered kingdom with the title of Maredazmatch. / Theodros made one of the mistakes which were to render his hold over Shoa so tenuous. In his conquest of the northern provinces, Theodros replaced the old and established ruling families with his own trusted men as governors. The method by which he re-organized the administration of the northern provinces was nicely summed up by Plowden thus:

"...He placed the soldiers of the different provinces under the command of his own trusty followers to whom he gave high titles but no power to judge or punish, thus in fact, creating generals in place of feudal chieftains, more proud of their birth than of their monarch, and organizing a new nobility, a legion of honour, dependent on him and chosen specially for their daring and fidelity." ¹

This method was designed to win the support of the conquered people away from their traditional rulers for the Imperial government. To what extent it succeeded in its aim is an open question, but there is little doubt that it contributed a great deal to making the first half of Theodros's reign the success which it was. By not following a similar policy in Shoa Theodros failed to win the sympathies of the "Shoans" away from their attachment to their "provincial" independence. The significance of this will become clearer when we come to consider the anti-Imperial feelings which gave rise to revolts against the new regime. In addition to the Maredazmatch, Theodros appointed Ato Andargatchaw an Abogaz or frontier governor. It was his duty, as an Abogaz, to see to it that the Shoan subjects who inhabited the frontier provinces lived in peace with those living beyond the frontiers. The duties of an Abogaz were by no means easy; it was for this reason that Haile Malakot and his predecessors had appointed at least four Abogazoch,² one

¹ FO 1/9 Plowden to Earl of Clarendon, 25.6.1855, Enclosure.

² Amharic plural for Abogaz.

responsible for each of the four frontiers of Shoa. Here again the innovation could not have contributed to strengthening the Emperor's hold over the conquered kingdom. One frontier governor could not successfully see to the maintenance of law and order at the four frontiers, especially since he did not have a large army and also communications were so poor at the time. Further, Ato Andargatchaw who was appointed to this post had been a devoted official of the Shoan dynasty and had fought courageously against the imperial forces. It is possible that the courage of Andargatchaw and the popularity which he enjoyed in the country influenced the Emperor in appointing him to the post in the hope of making advantageous use of his qualities and popularity. Much as he could have been a useful agent for the Emperor, the indications are that Andargatchaw was more of a liability than an asset to the imperial administration in Shoa.

Our sources do not tell us what happened to the numerous officials of the former administration, the shums, the district and provincial governors, the court officials, all of whom had useful parts to play.¹ It is not unreasonable,

¹See Chapter IV.

however, to assume that the lower grades of the former hierarchy were left undisturbed by the conqueror, and that it was only the most important top grades which were re-organised.¹ This was another of the Emperor's mistakes in connection with the re-organization of the administration of Shoa, for these lower officials had been the backbone of the former regime and no conquest of Shoa could last long unless the lower ranks of the monarchical administration were re-organised. The assumption that the lower grades were left untouched is strengthened by the fact that we are told in the sources that Theodros issued a proclamation to confirm the laws which existed during the previous administration.² There appears to have been one exception, and this referred to the murder law passed by Sahla Selassie. According to this law murder was punishable by the death of the culprit as well as his whole family, and the confiscation of their property by the State.³ This was undoubtedly a harsh law, but its purpose

¹The assumption becomes more valid when one considers the factors which facilitated Menelik's re-conquest. See below.

²Walda Maryam: op.cit., pp. 17-18.

³Ibid.

was clear and simple. Sahla Selassie wanted to make Shoa a safe and peaceful place to live, and his murder law, together with his property and theft laws, were designed to achieve this purpose.¹ The severity of the law against murder could not escape Theodros, who had already shown himself, among other things, a social reformer. He therefore humanized this law by stipulating that only the person convicted of murder should be executed and that any members of his family would be executed only if they were proved to have been accomplices or found at the place of murder at the time when the offence was committed.²

Having thus settled the administration of Shoa, Theodros left Ankober for Gondar by way of Godjam and Beghena.³ Taking with him, as prisoners of war, Prince Menelik, the son of Haile Malakot, his mother, and a number of the chief men of Shoa including Ato Nadaw, Ato Dargue and Walda Tsadek.⁴

¹See Chapter IV.

²Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.18.

³He arrived back in Gondar in June 1856.

⁴ASSGI: Cartoni VI^c. Chiarim: "Memoria... sulla storia recente dello Scioa..." 23.11.1877.

It was thus that the independent kingdom of Shoa was conquered by the Emperor Theodros. It was not without a desperate struggle that the inhabitants of Shoa yielded to the conqueror, and their capitulation was hastened by the sudden illness and subsequent death of their sovereign at the time when the struggle was at its climax. For the next nine years the "Shoans" lived under the "Maredazmatchship" established by the conqueror; but throughout that period they strove unceasingly to regain their independence; the history of Shoa in those years is, therefore, the story of revolts against the Imperial administration.

In view of the criticisms which have been made against the methods by which the Emperor hoped to win the support of the conquered kingdom of Shoa, it is remarkable that the conquest lasted as long as it did. One is tempted to think that there must have been a considerable body of men in the kingdom who supported the nationalism for which the Emperor stood, and that it was these people who constituted the prop on which the Imperial administration rested. It is difficult however to point at any individuals or group of men. Nevertheless, there must have been such men among the clergy. This suggestion gains weight when it is remembered that for some time the clergy in Shoa, like those in Godjam, Gondar and Tigre, had been

divided on a number of theological questions. Theological discussions and disputes had for some centuries been a feature of the Church in Ethiopia as a whole.¹ By the first half of the 19th century two sects had developed in the Ethiopian church on the question of the nature of the birth of Jesus Christ. There were those who believed in what came to be termed the three births of Christ: "Christ proceeding from the Father, from all eternity ^{was} styled the Eternal 'birth', his incarnation as being born of the Holy Virgin, termed his second or temporal birth, and his reception of the Holy Ghost in the Womb, denominated the third birth".² Opposed to the doctrine of three births were those who denied the third birth and preached two births. Both "sects" or doctrines had a large following in the leading monasteries in the various "provinces" of the Empire, but the doctrine of the two births was particularly strong in Tigre. Both the Emperor Theodros and the Abuna Salama upheld the two births and prohibited the three births throughout the Empire on pain of the offenders

¹See I. Guidi: "La Chiesa Abissina" in Oriente Moderno. Anno II 1922-3, pp. 123-8, 186-90, 252-6.

²IOL: IG 189 No. 2060^D, Harris, 27.11.1841, para 18. For detailed account of these disputes see Gobat: Journal of a Three Years Residence in Abyssinia in Furtherance of the objects of the C.M.S. (Lond. 1834) and Journals of... Isenberg and Krapf.... Lond. 1845.

having their hands cut off.¹

In Shoa the dispute between the adherents of the two doctrines reached dangerous heights in the 1830s when the king, Sahla Selassie, intervened to uphold the three births and "issued a proclamation" that "any subject denying the three births of Christ should forfeit his property and be banished the realm". In consequence of this proclamation a number of leading Churchmen known to have believed in two births were deprived of their posts.² A tense situation was thus developed which, the European travellers then in Shoa feared, might lead to a religious civil war. It must be emphasized that the question of the two or three births was only one of the many issues over which the clergy was divided.

Both chroniclers emphasize that the anxiety to settle the doctrinal disputes among the clergy in Shoa was one of the factors which led the Emperor to conquer Shoa, and that on conquest the doctrine of two births was established in the kingdom.³ It is conceivable therefore that the Emperor found

¹Guidi: Art. cited in Oriente Moderno II, p.190. Abuna is the title given to the metropolitan of the Ethiopian Church.

²LG 189 No. 2060^D, Harris, 27.11.1841, para. 20. CMSA: CM/044, 21: Krapf to Coates, 14.12.1841.

³Walda Maryam: op.cit., pp. 7-10. Alaka Zaneb: op.cit. in RSE, Vol. II 1942, p.150.

support in Shoa among those who had adhered to the doctrine of two births and had, under the old regime, been intimidated and victimized as a result. Considering the influence which the clergy exercised over the minds of the people, it is likely that the adherents of the two births doctrine made quite a following among the inhabitants of the kingdom to espouse the Imperial cause in Shoa. It may also be added that it is quite possible that the governors of the northern provinces of Shoa who submitted after ineffective initial resistance, or without any resistance at all, were believers in two births.

One must, however, not emphasize too strongly the religious issue as a factor which made for what success attended Theodros's conquest of Shoa. Religious sympathies of the kind indicated do not necessarily lead to political alliances; and there is no evidence in the sources of the existence in Shoa of any sizeable body of people who believed in centralism (represented by Theodros) as opposed to provincialism. Indeed, the revolts which broke out against the Imperial administration not only in Shoa but also in other parts of the Empire suggest that, in general, the inhabitants of the Empire were still opposed to Imperial domination. The initial success of the Emperor's conquest of Shoa must therefore be sought in factors other than the support of those who were in agreement

with the Emperor about certain theological issues.

It would seem that those who submitted initially to the Emperor did so more out of fear than out of disloyalty to the Shoan monarchy or sympathy with the aspirations of the invader. This fear must have been due to exaggerated reports about the Emperor's military prowess and resources. As has been remarked already, the submission of the northern provincial governors weakened both the total numerical strength and the morale of the "Shoans" who could be put to the field against the Emperor. The situation was complicated for the Shoans by the untimely death of their king. The psychological effect of the king's death at that difficult moment upon a priest-ridden and superstitious society should not be under-estimated. These factors, more than the religious sympathies, must have led to the collapse of Shoan resistance in 1856. Later when the Shoans had recovered from the shock of the events they successfully resisted all efforts by the Imperial administration to pacify the kingdom.

The resistance of the "Shoans" against the Imperial government found leadership in the Prince Seifou Selassie, the younger brother of the deceased Haile Malakot. Seifou appears to have been one of the few chief men of Shoa who managed to escape

capture by Theodros. The first series of revolts was protracted and was brought to an end only by the death of the Prince in 1860. The rebels defeated the imperial administrators in a series of battles fought between 1856 and 1859. In 1859 the Maredazmatch Haile Mikael was summoned to Magdala, the Emperor's headquarters, deprived of his post and put in chains.¹ We are not told what happened to Ato Andargatchaw, the Abogaz, but from 1859 he fades out of the picture, and one suspects that he was either killed in the revolts or imprisoned with the Maredazmatch.

The explanation for the imprisonment of the Maredazmatch (and possibly of the Abogaz Andargatchaw) was that he had not proved equal to the task of governing Shoa and had been unable to quell revolts in that part of the Empire. In his place Ato Aboye (Abboye) was appointed as governor and Ato Bezabu as Abogaz. The new administrators had no better luck than their predecessors had had against the rebels who had by now occupied the capital, Ankober. It would have been remarkable if they had had successes for, as we have seen, their administration does

¹Alaka Zaneb: op.cit., in O.M. II, p.174. G. Sellasié: op.cit. I, pp. 93-4. Cecchi: Da Zeila, I, p.256.

not appear to have had much support in the kingdom. After suffering repeated defeats, the governors sent a messenger to Theodros undoubtedly to ask for reinforcements. This brought the Emperor to Shoa for the second time. Plowden, who was then in Gondar, places the Emperor's second visit to Shoa at the beginning of October, 1859.¹ The rebels successfully repulsed every assault on the city, inflicting severe losses on their opponents.² Unable to make any headway against the rebels, Theodros decided to abandon the struggle and gave orders to his men to withdraw.

In this unsuccessful attempt by the Emperor to capture the rebel stronghold Ankober, we have evidence of the exaggerated reports about the invincibility of the Imperial army. Admittedly the need to put down revolts in some parts of the northern half of the Empire had considerably reduced the numerical strength of the invading army, but a reduced fighting strength was no less true of the Shoan rebels. On this occasion as on the first, it may be said that events played into the Emperor's hands, for just at the point when the Imperial forces withdrew from the attack, Prince Seifou made an error of judgment which robbed him of the fruits of

¹F.O.1/11: Plowden to H.M.'s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 2.2.1860.

²Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.25. Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.96.

day's hard fighting. He decided to abandon Ankober and pursue the enemy into the plains below. His decision appears to have been unpopular with a section of his army; they rightly suspected that the enemy's action might be a trap to entice them on to the plain, and thereby deprive Seifou of the advantage of fighting from a mountain top. Accordingly, this section of Seifou's soldiers, numbering some five hundred men, refused to follow their leader into the plains and remained behind to guard the city.¹

When Theodros saw that Seifou had abandoned the city and was pursuing the Imperial forces, he turned round, gave him a battle and succeeded in scattering Seifou's soldiers; then he made an assault on Ankober which, after strong initial resistance by the five hundred soldiers still there, fell to the Imperial soldiers. The fall of Ankober was followed by pillage and massacre of not only soldiers but also the clergy, and much church property was either destroyed or captured.²

¹I have followed Cecchi for this part of the story. The three chronicles (Walda Maryam, 25, Alaka Zaneb in RSE II, 180, Sellassié, I, 96) say that the discovery that Theodros was personally leading the attack unnerved Seifou who, thereupon, fled in fear leaving Ankober to its fate. Cecchi: op.cit., I, p.257.

²Walda Maryam, op.cit., p.25-26. Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.96. Cecchi: Da Zeila, I, p.257. Cecchi adds that Theodros set the city on fire; and Walda Maryam estimates that the Emperor lost 1600 men in the battle.

That the Church should have been a target for attack from the Emperor's soldiers suggests that the clergy played a part in the resistance to the Imperial government. It is likely that the "defeated" adherents of the doctrine of three births, who appear to have been in the majority in the Church in Shoa, stirred up anti-imperial feelings in the ordinary people. The Emperor does not appear to have learnt any lesson from the revolts, for he left the administration and the defence systems of Shoa the same as they had been under Maredazmatch Haile Mikael, and returned to Magdala leaving Aboye and Bezabu in control at Ankober. On his way to the north the Emperor devastated the Shoan province of Morabiete over which Prince Seifou had been the governor and brought panic and disorder into that province. It was in his attempt to restore order there that Seifou was killed in June 1860.¹

The death of Prince Seifou Selassie brought the first wave of revolts in Shoa to an end, but for the next three years the "Shoans" lived in an uneasy peace. Although the Seifou revolt failed, its lesson ought to have been clear to Theodros and his representatives in Shoa. The enthusiasm with

¹Cecchi: op.cit., I, 258-9.

which the Shoans responded to Seifou's call to arms and the daring with which they prosecuted their designs ought to have warned the Emperor that the Shoans would spare no effort to win back their independence. What is surprising was that Theodros should have failed to garrison Akober with troops from the north under one of his own faithful captains, but should have depended, as he appears to have done, on his religious sympathisers in Shoa for the peace and security of his southern conquest. One is led to believe that he failed to understand the attitude of the "Shoans" towards his conquest of their kingdom, and under-estimated their loyalty to the independent Shoa which they had helped to build.

In late 1863 or early in 1864¹ the second series of revolts broke out in Shoa. This time they were led by Abogaz Bezabu, one of the two officials appointed by Theodros to govern Shoa. The fact that a representative of the Imperial regime did turn against the Emperor indicates that Theodros's conquest of Shoa was not as popular as the Emperor appears to have believed. About this time Ato Aboye took the annual

¹Sellassié: op.cit., I, 97, n.10. The Editor depends here on Stern's The Captive Missionary pp. 214-6 where Theodros' attempt to put down revolts in Wallo and Shoa are described.

tribute¹ to the north to the Emperor and left Bezabu behind to maintain peace in Shoa. Taking advantage of the absence of his superior, Bezabu proclaimed himself negous (king) of Shoa.² In taking this action Bezabu certainly reckoned on the absence of popular support for the Emperor's rule in Shoa. The "Shoans" had not as yet come to accept Theodros's conquest as a fait accompli. Their loyalty to the old order was deep-seated, and all that they needed to rebel was a leader who would restore the old order. Nobody knew this better than a man who for four years had represented the interests of Theodros in Shoa. In his campaign, therefore, Bezabu undoubtedly represented himself as a man pledged to restore the old order, the champion of the conquered people against the conqueror.³ Further, Bezabu must have counted on the fact that the military reputation of Theodros which had driven the Manzians to submit without resistance was exaggerated. He must have realized during the last campaign that, but for the tactical mistake of Prince Seifou, Theodros could hardly

¹Alaka Zaneb (RSE II, p.174) estimates the annual tribute paid by Shoa at 100 horses, 788 mules, 10,000 thalers, several oxen, 1000 sciamma (a kind of shirt) and other unspecified articles.

²Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.54. Sellassié: op.cit., I, 97. Cecchi: op.cit., I, 260.

³Sellassié: idem.: The chronicler attributes the following speech to Bezabu: "If Menelik, the son of my former master returns, I shall hand over the reins of government to him, but if anybody else comes claiming to be master of Shoa I shall not abandon it (Shoa)" i.e. I shall oppose any such pretender.

have taken Ankober. All these thoughts must have weighed heavily in the mind of Bezabu when he rebelled against the Emperor Theodros.

It is interesting to note that some time earlier, Bezabu had sent messengers to Tadjura to purchase firearms.¹ This is significant for it indicates to what extent the rebels in Shoa, like those in Tigre, were determined to fight for the overthrow of the Imperial regime. In seeking to re-open contact between Shoa and the coast, which must have been closed as a result of Theodros's conquest and the consequent insecurity in the kingdom, Bezabu also demonstrated to the people his determination, even if only apparent, to restore the old order.

With rebellions in Wallo and other parts of the Empire, Theodros was in a difficult situation, but for the third time he marched southwards to Shoa to suppress the rebel Abogaz. His plan appears to have been first to put down the rebellion in the Wallo country under the leadership of Waizero Warqit, and after that to continue to Shoa. Not much success attended

¹M & D (Afrique) Vol. 63, pp. 276-8: Betsabe to a certain Ghebra /Geubra/ Hajwat, 2.4.1863.

the Emperor's campaign in either the Wallo region or Shoa. The Wallo Galla, without hazarding a battle, withdrew to some distant and inaccessible ambas from where they "began a destructive guerilla war" against the Emperor. "Numerous bands... hovered around the [Emperor's] camp when it rested, or assailed its rear when it moved".¹ The effect of the Wallo activity on the Imperial army was that the soldiers were exhausted and dispirited by the time they arrived in Shoa; consequently their fighting strength was weakened. In the circumstance it is not surprising that the Imperial army could not dislodge the rebels from the naturally impregnable fortress of the Afgara in Manz from where the latter attacked the invaders. Unable to make any headway against the rebels, his army already weakened by the campaign in the Wallo country, and pressed by the need to attend to other rebellions in the northern part of his Empire, Theodros withdrew from the attack. All that he could do was to plunder the nearby provinces; he returned to Magdala and left Shoa in the hands of the rebel leader. As it turned out, Theodros was never again to set foot in Shoa, and by the

¹Rev. H. A. Stern: The Captive Missionary (Lond. 1868), p.215.

time he died in April 1868, the kingdom which he had sought to annex to his Empire had re-established its independence under the Prince who, for nearly ten years, was his prisoner at Magdala.

Menelik's escape from Magdala and his reconquest of Shoa constitute a fascinating episode in the history of the kingdom. Born in August 1844 Menelik's mother was a lady of humble birth who, for some time, was employed as children's nurse in the royal household.¹ Menelik was only about eleven years old when Shoa was conquered by Theodros and he, together with other chief men of the kingdom, was taken prisoner to Magdala. It was here therefore that Menelik spent most of his adolescent and formative years. The influence which this period had on the shaping of both his character and future policy will make an interesting study. Here we cannot do more than to point out that the policy which Menelik was later to follow as king of Shoa, especially the use which he made of Europeans, appears to have had roots in this period. While he was at Magdala Menelik was well treated and had for a playmate

¹Sellassié: op.cit., I, pp. 73, 74-5. In note 3 on p.73 the Editor dates Menelik's birth to 17th August 1844.

the Emperor's son, lijjj¹ Mashasha. Both boys appear to have been directly under the care of Dedjatch Ubie, the former ruler of Tigre, at this time also a prisoner at Magdala.² Menelik was loved not only by the soldiers and his fellow prisoners but also by the Emperor who later gave his daughter in marriage to the Shoan prince.³ Well treated though he was, Menelik was burning with the desire to ascend the throne of his ancestors and to restore Shoa to the peace and prosperity to which the kingdom had been used. And he began to contemplate plans to escape.

While the desire to ascend the Shoan throne may have been inherent in his princely birth, and was merely sharpened by circumstances in which he found himself, the thought of escape seems to have come to Menelik from two possible sources. The first source would be Magdala itself, and could have included not only the Shoan chiefs imprisoned there with Menelik but also Dedjatch Ubie and even the Abuna and the clergy all of whom had lately encountered the hostility of the Emperor. All

¹Literally meaning boy, it is generally attached to the names of the sons of the Imperial family as a form of title.

²Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.40.

³Walda Maryam: ibid. Stern: The Captive Missionary, p.219. Sellassié: op.cit., I, 94. In note 5 the Editor names her as Zauditu.

these leaders must have believed that of all the "princes" detained at Magdala only Menelik had any chances of escaping because of the freedom of movement which he was allowed by the Emperor. Further it was only Menelik who, once he had escaped, could win back the support of his country to resist successfully the power of the Emperor who had of late degenerated into a blood-thirsty tyrant. The second source from which the thought of escape could have come to Menelik was Shoa, where resistance to the Imperial conquest had not wavered since 1856. One would like to think that Menelik was the cause of the troubles that the Imperial administration faced in Shoa, as is indeed suggested by the speech attributed to Bezabu.¹ Menelik must in fact have been the centre of an elaborate intrigue in Shoa to oust the Imperial government and to restore the Shoan dynasty. Although there is no evidence in the sources to indicate that Menelik was in touch with events in Shoa, this may well have been the case; and contact between him and the rebel leaders in Shoa could not have been as difficult as one might think. Letters could have been exchanged between the leaders in Shoa and Menelik at Magdala without

¹See p. 104. n. 3

the Emperor finding out. That this was possible was proved by the fact that the Abuna who was still a prisoner at Magdala was able to communicate with Menelik after the latter had escaped to Shoa.¹ Thus Menelik's desire to return to Shoa was sharpened by the encouraging support which he must have obtained both within certain circles at Magdala and in Shoa itself.

The escape from Magdala was effected on the night of June 30, 1865; Menelik was accompanied by his mother and only a few of the Shoan chief men imprisoned with him. The route of escape lay south-eastwards through the district of Warra Haimanou, across the Maskal mountain, and southwards to Boroumeda where Menelik was given an enthusiastic welcome by the Wallo Galla Queen Warqit. The Galla Queen even gave Menelik an escort consisting of three detachments of Wallo troops to take to Shoa.²

On the face of it Warqit's reception of Menelik appears unusual. She is represented as a fanatical Muslim who had the

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.51.

²Letters from the Captive Missionaries in Abyssinia (Lond.1868), p.2. Stern to Charlotte /Stern? dated Amba Magdala, 13.7.1865.

habit of burning down Christian churches.¹ And the political relations between the Wallo and the Shoan frontier governors were, on the whole, anything but friendly.² Thus either religiously or politically the Wallo Galla had virtually nothing in common with Shoa which could understandably explain Warqit's behaviour. Further, Warqit's own son, Imam Amedi Ali Liben, the hereditary Prince of the Wallo Galla, was at this time a prisoner in Magdala, and Warqit could hardly have failed to realise that her son might have to suffer for it if she connived at Menelik's escape, as indeed it happened.³ However, Warqit may have reconciled herself to the painful fact that her son might never come back alive from Magdala, and she was, therefore, prepared to take whatever measures she could to revenge herself on Theodros. Ironically, Warqit had something in common with Menelik and the Shoans. Both the Wallo Galla and the "Shoans" were rebels against Theodros

¹ Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.9.

² Krapf: in Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.314, 316.
IOL: LG 189 No. 2031, Harris 10.11.1841. paras. 29-30.
Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.9,

³ When Theodros heard of the escape and of the reception of Menelik by the Wallo Queen Warqit, he ordered the immediate execution of the Wallo Prince together with 24 of the Wallo prisoners. See Walda Maryam, p.40; also F.O.401/2, Rassam to Lieut.-Colonel Merewether, 15.8.1865; Stern, letter cited. It is remarkable that the Shoan chief men who remained behind at Magdala should have remained unmolested while the Wallo prisoners were executed.

and, in helping the success of Menelik's escape and with it the success of the Shoan revolt, Warqit believed that she was inflicting a humiliating revenge on Theodros.

The escort of three detachments of Wallo soldiers which Menelik had, could hardly have been a match if the "Shoans" had offered a serious opposition to the entry of Menelik into Shoa. As it happened the governor of the frontier province of Geshe, Dedjatch Waldie and the governor of the district of Antokia (Antsokia) in the province of Efrata submitted without any resistance and, together with their men, joined the ranks of the Prince.¹

As a result of his revolt against Theodros, and in order to prevent any sudden attack on Ankober by the Emperor, Bezabu had stationed soldiers to guard the various defiles which led from the frontier provinces into the central province of Shoa. One such guard was posted at the river Katchenee defile in the district of Dair, the southern district of Geshe. "The defile is the principal pass and entrance into the centre of Shoa. The banks of this defile are so steep and high that the natives would be able, by throwing stones upon the invader,

¹Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.103.

to check a whole army."¹ Both the guard and the governor of Dair submitted to Menelik without resistance. The abandonment of this strategic defile by the soldiers of Bezabu and their defection greatly facilitated the ascent of Menelik and his party and their advance into the centre of Shoa. So far Menelik's advance had been devoid of any military encounter; the inhabitants of these provinces who had been shaken with fear and had submitted to the Emperor were now proving that they were not disloyal to the Nagassi dynasty. But the easy advance of the Prince was not to continue as far as Ankober, for Bezabu, the rebel governor who now controlled Shoa, was not without his devoted followers. Among them was the provincial governor of Efrata, Ato Habta Yassus, who opposed Menelik's advance. In Efrata, therefore, Menelik's party had to fight the first battle of the reconquest. The royalists won the battle, and captured in addition to Habta Yassus and some of his soldiers, eighty rifles, horses and mules; all of which went to strengthen the fighting power of Menelik and his party.²

¹Krapf: Journal, p.314. "From Manz," Krapf writes on the same page, "one descends some 3,000 ft. through this defile at the foot of which flows the river Katchenee which separates the province of Manz from that of Geshe."

²Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.103.

With the submission of Geshe and the conquest of Efrata Menelik won the northern provinces to his side. This gave him sufficient soldiers to be able to fight his way to the throne if this became necessary. It also strengthened the morale not only of himself but also of his Wallo escort; Menelik was therefore able to proclaim himself King of Shoa when he arrived at Ghedem (Geddem). When the news of Menelik's advance reached Bezabu he assembled the men who had helped him to rebel against Theodoros and led them in person against the advancing Prince. Bezabu had tasted power and as a rebel ruler of Shoa was probably beginning to enjoy the loyalty and confidence of the inhabitants who, as has been suggested, looked upon him as champion of the old order; he was therefore, understandably reluctant to relinquish the position of power which he had seized. It is even possible that, in order to win the support of his soldiers against Menelik, Bezabu represented the advance of the Prince as another of the Emperor's attempts at subjugating the revolted province of Shoa. This suggestion

¹Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.103.

becomes more plausible when we consider how Menelik won the battle against Bezabu which took place on the plain of Gadilo in the province of Geddem. The encounter could hardly be called a battle, for the sources agree on the fact that when Bezabu's soldiers realized that the "invader" was Menelik and not Theodros, the majority refused to fight against the prince on whose behalf they had for so long resisted the Imperial government in the kingdom. Bezabu thus found to his dismay that he had not sufficient followers to fight the battle; and it was with difficulty that he escaped capture and fled to seek safety on the fortress of Afqara.¹

Menelik entered Ankober in triumph about the end of August 1865. His first act as King of Shoa was to abolish whatever changes were introduced during the Imperial administration and to reinstate the officials who had served under his father and grandfather. This re-organization was particularly needed in the Church where the official establishment of the doctrine of two births by the Emperor had caused much confusion. The doctrine of three births was re-established in

¹Walda Maryam: op.cit., pp. 54-5. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.262. G. Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, p.104. Sellassié dates the "battle of Gadilo" to Monday, 16th of Mahassie, about 23rd August 1865.

Shoa and the clergy who had been dismissed by the Emperor were re-instated. It must be pointed out however that the doctrine of three births was again to be abolished and replaced by that of two births by the Emperor Yohannes IV in 1878 after he had come to an agreement with Menelik in that year.¹ After a short stay in Ankober, Menelik was said to have gone on a country-wide tour of his kingdom, no doubt to proclaim the end of the inter-regnum and the dawn of a new and hopeful era for the inhabitants of Shoa.² As for Bezabu, he was graciously pardoned and made governor of the district of Abba Moti in the province of Tegulet; however, when later he was found to be stirring up insurrections in his district, he was captured, tried publicly for treason and executed.³ The execution of Bezabu removed the only possible immediate threat to the security of the new regime, and central Shoa became tranquil. Menelik then turned his attention to the frontier Galla who were

¹I. Guidi: "La Chiesa Abissina" in Oriente Moderno, Anno II 1922-3, p.190. See also Chapter III, pp.158-164

²Walda Maryam: op.cit., p.55. G. Sellasié: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 104-5.

³Walda Maryam: op.cit., loc.cit. G. Sellasié: op.cit., I, pp. 105-6. Cecchi: op.cit., I, pp. 263-4.

prone to be rebellious, and by 1868 he had pacified the frontier districts of his kingdom.

The British Expedition to Magdala and the death of Theodros in April 1868 led to the return, to their native country, of those Shoan chief men who still remained prisoners at Magdala after the escape of Menelik; among these were Ato Dargue, Ato Nadaw and Walda Tsadek. The return of these men to Shoa removed the last stain of Theodros' conquest of the kingdom and the restoration may be said to have become complete.

As has been seen Theodros' conquest of Shoa failed for two related reasons. First, the Emperor failed to effect a thorough re-organization of the administration of the conquered kingdom, as he tended to do in the northern provinces. It may be argued that he did not have nearly enough soldiers to have been able to spare some to garrison the distant province of Shoa. Whatever his reason might have been, the failure to introduce into Shoa the policy which he had found useful in the north played into the hands of the opponents of the conquest. These opponents of the imperial regime were able to organize effective resistance against the government and this made the Emperor's control over the conquered kingdom tenuous. The second factor which contributed to the failure of the Emperor's conquest was the loyalty of the inhabitants of Shoa to

the dynasty under which the country had grown to become peaceful and prosperous. It is true that some of the inhabitants wavered under the shock of an invasion by the Emperor; this shock was heightened by the untimely death of their king at the critical moment, an incident which must have had a great psychological effect on the invaded country. Nevertheless, the majority of the inhabitants of Shoa remained loyal to the heir to the throne despite the fact that the Prince was for nearly ten years a prisoner at the Emperor's headquarters. Their loyalty expressed itself in the series of revolts which broke out against the representatives of the Emperor in the kingdom. It was these same factors which made the restoration of the old dynasty probable, and when it came it was rapid and almost bloodless. The restored king embarked upon a policy of aggrandizement which not only made the name of Shoa feared and respected in all Abyssinia, but eventually made the kingdom of Shoa the centre of a regenerated Empire.

Chapter IIITHE REIGN OF MENELIK

The reign of Menelik effected the regeneration of Shoa after the decline which followed the conquest of the Kingdom by the Emperor Theodros. The reign was marked by developments which can be grouped under three main heads: Firstly, the influx of European nationals into Shoa and the development of a more sustained relations with Europeans than had hitherto been the case with the rulers of Shoa. Secondly, greater involvement with the provinces north of Shoa and with the politics of the Empire as a whole. Thirdly, the expansion of the Kingdom to incorporate the vast Galla populations inhabiting the regions to the south, south-west and south-east of Shoa. This grouping is completely arbitrary and is made only for the convenience in treating the reign. All the developments were closely interwoven and each had marked effects upon the others. For example, the influx of Europeans closely affected Shoa's relations with the northern princes, as well as her expansion. Besides these "major" events, there took place, in a more domestic sense, developments whose contribution to the "major" events were no less important. Among these

were the growth of a regular **army** and the development of an administrative machinery which catered for the needs of the expanding Kingdom and became, after 1889, the basis for the administration of the United Empire.¹

The influx of various European nationals into Shoa during Menelik's reign had important effects on the final stages of the rise of the Kingdom. During the reign of Sahela Selassie, for the first time in our period, Shoa was visited by Europeans. Through these Europeans Sahela Selassie made contacts with Britain and France, but nothing positive came out of these contacts, and after about 1844 no more Europeans came to Shoa until the reign of Menelik.² In 1848-9 Haile Malakot, and again in 1863, Bezabu, one of the Shoans appointed by Emperor Theodros to govern Shoa, tried without success to re-open contact with Europe.³

On returning to Shoa after his escape from Magdala in 1865, one of the first acts of Menelik was to re-open contact with the British and French agents in Aden. In his letter to

¹See Chapters IV and VI.

²See Chapter I.

³See Chapter II.

the French consul Menelik made a direct request for cannon and muskets. Very early in his reign Menelik realized the immense value which European firearms would be to him. He needed improved European weapons not because he wanted to act against Theodros as the European agents claimed¹, but to be better able to defend Shoa should Theodros re-invade the Kingdom. Moreover, he needed firearms to pacify his rebellious Galla countries to the south and south-west of Shoa. Menelik was, however, frustrated by the British, who fearing that arming Menelik would complicate their involvement with Theodros, made representations to the French officials both in Paris and at Aden.² As a result, Menelik's military strength was for the next decade very weak.

In the letter³ which Menelik sent to the English Agent in 1867 he made no formal request for firearms, but proposed the renewal of the friendly relations which the British had entertained with Shoa during the reign of Sahela Selassie. In expressing the hope that "..... my country will not again be lost", Menelik expressed in a nutshell the objective which lay behind his approaches

¹F.O. 401/2 p.644. Merewether to Lord Stanley, 11.7.1867. This Despatch is printed in Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, p.410. See also ibid. p. 681. Footnote.

²Ibid., Merewether's Despatch quoted.

³Ibid., p.641. Same to Same, 20.7.1867.

to the Europeans. In his dealing with the Europeans Menelik's foremost interest was to safeguard the independence of the Kingdom over which he ruled. As he saw it the only way by which he could achieve this was to build up Shoa's military strength to a position strong enough to resist successfully, and if possible, conquer, his neighbours, including the northern provinces of the Empire. The first thing that he wanted from the Europeans therefore was an unlimited supply of firearms.

Besides firearms, Menelik would employ any European willing to work for him on any aspect of development which contributed to the security of Shoa. Thus in 1877 a Frenchman named Pottier was employed in training a group of Shoan youths in European military techniques.¹ Another Frenchman, Pino, was a regular officer in the Army which was commanded by Ras Gobana. Swiss engineers, Alfred Ilg and Z  mmermann, were employed on, among other things, building bridges across the Hawash and other rivers to facilitate movement within the Kingdom.² The Italian physicians, Dr. Alfieri and Dr. Traversi, were made use

¹G. Massaia: I Miei Trentacinque Anni di Missione nell'Alta Etiopia, Milano 1885, Vol. X p.193. Pottier was killed in the same year while fighting the rebellion of April-May, 1877.

²C. F. Audon: "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde 2e Semestre 1889, also Traversi, "Viaggio nei Guraghe" in B.S.G.I. 1887. p. 277.

of by the King as his regular personal doctors, and from time to time were allowed to attend important dignitaries. Gradually Menelik had come to appreciate the advantage of having a medical officer with him on his campaigns, and took to the practice so seriously that he found it necessary to delay Traversi's visit to the south-western Galla provinces in 1887 because, as Traversi explained, he would not like to go on a campaign "senza medico".¹ And quite a few of the Europeans who went to Shoa were, on a number of occasions, consulted by Menelik on important issues. For example, Massaia played a considerable role in bringing about reconciliation between Menelik and his cousin Machacha Seifou, after the latter's rebellion in 1877.² The first mission which Menelik sent to Europe in 1872 under Abba Micael owed not a little to Massaia, and the second mission which was confided to a Frenchman, Pierre Arnoux, owes its initiative wholly to the Frenchman.³

¹ Traversi: "Escursione nel Gimma" in B.S.G.I. serie III, Vol. I, 1888. p.901.

² A. Cecchi: Da Zeila alle Frontiere del Caffa, Roma 1886. Vol. I, p.271. Massaia: op.cit., Vol. X, pp. 202-3.

³ L. L. Lande: "Un Voyageur Français dans l'Ethiopie Méridionale" in Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, 15th December, 1878. p. 887-8, and Passim; also 2nd Article in R. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 31, p.390 and Passim.

In the use which Menelik made of Europeans, as in many other aspects of his policy, he took his example from the Emperor Theodros at whose court he had spent the formative period of his life. Theodros had made use of missionaries who lived in Gaffat for the manufacture of gunpowder and had had an Englishman John Bell as a regular soldier in his army. Accredited to his court, though resident at Massowah, was a British consul, Plowden, and after Plowden's death in 1860, Cameron. Menelik, however, made a more extensive use of Europeans than Theodros ever did. In the course of this essay, an attempt will be made to show that Menlik had much of his later policy roughly formulated in his mind before he reached Shoa after his escape in 1865.

Early in March 1868 the Catholic missionary, Mgr. Massaia, the first European to arrive in Menelik's Shoa, reached the Kingdom. From Zeila the missionary had written to ask, and ostensibly obtained, the permission of Menelik to pass through Shoa to the south-westerly Galla region where he had established a mission between 1852 and 1864.¹ On reaching Shoa, however,

¹The material on the "Mission to the Galla" is in the Archives of the Collegio della Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide in Rome, the series Scritture Riferite nei Congressi. The Mission was instituted in 1846 as a result of representations made to the Roman Catholic Authorities in Rome by the celebrated French traveller Antoine d'Abbadie, who had visited part of the Galla region in 1839-43. Massaia first entered the region in 1852 by way of the Sudan, Abay and Godjam.

Massaia was persuaded by Menelik to stay in Shoa and from 1868 until 1879 Massaia lived in Shoa. He was later joined in Shoa by the other missionaries who had been with him in the south-west; Léon des Avanchers, however, remained on in Ghera where he was met by Cecchi and Chiarini in 1879-80.

Massaia's request to enter Shoa came at a time when Menelik was still fighting to establish himself in power after his escape from Magdala and seeking to make friendly relations with the European powers on the Red Sea coast. He therefore saw the presence of a European in his country as a favourable opportunity for his contact with Europe. This was probably the reason why he persuaded Massaia to stay in Shoa. Menelik hoped that with the help of Massaia he might be able to secure the help which he needed from the European powers. As it turned out this was not an idle hope for, upon the advice of Massaia, Menelik sent a mission under an Abyssinian, Abba Michael to Europe in 1872.¹ The object of the mission was to establish friendly relations with the governments of England, France, Italy and the Papacy. Abba Michael visited only Italy, and

¹Massaia: I. Miei.... Vol. X pp. 12-21. Libro Verde No. XV (Documenti) Etiopia. Doc. II, p.25 Massaia to S.M. Vittorio Emanuelè, dated Filogov (Scioa) 25.6.1872.

although received in audience by the King of Italy his mission failed to achieve its declared objective. Yet, it would be wrong to consider Abba Michael's mission as a hopeless failure, for it contributed to bring Shoa to the attention of the Italian authorities; this fact, no doubt, resulted in the selection of Shoa as a route and a base for the scientific mission which the Italian geographical society was to send in 1876 to explore the lake regions of Equatorial Africa.¹ Seen from the long-term point of view, Abba Michael's mission was not without its achievement.

The arrival in Shoa in September 1874 of the French merchant Pierre Arnoux marked a stage further in Menelik's involvement with Europeans.

For many centuries the Red Sea coasts had attracted visitors from various nations. The importance of the Red Sea area derives from the channel which it provided between Africa, the Mediterranean World and Arabia. In the early decades of the 19th century the revival of trade in Arabia soon had its repercussions in the Red Sea, and led to a similar trade revival in this part of the world. The ports of the Red Sea were at this time controlled by the Ottoman Empire, but this did not deter France and

¹Infra, pp. 135-9

Britain from trying to get a footing on the Red Sea coast. Indeed, until about 1849 Britain did not officially recognise Turkish control over the Red Sea ports.

The French Ministry of Marine sent a number of expeditions to the Red Sea with a view to developing trade with the ports of the area. One way by which this was to be done was to establish trading posts on the African side of the coast and to enter into friendly relations with the rulers of the hinterland. In the 1830s two of these missions, that of Lefebvre and that of Combes and Tamisier penetrated into Ethiopia. Combes and his friend bought from Dedjatch Ubie, the then ruler of the Province of Tigre, the port of Ait near Massawah with the intention of developing it as a base for Franco-Ethiopian commercial dealings. In 1859, the Bay of Adulis was acquired by France from Negussie, then ruler of Tigre¹ for the same purpose. By a treaty of 11th March 1862, signed with the local ruler, the French Government acquired possession of Obock, situated in the northern part of the bay of Tadjoura. Obock was to be developed to serve the dual purpose of a depot

¹M.A.E. (Paris) M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 63, pp. 408-24.

for the refuelling of French ships to and from the East, and of attracting the trade of Ethiopia. The French were determined to win a position in the East strong enough to rival that which the British had built in India. Throughout the 19th century the French policy in the Red Sea had for its purpose the destruction of British commercial preponderance.¹

The British, on the other hand, were determined to safeguard their interest in the East. One of the methods by which they intended to do this was to secure a dominant position in the Red Sea. Already the British had an agent at the port of (Mocha) Mokha on the Arabian side of the Red Sea. To strengthen their position the British occupied Aden between 1839 and 1840. British commercial interests were not limited to the Arabian side of the Red Sea; they were also interested in the African side of it. It was part of the instructions from the Bombay Government to their agent in Mokha to "(open) communications and (establish) a commercial intercourse with the different chieftains in Abyssinia".² In 1810 one such attempt was made with Henry Salt's mission to Ras Walda Selassie, then ruler of

¹Cf. for example Instructions given to M. Lemay who was sent on a mission to Emperor Yohannes in 1884. M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 105, p.52. "Mission confiée à Mr. Lemay auprès du Roi d'Abyssinie. Instructions données à cet Agent en Nov. 1884."

²F.O. 1/1 p.169. Henry Rudland to General Hewitt, dated Mocha, 30.9.1809. For correspondence on the missions of Henry Salt and William Coffin cf. F.O. 1/1, F.O.1/2, F.O.1/3. For Harris' mission see Chapter I.

Tigre; another was made in the 1820s with W. Coffin's mission to Sabagadis, the successor of Walda Selassie. A third attempt was made with Captain Harris' mission to Sahela Selassie, the King of Shoa in 1841-3. The establishment of a British consulate for Abyssinia (Ethiopia) at Massawah in 1847 was the climax of British activities on the African coast of the Red Sea at this period.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which directly linked the Mediterranean sea to the Red Sea, intensified commercial activities in the area and brought a wave of adventurers anxious to explore and exploit the commercial potential of the African hinterland. By this time, however, Britain's direct interest in Ethiopia had waned, for the basis of her Red Sea policy had altered. The French continued to be interested in the area. Their interest was largely sustained by individual Frenchmen; from time to time rather short-lived commercial companies were floated in France to develop trade with Ethiopia through the port of Obock. Italy was late in coming to the Red Sea, but after 1879 she began to play an increasingly important role both on the Red Sea and the Somali coasts.

Arnoux, who arrived in Shoa in September 1874, was one such individual; he had conceived plans for developing close relations between France and Shoa. France would help Shoa to de-

velop in such a way that she would spearhead the regeneration of the Empire of Ethiopia; a regular commercial route would be open between Shoa and Obock; a colony of French artisans would be established in Shoa to instruct the inhabitants in improved agricultural and industrial activities; the introduction of European medicine into Shoa; training of Shoan army on European lines; introduction of order and efficiency into the Shoan governmental system; in short all the essential elements of European civilization would be introduced into Shoa.¹

Arnoux's project had advantages for both France and Shoa. It would ensure for France a foothold in the hinterland of north-east African coast, with all its commercial and political advantages. For Shoa it would give an European ally from whom Menelik could expect all the material and cultural help he needed for the development of Shoa.

In a number of meetings with Menelik and his chiefs, Arnoux impressed on the King the advantages with which Shoa stood to gain from his project.² Menelik showed great in-

¹M.A.E. (Paris): M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, pp. 334-6, Arnoux's Report on his project. Ibid., pp. 355-73, Arnoux: "Extraits du Journal de voyage".

²M.A.E. (Paris): Ibid., p.356.

terest in the project; he appears to have, without any hesitation, taken the Frenchman into confidence, and in 1876, sent him on a mission to Europe with the authority to establish friendly relations with the governments of France, England, Italy, the Papacy as well as Egypt. Menelik also fitted out a caravan of Shoaan products for Arnoux to take to Europe to demonstrate Shoa's commercial potential.

One must not fall into the temptation of attributing undue influence to Arnoux over the shaping of Menelik's ideas as to how best Shoa could be developed. As far as the ideas themselves are concerned there was little in the Frenchman's proposals that was new to the King. Menelik had all his ideas formed in a nutshell and had already started to put them into execution before Arnoux arrived in Shoa. Between 1865 and 1867 Menelik had sent letters to the French and English officials in Aden soliciting friendship with their respective governments. With the same purpose in view, he had sent a mission, albeit unsuccessful, to Italy in 1872. Realising the importance of commercial contact with the coast, Menelik had appointed in 1871 a certain Cesar Tian as his agent in Aden whose duty it was to endeavour to develop commercial relations between Aden and Shoa.¹ This agent appears to have

¹ IOL: Abyssinia Original Correspondance, Vol. 3. Menelik to (British) Resident at Aden, dated 29 Ma' a zia 1863 (about 5th May 1871). Ibid., Resident at Aden to Menelik, 30.9.1871. Cesar Tian was connected with a French firm of coffee-importers, which was established at Aden.

achieved some success for when Arnoux arrived in Aden in February 1874 on his way to Shoa he met two Abyssinians, Abba Mikael and Ato Warkie, sent there by Menelik to bring merchandise to Shoa. It was in the company of these Abyssinians that Arnoux travelled from Aden to Shoa.¹ Nor did the need to introduce European technology or to establish peace and unity among the various Ethiopian princes escape Menelik, since he referred to these in his letter to the British sovereign in 1869.²

The ready response which Menelik gave to Arnoux's proposals is, therefore, not to be seen as a fascination for the grand new ideas of the Frenchman. It is rather to be seen as an indication of the closeness of Arnoux's ideas to his own. Perhaps what Arnoux succeeded in doing was to give Menelik some education in the techniques of European diplomacy: the importance in stressing in Menelik's letters to the European powers such issues as were likely to interest them, for example,

¹L.L.Lande: "Un Voyageur français" in "Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, 15.12.1878, p.880.

²IOL: Abyssinia Original Corresp., Vol. 3, pp. 759-61: Menelik to Queen Victoria 27 Sanne 1861 (about 4th July 1869). Massaia's influence may have been at work here. In a personal note to Capt. Goodfellow, the British Resident at Aden, accompanying this letter Massaia claimed that "I am the one who exhorted the King to despatch" the letter to the Queen.

the abolition of the slave trade and the encouragement of legitimate trade. This new idea is discernible in the letters Menelik prepared for Arnoux's mission to Europe in 1876 and in his subsequent letters to the European powers.¹ Henceforth Menelik would stress the cultural guidance which Europeans could bring to Shoa. Acting on this new emphasis, Menelik welcomed Europeans of all descriptions, arms merchants, missionaries, both Protestants and Catholic, travellers and explorers including a scientific mission sent by the Italian Geographical Society. The 1880s brought into Shoa a number of Frenchmen many of whom were actively engaged in trading arms to Menelik. Notable among these arms merchants were Paul Soleillet, Léon Chefneux, Jules Brémond and Labatut.

The overall advantages derived by Menelik and his kingdom, though limited, must not be underestimated. Indeed the civilising

¹Cf. for example, Menelik's letters to the European Powers and the British Anti-Slavery Society in 1878 in F.O.407/11. Also see M. & D. (Afrique), Vol. 62, p. 286, Menelik to President MacMahon of France, 19.12.1875. *Ibid.*, Menelik to La Société de géographie de Paris Ankober, 5.2.1879. L.V. No. XV: Doc. 37, pp. 58-60, Menelik to S. M. Umberto I, 28.11.1878. *B.S.G.I.*, Serie II, Vol. XI, p.515. Menelik to La Società geografica Italiana, dated 5 Hamile 1877 (about 13th July 1884/5).

light of Europe began to shine in Shoa. Quite a few individual inhabitants of the Kingdom became acquainted with European languages and served as interpreters for the King and the important dignitaries.¹ Bridges were built by qualified European engineers; scientific medicine was introduced. Upon the request of Dr. Traversi in 1886 the Italian Geographical Society agreed to and took steps toward the construction of a hospital in Antotto.² More important, from Menelik's point of view, the Shoan army was systematically equipped with contemporary European firearms. Menelik's encouragement of the arms traders, and his tolerance for the missionaries angered the Emperor Yohannes, and increased the Emperor's suspicion as to the intentions of Menelik. Thus one of the effects of the presence of Europeans, especially of the Italian agents in Shoa, at a time when the Italians had occupied Massawah and were pushing

¹The famous Joseph Negussie was Menelik's interpreter and "secretary". Ras Gobana had an interpreter; and in 1888 a certain Michael, "son-in-law of Azage Walde Tzadek", who spoke "French, German, English and Arabic" appears to have been Makonen's interpreter in Harrar. Cf. Armando Rondani's letter dated Harrar 1.3.1888, printed in B.S.G.I. serie III - Vol. I, 1888, pp. 580-1.

²Communications between Traversi and the S.G.I. on this subject are to be found in B.S.G.I. Dec. 1886, p.923; B.S.G.I., 1887, p. 497. See also Supra, p.122-2
In 1886 the Italian Geographical Society probably upon the request of the doctors, "sent 14 cases of drugs, surgical instruments, medical books etc. to Assab to be forwarded to Dr. Ragazzi and Dr. Traversi in Shoa." ASMAI, 36/4-37. M.A.E. to General Gené, 5.1.1886.

towards Tigre, was to complicate the relations between Menelik and Yohannes.

The development of Italo-Shoan relations is an important aspect of Menelik's dealing with Europeans. Apart from its effect on Menelik's rule in Shoa, it was to have a profound long term effect on the history of the Ethiopian Empire as a whole.

When in 1872 Abba Mikael, the first Shoan envoy to Europe arrived in Italy, besides the King, he had discussions with Orazio Antinori, a naturalist and an official of the Italian Geographical Society, and impressed on him the willingness of Menelik to receive European travellers. Around this time the Society was thinking of organising a scientific expedition to explore the lake regions of Equatorial Africa and when all the necessary preparations were finished Shoa was chosen as a base for the exploration. The Expedition led by Orazio Antinori arrived in Shoa in September 1876. Its object was twofold: firstly, it was to undertake the scientific exploration of the Galla regions south of Shoa as far as the lake regions of Equatorial Africa - mountains, geology, course of rivers etc; secondly, it was to examine the prospect of opening up commercial relations between Italy

and the countries through which the expedition passed.

This second objective was clearly explained in the letter of introduction which the Expedition carried from the Italian Foreign Minister to Menelik.¹

It would appear that behind these declared objectives was another which was not openly expressed. Italy, which had only recently achieved national unity, was looking for some positive achievement to cement its unity. The Geographical Society thought that the exploration of the hitherto unknown parts of Africa in which other European nations were engaged would be an ideal object to tackle. Success in this enterprise would not only give a new life to united Italy, it would also enhance her position and prestige in Europe.²

In welcoming the Expedition Menelik was induced by the same motive which had led him to welcome Massaia and Arnoux; that is, to make use of the expedition as a channel through which Italian arms and artisans would percolate to Shoa. And this is what happened, for, although the expedition remained, more or less, scientific in nature and objective, it

¹L.V. No. XV, Doc. 17. Annesso. Visconti Venosta to Menelik, 1.3.1876. Sources for the Scientific Expedition are mainly A.S.S.G.I. and the Bulletin of the S.G.I. for period in question.

²M.A.E.I.: A.S.M.A.I., 36/1-4. Memorandum by the S.G.I. to the President of the Council of Minister dated 8.4.1878.

paved the way for the development of commercial and political relations between Shoa and Italy. In 1877 Menelik offered the expedition a tract of land (Let Marefia) two hours north of Ankober on which to make its headquarters. The station established here became the centre of Italian activity in Shoa. With the establishment of the Geographical station the Italian authorities entered into a more frequent communication with Menelik, exhorting him to treat the Italians in Shoa well and offer them freedom of movement to pursue their scientific researches. From time to time gifts of arms and ammunition were offered through the Expedition to Menelik, partly as a way of rewarding, and partly as a way of encouraging his friendly attitude to the expedition. Menelik, on his part, did not hesitate to take advantage of the presence of the Expedition to ingratiate himself with the Italian authorities, and to pursue his policy of hunting for firearms.¹

¹Dissatisfied with the arms offered by the expedition on the arrival of Martini-Bernardi in 1877, Menelik caused Martini to be sent back to Italy in quest for more arms. Martini returned to Shoa in November 1879 with only a few hundred rifles and their accessories.

He treated the expedition well¹ and offered them the opportunity to travel through the kingdom; sometimes he took individual members of the expedition with him on his campaigns of conquest in various directions. From time to time he sent gifts to the King of Italy and these were reciprocated with arms and ammunition. Menelik represented himself to the Italian authorities as being devoted to the suppression of the slave trade and to the pacification of the provinces to the south of Shoa in order to facilitate the travelling and researches of the Expedition.² These ideals coupled with his friendly attitude towards the Italian Expedition in Shoa won him the respect and confidence of not only the Italian Geographical Society but also the Italian Foreign Ministry. Thus when in 1881 Menelik suggested that Antinori be accredited to his Court as a representative of the Italian Government³

¹Antinori in his letters frequently remarked that "(noi) siamo in benissimo rapporti con Re". (We are in excellent relations with the King). See among others: B.S.G.I. serie II, Vol. II 1877, pp. 297-8, Antinori to Bienenfeld, Licce 6.12.1876. Serie II, Vol. V 1880, p.120 Antinori to Martini-Bernardi, Let.-Marefia 4.9.1879.

²See Supra Note 1 on p.133

³L.V. XV. Doc. 45, p.75. Menelik to S.M. Umberto I, Debra Brahan 11.10.1881.

the suggestion was welcomed by the Italian authorities, and Antinori was so appointed; on the death of Antinori in August 1882 Antonelli was appointed to the post.

It is not clear whose influence might have been at work in the initiation of such a diplomatic manoeuvre. It is possible that Menelik derived a precedent from Theodoros's example with Plowden and Cameron; but one wonders if Menelik appreciated the difference between Antinori's position as head of the scientific Expedition and as the Italian Government's representative to Shoa. One would like to believe that the suggestion owed its origin to one or the other of the Italians then in Shoa, possibly Antinori but more likely Antonelli. The indications are that between November 1879, when Antonelli arrived in Shoa, and October 1881 he (Antonelli) had several discussions with Antinori on, amongst other things, the possibility of taking advantage of the Expedition's presence in Shoa to develop commercial and political relations between Italy and Shoa.¹ The subsequent development of Italo-Shoan relations owed not a little to Antonelli and to the favourable impression he made on Menelik during this period. What

¹Carlo Giglio: L'Italia in Africa, Roma, 1958. Vol. I, pp. 148-9. An extremely useful work on Italian activities in the Red Sea and Somali coasts and in Ethiopia in the 19th century.

is clear is that as a result of Antonelli's visit (Nov. 1879-Nov.1881) the semi-official rather detached relations which had existed between Italy and Shoa took a definite turn towards official commercial and political relations.

Pietro Antonelli first arrived in Shoa in November 1879 as a private traveller in the company of Martini-Bernardi a member of the scientific Expedition. He travelled extensively in the kingdom and gradually came to a realization of the possibility of developing commerce between Shoa and Italy by way of Assab. In several interviews with Menelik in October 1880 Antonelli and Antinori discussed with the King, among other subjects, the opening of a route between Assab on the coast and Shoa for commercial purposes.¹ Antonelli had come to believe that Italy could maintain her friendly position in Shoa only if Menelik's desire for firearms was satisfied.² He therefore decided to enter into a private arrangement with Menelik to supply him with two thousand Remington rifles in order to pave the way for the development

¹B.S.G.I., Serie II - Vol. VI, March 1881, pp. 157-166, Antonelli to the President of the S.G.I. Let-Marefia 28.10.1880

²C. Giglio: op.cit., p.154.

of Italo-Shoan commerce by way of Assab.¹ Precisely when this project was discussed with Menelik is not known; it is likely that this was done between February 6 and February 19, 1881 when both Antonelli and Cecchi travelled with Menelik to Worra Ilu from Samera (near Debra Tabor) where all three had taken part in the coronation of Ras Adal as King of Godjam.² The contract was signed on March 27, 1881 at Debra Berhan³ and in November Antonelli left for Italy to look for two thousand rifles to fulfil his part of the contract.

While in Italy Antonelli set to work to win support for his project and found a favourable response from the Foreign Ministry; this was a stroke of luck for Antonelli since the time was favourable to him. The official Italian attitude of absolute disinterestedness in colonial matters underwent a transformation between 1879 and 1882 and thereafter became one of territorial acquisition.

¹Carlo Zagli: "Pietro Antonelli esploratore" in Rivista delle Colonie Italiane. Sept., 1932, pp. 707-716.

²See Infra, pp. 169-170. Also A. Cecchi: Da Zeila Alle frontiere del Caffa, Roma 1886, Vol. II, pp. 582-89.

³A.S.S.G.I. Cartoni VI^C. Antinori alla Commissione Esecutiva della Spedizione Geografica Italiana a Rome, dated Let-Marefa 6.4.1881. Antinori gives the terms of the contract. See also Zagli: Article cited.

Between February and March 1879 the then Italian Foreign Minister, Depretis, under the influence of Raffaele Rubattino and other industrial-commercial interests, had been converted to the need to develop Assab as a base for trade with Ethiopia and to open a regular route from Assab through Aussa to Shoa to divert the trade of Shoa and other southern Galla provinces from Zeila to Tadjura.¹ Depretis's policy was adopted by his successor. In March 1879 Depretis prepared a draft treaty of commerce and sent it to Shoa for Mgr. Massaia to negotiate on behalf of Italy with Menelik² and later enjoined Antinori to discuss with Menelik the opening up of a route from Assab to Shoa. In furtherance of this project Assab was re-occupied and a Civil Commissioner's office established there between 1879 and December 1880.³ It is clear then that Antonelli's project was substantially the same as the official government policy which had been

¹For this development see C. Giglio: op.cit., I, pp. 149-154. Also Ibid., I-36 for official Italian attitude to colonial acquisition before 1884.

²M.A.E.I. (Rome) ASMAI 36/1-8. M.A.E. (Depretis) to Padre Mgr. Massaia, 1.3.1879. The letter and treaty were taken to Shoa by Martini-Bernardi but by the time he arrived in Shoa (Nov. 1879) Massaia had left the Kingdom, expelled by the Emperor Yohannes.

³Assab had been acquired in November 1869 by Sapeto on behalf of the Italian Government but was transferred to the Rubattino Company in February, 1870. see Giglio, op.cit., pp. 103-5 and Note 14 on p.126.

initiated between February and March 1879. It is no surprise, therefore, that Antonelli found a favourable response from the Foreign Ministry.

In June 1882 Mancini, the Foreign Minister charged Antonelli with an official mission to take letters and presents from the King and the Government of Italy to Menelik to reciprocate those which had been received from the Shoa King.¹ Added to these was a draft treaty of commerce and friendship which Antonelli was to negotiate with Menelik.

When Antonelli arrived at Assab on his way to Shoa he completed a treaty with Mohamed Hanfari, the sultan of Aussa in order to make possible the opening of a route from Assab through the Sultan's territory to Shoa;² to show the practicability of such a route Antonelli followed a route hitherto unattempted from Assab through Aussa and Gafat to Shoa. This was the route which was intended to divert Shoa's trade from Zeila and Tadjura.³

¹ASNAI 36/2-11. Mancini (M.A.E.) to Antonelli 1.6.1882.

²L.V. XV. Etiopia p.127. Doc. 60 (Annesso).

³B.S.G.I., Dec. 1883, pp. 857-880. Antonelli "Il mio viaggio da Assab allo Scioa".

When Antonelli arrived in Ankober in April (29) 1883, he presented the letter and gifts of which he was in charge as well as the rifles which he had in 1881 contracted to supply to Menelik. This increased Menelik's confidence in Antonelli and must have made the task of negotiating the treaty considerably easier for Antonelli. The treaty was concluded in Ankober on May 21, 1883.¹ The nineteen articles of the treaty stipulated:

a) Establishment of diplomatic relations and the exchange of consular representatives between Italy and Shoa (Art. 2.).

b) Full freedom of movement for both men and goods from the one country in the other (Art. 3).

c) Religious liberty for the citizens of Italy in Shoa and vice versa (Art. 5).

d) A single, unified duty of 5^o/o ad valorem was to be imposed on trade goods brought into Shoa by Italians;² while goods brought by the subjects of Menelik - export or

¹ASMAI, 36/2-12. Original draft printed in IV. No. XV. Etiopia Doc. 61 (Annesso) pp. 128-131.

²Goods entering Shoa paid duty up to 20^o/o. See Chapter V.

import - would be tax-free in the Italian possession of Assab (Art. 8).

e) Menelik would do all he could to secure the commercial avenues from the interior to Shoa and from Shoa through the Danakil country to Assab, while Italy would see to the security of the coast and its immediate hinterland (Art. 7, 9, 10).

f) Italians in Shoa would be judged according to Italian laws in any offences they might commit in Shoa, and the Shoaan authorities should give every possible assistance to the Italian Consul in Shoa in the discharge of his judicial duties (Art. 13).

g) In disputes between two Italians in Shoa, or between an Italian and a non-Abyssinian, the Italian Consul in Shoa was to arbitrate; in a dispute between an Italian and a subject of the King of Shoa, arbitration was to be done by the Italian Consul assisted by a local judge (Art. 12).

h) Subjects of the King of Shoa when on the coast or outside the reach of Menelik's influence could avail themselves of the protection of the Italian authorities there (Art. 14.).

i) Reciprocal most-favoured nation treatment (Art. 15).

j) A neutral power was to arbitrate in disputes between the Government of Italy and that of Shoa (Art. 16).

k) The treaty was to last for ten years in the first

instance from the day of its ratification, after which its renewal was at the discretion of the contracting powers (Art. 18).

The conclusion of this treaty marked an important stage in the development of Italo-Shoan relations. Up to this time the relations between the two countries had been semi-official through the scientific Expedition led by Antinori. With the conclusion of the treaty the Italian Government officially entered into relations with Shoa, and was to build on it to gain an influence in Ethiopia as a whole. In 1885 (Feb.) Italy occupied Massawah and began to push inland towards the frontier of Tigre. This brought her into hostility with the Emperor Yohannes. In this conflict Italy counted on, if not the support, at least the neutrality of her friend, the King of Shoa.¹ Yet Menelik's friendship with the Italians complicated his relations with the Emperor Yohannes, and the

¹There are several indications in the Italian archives to this effect. See, for example, ASMAI 8/1-2: M.A.E. to Generale Saletta, Comandante Superiore, Massaua, dated Roma 11.4.1887 where he writes "... Nell occasione dell'invio di questi doni ... il Cavaliere Bienenfeld avrebbe voluto iniziare pratiche per indurre il Re Menelik, per mezzo del governatore dell' Harar, a muover guerra al Re d'Abissinia."

LV. XV Etiopia. Doc. 119 Annesso I, p.261: C. Robilant (the M.A.E.) to Antonelli, Roma 11.3.1883 where he mentions that in the military operations towards the interior "an important factor to take into account would be the attitude of Menelik" ("...Importante elemento di giudizio sarà per noi l'atteggiamento di Re Menelik") and he continued by asking Antonelli to find out if Menelik would co-operate with

the Italian occupation of Massawah greatly embarrassed Menelik. To extricate himself from this ugly situation without antagonising either of the contestants, Menelik tactfully proposed to mediate between the Emperor and the Italians.¹

From 1883 to 1891 Antonelli served as the official representative of the Italian Government in Shoa. He spent this period between Italy and Shoa as the intermediary between the two Governments. During this time he spared no effort to satisfy Menelik's desire for firearms and to build up the King's confidence in the Italian friendship.

In 1884-5 Antonelli was charged with another mission to Shoa which was the direct result of the successful completion of the first mission. On this occasion he was to carry letters and gifts to not only Menelik but also three of the principal chiefs of the Kingdom - Ras Dargue, Ras Gobana, and Azage Walde Tzadek. More important, he was to

(cont.) Italy against the Emperor Yohannes. See also ASMAI 36/4-42. Crispi (M.A.E.)'s telegram to the R^o Console d'Italia in Aden, dated 27.11.1887. Antonelli to M.A.E., Addis Abeba 16.11.1887. Same to Same Addis Abeba 23.11.1887.

¹ASMAI, 36/4-42, Antonelli to M.A.E., Addis Abeba 29.10.1887.

persuade Menelik to send a delegation to Italy to ratify the treaty of 1883, and was himself to conduct this delegation to Italy. He was also charged by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce to conduct some agricultural researches in Shoa.¹

Antonelli appears to have achieved initial success on the important task of persuading Menelik to send a delegation to Italy. By February 1885 Menelik had decided to send the mission, but before preparations could be made for its departure, the news of the Italian occupation of Massawah reached Shoa. Menelik became uneasy as to the real intentions of Italy and Italo-Shoan relations became strained.² It needed all the tact of Antonelli to ease the King's mind and restore a semblance of normal relations.

The occupation of Massawah by Italy and her advance towards Tigre convinced Menelik that the Italians were determined, despite their protestations to the contrary, to acquire a colony at the expense of the Empire of Ethiopia;

¹ASMAI 36/2-22. Il Ministro di Agricoltura e commercio al Sig. Pietro Antonelli, Roma 5.1.1884.

Antonelli concluded another "private" treaty with Menelik in Nov. 1884 to supply the latter 50,000 Remington Rifles with 200 cartridges for each over a period of 10 years.

²ASMAI 36/3-28. Antonelli to R. Comm. in Assab. dated Hori (Efrata) 19.1.1886. ASMAI 36/-28. Antonelli to M.A.E. 11.5.1886.

and he determined to prevent this happening. The treaty which he signed with the Italians on May 2, 1889 (Uccialli) when he became Emperor was for him only a temporary measure designed to gain time. In the circumstances an open conflict between Menelik and his erstwhile friends, the Italians, seemed unavoidable; hence the series of battles which culminated in the humiliating defeat of the Italians at Adowa in March 1896.

The second major development of the reign was Shoa's relations with the rest of the Empire. The death of the Emperor Theodros in 1868 and the withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Forces whose campaign against Theodros brought about his death, had left a power vacuum in Northern Ethiopia. The struggle to fill this vacuum was contested between Wagshum Gobazi of Amhara and Ras Godja-Kassa of Tigre. Menelik does not appear to have contemplated seriously joining in this struggle. For one thing his authority in Shoa was only now beginning to take

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root, and he rightly considered it unwise to direct his subjects into the expensive contest for the Imperial crown. Moreover, he did not have, in the northern provinces, that prestige which could win him the support of those provinces in the struggle. Menelik's chances in the struggle, therefore, would depend entirely on his military strength, but this was, at the time insignificant when compared with that of either Kassa or Gobazie. Instead, Menelik spent the period consolidating his position at home and initiating campaigns in the Wallo Galla region.

With the final defeat of Gobazi~~e~~ in July 1871, Kassa became Emperor as Yohannes IV. The new Emperor then marched south to assert his power over the southern provinces. After pacifying Godjam in 1875 he turned to continue his march into Shoa. From this period until Yohannes' death in 1889, the relations between Menelik and the Emperor was one of the crucial domestic issues within the Empire.

Menelik aspired to the Imperial Crown¹ but throughout the period his military strength was weaker than that of the Emperor. Menelik was fully conscious of his military weakness

¹Until the Peace settlement of 1878 between the Emperor and Menelik the latter's seal carried the Imperial title of "King of Kings".

and employed various methods to improve his fighting strength. He encouraged individual European arms traders to supply him with stocks of firearms and entered into treaties with Antonelli (and the Italian government) for the same purpose. He also conquered the rich Galla countries to the south and south-west of Shoa. These countries were important to Menelik for two reasons: the positive reason of getting merchandise to pay for the firearms which he obtained from the Europeans and of increasing his manpower resources; and the negative reason of preventing not only the Emperor but any other prince of the Empire from the control of the region, for the region was important for the commercial life of the whole Empire. Moreover, Menelik tried to build up his prestige in parts of the northern provinces of the Empire. He saw the Wallo and Godjam as important provinces to dominate; their possession would not only add to his power and prestige but would weaken the Emperor. Between 1868 and 1876 therefore Menelik conquered the Wallo Galla and fought Godjam, in 1877 and again in 1882, taking its ruler prisoner. All these various methods of aggrandizement were to prepare himself for his eventual bid for the Imperial Crown.

Yohannes, on the other hand, saw the independence of

Shoa and everything that Menelik stood for as a threat to his position and power as Emperor. He was, therefore, determined to re-incorporate Shoa within his Empire and reduce Menelik to the position of a vassal. In these circumstances armed conflict between Menelik and Yohannes was to be expected. That such a conflict was avoided in spite of several attempts at invasion of Shoa by Yohannes was due, partly to Menelik's caution and partly to Yohannes' preoccupation with the incursion of the Egyptians, the Dervishes and after 1885 the Italians on the frontiers of his possession. The details of these incursions and of Yohannes' response are beyond the scope of this essay. It must be noted, however, that throughout his reign Yohannes was menaced by these foreign powers and he spent most of his time resisting their incursions, so that he never really had a free hand to deal more firmly with Menelik. Perhaps it was this more than anything else which saved Shoa from conquest at the hands of Yohannes.

In 1875 the first of Yohannes' attempts at invasion of Shoa took place, but he had to give it up, as he was to do many times later, and instead settled his relations peacefully by a treaty. By this treaty Menelik recognised Yohannes'

suzerainty and agreed to pay tribute.¹ In accepting those terms Menelik clearly compromised Shoa's independence, yet he had no choice, for he was militarily weak and his position in both central Shoa and the newly conquered Wallo region was threatened by revolts. On his part, Yohannes contented himself with what he must have seen as a stop-gap settlement, because Egyptian forces were then threatening his northern frontiers.

The frontier struggle between Ethiopia and Egypt dated back to the second quarter of the 19th century, when Mohamet Ali's territorial ambitions in the Sudan and the Red Sea coast had brought Egyptian soldiers to Ethiopia's western, northern, and north-eastern frontiers. But it was not until the 1870's that the conflict assumed serious proportions. The Khedive Ismael inherited the territorial ambitions of his predecessors and embarked on a policy of building an Egyptian Empire covering the whole of N.E. Africa. In pursuit of this policy, the Khedive obtained Massawah from Turkey in May 1868 and between 1870 and 1875 occupied the whole of

¹M.A.E.: Correspondence Politique des Consuls, Egypte. Nassouah. Vol. 4, p.12, de Sarzec to Decarzes, 14.8.1875.
L.L.Lande 1st Article in R. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, pp.895-6.
W. Mac. E. Dye: Muslim Egypt and Christian Abyssinia 1880,
p.127.

of the African coast of the Red Sea, as well as the ports of Zeyla, Tadjura and Berbera on the Somali coast. Moreover, an Egyptian force pushed inland across the Somali country and conquered the important city-state of Harar in February 1875. Having occupied the ports, Egypt instituted blockades thereby cutting off not only the Emperor but also Menelik from the coast. Already in May 1872 the Egyptians had occupied the Bogos area, the northern-most district of Ethiopia and in 1875 the Khedive fitted out two expeditions to attack the Empire, one from the Bogos area, and the other from the Tadjura and the Danakil country. This last expedition, led by Munzinger Pasha, was attacked and destroyed by the Danakil before it could reach Ethiopia. In the north, Yohannes routed the first expedition led by Arakel Bey and Colonel Arendrup in November at Gundet on the banks of the Mareb, and again defeated another expedition in March 1876 at Gura. From 1875 until 1884-5, when Egypt evacuated the Red Sea and Somali coasts, Yohannes' attention was largely absorbed by the conflict with the Egyptians.¹

¹For Yohannes' relations with Egypt see W. Mac E. Dye, op.cit., pp. 125 onwards, also F.O. Confidential Print No. 4249, 4082, 3203, 5134. Douin, G.: Histoire du règne du Khédive Ismail, Tome III, part 2, Cairo 1938; part 3.

It has been assumed that Menelik co-operated with the Egyptians against Yohannes. It is true that Menelik received letters and gifts as an offer of friendship from the Khedive in 1875 and in January 1876¹; it is also true that Menelik too wrote to the Khedive and that Arnoux's mission to Europe also covered Egypt. But nothing more appears to have happened between Menelik and the Khedive. The Egyptian blockade at the coast hit Menelik hard and in his letter to the Khedive in 1876 the Shoan King complains bitterly about this.² In fact he continued to complain to the European powers about this blockade throughout the period of Egyptian occupation of the Somali coast,³ a fact which indicates that relations between Shoa and Egypt never got beyond the mere exchange of letters in 1875 and 1876. Menelik's encouragement to the French and the Italians to open to the Shoa ports free from Egyptian control at Obock and Assab may well have had something to do

¹M.A.E. Paris: M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, Arnoux: "Extrait du Journal" for 13th January 1876, p.376; also, L. L. Lande: 2nd Article cit. in R. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 31, 15.1.1879, p.380.

²M.A.E.: M. & D.(Afrique), Vol. 62, pp. 210-211, Menelik to Ismael Pacha dated Litche 10.6.1876.

³See for example, F.O. Confidential Print No. 4082. Menelik to Queen Victoria, dated 28th Hedat 1871 (6th Dec. 1878).

with the Egyptian blockade at Zeila and Tadjura, the ports hitherto used by Shoa.

While Yohannes was busy with the Egyptians, Menelik pursued his policy of self aggrandizement. By July 1876 he had conquered the Wallo as far north as, and including, the fortress of Magdala; and in February 1877 invaded Godjam. He crossed into Godjam by way of Beguender. It is not clear, if Menelik, in taking this route, intended to attack Gondar and, possibly get himself crowned Emperor as has been assumed.¹ In any case he did not attempt to enter the city and only camped a few miles to the south of it. Menelik's advance into Godjam was easy, for Ras Adal, the Godjamese ruler, realising that he was overmatched, fled first to a (amba) fortress in the south of the province and later to the Emperor, abandoning the province to the invader.²

Yohannes could not tolerate such an overt demonstration of ambition by his vassal. The outbreak of Russo-Turkish war

¹Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.272.

²Massaja: I. Miei, Vol. X, p.190. Selassié: Chronique, Vol. I, p.127.

in 1876 led to a diversion of Egyptian forces to fight for Turkey, and this resulted in a suspension of the Ethio-Egyptian war. This respite enabled Yohannes to march south to Shoa in 1877 on what was his most serious attempt at subjugating Shoa. By July the invader was already en route¹ and in Shoa panic built up. Between July and December feverish preparations were made to provision impregnable fortresses where women, children and valuables were taken to safety.² By January 1878 the Imperial troops reached Shoa's northern province of Geshe where a futile attempt at resistance was made by three neighbouring governors³ and the invader pushed on into the province of Menz. Realising the danger in which they found themselves, Menelik decided to send envoys to sue for peace. Although the Emperor now had Menelik at his mercy, he would not risk weakening his forces in a large scale war against Shoa when he needed his full strength to defend his

¹M.A.E.: Correspondence Politique de Consuls. Egypt, Massourah, Vol. 4, p.74. Carbonnel to M.A.E. 28.7.1877.

²Cecchi: op.cit., I, pp. 414-20.

³Cecchi: Idem, p.415.

vulnerable northern frontier. Thus negotiations for peace were started and the result was the peace arrangements of 20th March 1878. The negotiations were hardgoing, for the Emperor's demands were stiff and were initially rejected by Menelik.¹

The terms of the settlement have not been officially published and do not appear ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ Guèbrè Sellassié's chronicle of Menelik's reign. The unofficial versions given by Massaia, Cecchi and Waldmeier differ considerably from one another. Of the three sources, Cecchi and Massaia were in Shoa at the time when the events took place, while Waldmeier was not in Shoa and only derived his information from Mayer, the German Protestant missionary then in Shoa. At the news of the invasion, the missionaries including Mayer and Massaia, upon the advice of Menelik, withdrew to the safety of the fortress of Fekerie-Ghemt where they remained throughout the critical period, and Massaia says he derived his information on these events from Ato Mannaje, the governor of the fortress.² Cecchi,

¹ Cecchi: op.cit., I, pp. 415-21. Waldmeier: Autobiography of Theophilus Waldmeier... p.133.

² Massaia: I. Miei, Vol. XI, p.10.

on the other hand, was not shut up in the fortress and indeed did not restrict himself to one spot. Cecchi and Chiarini thus followed these events more directly than the missionaries. This accounts for the interesting details which Cecchi gives about the progress of the negotiations. In fact Cecchi followed Menelik to the Imperial camp on March 20, the day when agreement was reached, although he was not present in the Emperor's tent where the final round of negotiations took place. Indeed, only the Emperor and Menelik engaged in these final discussions for, as Cecchi explains, everybody else was made to leave the Emperor's tent at the crucial moment.¹ In the circumstances, therefore, it might be said that the reliability of one or the other of the three versions is as good as the others.

Fortunately, however, there is enough similarity in the three versions to enable us to form a fairly accurate picture of what the terms of the agreement might have been. Menelik undertook to renounce the title of "King of Kings, which he had so far used on his seal, and to assume simply that of "King of Shoa"; to pay an annual tribute of unspecified amount; to

¹Cecchi: op.cit., I, pp. 44-52.

close the route from Shoa to the coast to Europeans within two years; to furnish troops to the Emperor wherever the need arose; and to support the Imperial army while they remained in Shoa. The Emperor on his part, acknowledged Menelik and his descendants as the lawful rulers of Shoa and he officially crowned Menelik as King of Shoa; he recognised Menelik's control over the Wallo, and undertook to offer military help to Menelik when necessary.¹ Although there was a dogmatic difference within the Church in Shoa as in the north, our sources are not agreed whether its settlement formed a condition of the agreement. What seems likely is that Menelik agreed at the discussions to a settlement of the doctrinal difference, and that after the political settlement a special council of the religious dignitaries from both Shoa and the north was called to discuss the religious issue.

¹Massaia: op.cit., Vol. XI, p.11. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 442-3. Waldmeier: op.cit., pp. 133-4. For the dogmatic question see I. Guidi, "La Chiesa Abissina" in Oriente Moderno, Anno II 1922-3, pp. 123-8, 186-90, 252-6.

The peace settlement of 1878 was, as later events were to show, the most basic of all the settlements that were made between Menelik and Yohannes. While it did not fully satisfy the personal aspirations of either of the signatories - in the circumstances only a complete victory following a full-scale war could do this - it went a considerable way to eliminate the element of insecurity and panic which had until then dominated the relations between the two princes. Nevertheless, it was a compromise which hit Menelik harder than Yohannes, and Menelik would respect it only for as long as his relative military strength was weak. Menelik's actions after 1878 indicate a conviction that Shoa's real security depended not so much on peace arrangements as on her military strength. Without repudiating the settlement, Menelik continued, and indeed intensified, his efforts to build up his prestige and military strength. He fought Godjam for the second time in June 1882 and took her ruler a prisoner; the greatest of his Galla conquests were made in the period after 1878; and Menelik intensified his efforts to get firearms, encouraging European arms traders to bring them to Shoa despite the clause in the agreement which stipulated closing the route to Europeans.

Yohannes on his part does not appear to have put too much confidence in Menelik's respect for the settlement of 1878. For this reason, while he did not discontinue his usual but subtle methods¹ of dealing with Menelik, Yohannes devised other means to ensure that Menelik would respect the agreement. It was with this intention that in 1882 Yohannes initiated² another agreement which not only confirmed that of 1878 but also recognised Menelik's suzerainty over the Galla inhabiting the regions to the south and south-west of Shoa. More important from the Emperor's point of view, the 1882 settlement stipulated a marriage between his only legitimate son, Ras Areya Sellasie and a daughter of Menelik's, Waizero Zauditu. The marriage actually took place in the last week of October 1882.³ It also arranged the succession to the Imperial throne on the death of Yohannes. Ras Areya Sellasie was to succeed his father, and was to be succeeded by his own children by Zauditu.

¹See below, pp. 164-168

²G. Sellasié: op.cit., I, p. 185. The 1878 arrangement was a better deal for Yohannes than it was for Menelik, and it was therefore in the Emperor's interest to safeguard it.

³P. Soleillet: Voyages en Ethiopie, Rouen 1886, pp. 98-106. Soleillet arrived in Shoa on 2.10.1882 and assisted in the marriage celebrations.

In the event of the Ras dying without children Menelik was to succeed to the Imperial throne.¹ The Emperor undoubtedly designed these stipulations as safeguards to protect the 1878 settlement which, for as long as it was adhered to, assured him of Menelik's support. The 1882 arrangement, unlike those of 1875 and 1878 was, on the whole, satisfactory to Menelik. Although he himself might not become emperor, the agreement guaranteed that, through his daughter, Menelik's descendants would one day come to possess the Imperial throne. When in 1888 Ras Areya Sellassie died without children, Menelik's chance of succeeding Yohannes as Emperor became great, and, for the first time in our period, the Imperial Crown came within the reach of the Shoan dynasty.

Taken together the peace arrangements of 1878 and 1882 went a long way to meet the aspirations of both Menelik and Yohannes. The proof of this is found in the fact that after 1882 co-operation between Menelik and the Emperor became more frequent. It is true that after the Italian occupation of

¹A. B. Wylde: '83 to '87 in the Soudan (Lond. 1888), Vol. I, p. 337. G. Sellasié: Chronique, Vol. I, p. 183 n.3.

Massowah in February 1885, when Yohannes and the Italians came to open conflict, relations between Yohannes and Menelik became somewhat uneasy, because of Menelik's continued friendship with the Italians in Shoa. It is no less true that after 1882 relations between Menelik and Yohannes were more friendly than ever before.

Allusion has already been made to subtle methods employed by Yohannes in dealing with Menelik. Besides the straightforward method of threats of invasion and peace negotiations by which Yohannes regulated his relations with Menelik, the Emperor employed other, subtle, means to deal with Menelik and preserve the balance of strength in his own favour. It has been remarked that despite the peace settlements, Menelik intensified his policy of military build-up and territorial aggrandizement. Yohannes, right from his accession realized - and how correctly - that the security of his Imperial position depended, domestically on preserving his military superiority over Menelik. For this reason, while he treated openly with Menelik, trying to reduce him to the position of a vassal, Yohannes at the same time, employed cunning and rather indirect methods to keep Menelik weak.

These methods were of two kinds. The first was to ally either openly or secretly with Menelik's rebellious subjects. The immediate purpose of this method was to magnify Menelik's domestic problems. This method was used with considerable success in the Wallo provinces which Menelik had conquered, but with little success in central Shoa.

During Menelik's campaigns of conquest in the Wallo country (1868-76) the Wallo ruler, Abba Uatto, several times appealed to Yohannes for help; the invasion which the Emperor projected against Shoa in 1875 was in fact in response to those appeals.¹ Later when Abba Uatto was imprisoned by the Shoan King and the government of the Wallo was given to his rival cousin, Mohammed Ali, the new governor was not long in rebelling. It is not known if Yohannes in any way encouraged this rebellion; what is clear is that, having rebelled, Mohammed Ali appealed to and received protection from the Emperor. In 1878 when Yohannes invaded Shoa, Mohammed Ali contributed a contingent to the Imperial army against his former overlord, Menelik.² Mohammed Ali became a faithful

¹Cecchi: op.cit., I, 269.

²Massaia: op.cit., XI, p.10. Cecchi: op.cit., I, 443. Cecchi estimates the strength of the contingent furnished by Mohammed Ali at 4-5,000 cavalry.

vassal of the Emperor's, he was converted to Christianity, baptised as Mikael in 1878 and a year later was promoted Ras by Yohannes.¹ So consistent was Yohannes' support for rebellions in the Wallo region that by 1878 the Magdala district which had been conquered in July 1876 was virtually lost to Menelik. The 1878 peace settlement recognised Menelik's control over the whole of his Wallo conquest, but he was persuaded by the Emperor to cede the whole region except the Worra-Illu district as a fief to Ras Areya Sellasie and Waizero Zauditu on the occasion of their marriage.²

In central Shoa, a serious but unsuccessful revolt by Waizero Bafana in 1877 appears to have been, at least, known to the Emperor. He was believed to be in touch with the rebel leaders, and after the peace settlement of 1878 Yohannes was said to have revealed some details of the Bafana plot to Menelik.³ By siding directly or otherwise with Menelik's rebellious subjects, Yohannes sought to weaken Menelik's position in his own kingdom and thereby reduce the threat which Menelik posed to

¹Domenico Brielli: "Ricordi Storici dei Uollo" in Studi Etiopici, Edt. C. Conti Rossini, 1945, p. 108. G. Sellasié: Chronique, I, 157.

²G. Sellasié: op.cit., I, p.185.

³Massaia: I. Miei Trentacinque Anni..... Vol. X, p.201. also NAF. 10222, pp. 51-2. Massaia's letter dated Feb. 15, 1880.

him as the Emperor.

The second subtle method by which Yohannes sought to keep Menelik weak was to build up the power of other princes within or outside Shoa as a counterpoise to Menelik.

In 1879 when Mashasha Seifou, a cousin of Menelik's rebelled for the second time he was arrested and imprisoned. It was upon Yohannes' intervention in 1882 that Seifou was released, and for a time he remained with Yohannes. Yohannes' concern for the personal safety of Mashasha Seifou may be seen as an attempt to balance Menelik's power with another force within Shoa. Though there is no evidence that Yohannes was implicated in any of the Seifou revolts, the Emperor's known pro-Seifou attitude could have had little other motive.

Seifou was the legitimate son of Seifou Selassie, the younger brother of Menelik's father, Haile Malakot; Seifou was thus a cousin germane to Menelik, and was the next in the line of succession should Menelik die without children. Seifou had a considerable following among the population of Shoa and was greatly respected by the soldiers and the great men of the kingdom.¹ It was therefore in the interest of Yohannes to prop up Seifou's position in Shoa. The Emperor realized that the

¹Chiarini's Journal, notes dated 20.12.1877 quoted in Cecchi, I, 285. L.V. XV, Doc. 97 (p.204), Antonelli to M.A.E. Entotto 26.11.1885.

more Seifou's influence in Shoa increased the more dangerous was he as a potential rival to Menelik; and the more Menelik had to fear from Seifou the less would he be able to create trouble for Yohannes. Thus, Yohannes' attitude to Seifou did not change after the Peace of 1878 when he openly recognised Menelik as King of Shoa. Menelik realised clearly that in the event of an open conflict between himself and the Emperor, the latter might draw on the support of Seifou. The Italian representative at Menelik's court, Antonelli, also appreciated the situation; and he mentions this as one of the reasons why Menelik would not take advantage of the Emperor's complications with the Italians in the north-east frontier to revolt against Yohannes.¹ The Emperor's attitude to Mashasha Seifou, therefore, added to Menelik's need for caution in his dealings with the Emperor; and by acting cautiously Menelik succeeded in neutralising the dangerous effect which the Emperor's pro-Seifou leanings could have had on his own position as King of Shoa. Nevertheless, the "understanding" between Yohannes and Seifou caused Menelik considerable embarrassment.

¹L.V. XV, Doc. 97 (p.204). Antonelli to M.A.E. Entotto 26.11.1885.

It was in Godjam that Yohannes made the greatest effort to build up a counterpoise against the growing power of Menelik. It has been seen that one of the ways by which Menelik sought to increase his power was to extend his territorial possessions. In the Wallo region he met with only an indirect opposition from the Emperor. In Godjam, however, the Emperor's opposition was overt.

It was particularly important for the Emperor that Godjam should not become a satellite of the King of Shoa. Apart from her importance as a source of food supply to the North, the most direct route which led from the North to the southwestern Galla countries passed through Godjam. This route was perhaps the most important commercial route in the whole of Ethiopia, and it was on this route that the commercial life of the northern provinces depended. The Godjamese district of Baso had one of the most important markets in the Empire. To let a potentially dangerous rival such as Menelik control Godjam was to inflict a mortal blow on what prosperity the northern provinces had; Yohannes could not have this, so he consistently supported the ruler of Godjam, Ras Adal, against Menelik's incursions. The Emperor's object was not just to preserve the independence of Godjam and his own control over

that region; he in fact intended to build up the power of the Godjamese ruler to rival that of Menelik. It was with this intention that the Emperor created Ras Adal Negous (King) of Godjam and the south-western Galla and crowned him under the throne name of Tecla Haimanot in January 1881. Cecchi, one of the four Italians who were eye-witnesses of the coronation, surmised that the Emperor intended the occasion for a political purpose.¹ All the Emperor's tributary chiefs, including Menelik, were present with troops; this display of the Imperial strength may have been designed to strike terror into Menelik. But the important point is that, by publicly recognising Godjam's conquest in Gudru and Lagamara, the Emperor openly demonstrated his support for Tecla-Haimanot in his contest with Menelik for the possession of the south-western region.

Godjam's incursions into the Galla provinces to the south of the Abay had started in the 1850s.² By the late 1870s Gudru and Lagamara were controlled by Ras Adal and a Godjamese governor commanding Godjamese soldiers was resident in these provinces.³ The influence of Ras Adal reached into the Galla

¹Cecchi: op.cit., II, 584; cf. also 582-89. The other Italians were Antonelli, Gustav Bianchi, and Giacomo Naretti. See also Bianchi: Alla Terra, pp. 528-9.

²Massaia: I. Miei Trentacinque Anni... Vol. IV, p.134 and passim.

³Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. II, p.564.

monarchies in the Gibie-Omo-Didesa region and played no small part in the liberation of Cecchi from prison in Ghera.¹ Encouraged, thus, by the Emperor, Tecla Haimanot intensified his activities in these provinces. This brought him into hostility with Menelik, who was also actively engaged in campaigns in the area. A war ensued between the two princes in the Spring of 1882 in which the Shoans defeated the Godjamese and took Tecla Haimanot and two of his sons prisoners.² The Emperor had little choice but to intervene to secure the liberation of Tecla Haimanot and make peace between the two princes. In the peace settlement which took place between Yohannes and Menelik in the Autumn of 1882 the Emperor recognised Menelik's control over the region disputed between Shoa and Godjam. In this way the settlement of 1882 put the seal on the failure of the Emperor's policy of building up the power of Godjam as a counterpoise to that of Shoa. There is little doubt that the Emperor's recognition of the failure of this policy contributed to his need to initiate the settlement of Autumn 1882 to protect the position which the settlement of 1878 had given him.

It has been mentioned that on the death

¹Cecchi: op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 543-551.

²ASMAI, 36/2-12. Antonelli to M.A.E. Aden 16.9.1882.
Ibid. 36/2-13. Branchi to M.A.E. Debra Tabor 30.6.1883.

of the Emperor civil war broke out in the northern provinces to determine the succession, and that Gobazie and Kassa were the leading contenders. These two men were the only princes in the Empire who, in 1868, could have interfered with Menelik's rule in Shoa; their preoccupation with the contest in the north thus left Menelik free to consolidate his position in Shoa and take the offensive against the Galla tribes who shared frontiers with Shoa.

The first region to claim the King's attention was that of the Wallo with whom Shoa shared a northern frontier. Menelik's first campaign in this region is represented as having been undertaken to restore to power the Wallo queen called Warquit. Warquit had been regent for her son Imam Amedie Ali Liben, who was taken prisoner by the Emperor Theodros during the latter's Wallo-Shoa campaign of 1855-6. For the welcome which Warquit gave to Menelik on his escape from Magdala (in June 1865) Theodros executed the Wallo Prince together with the other Wallo prisoners who were with him.¹ With the death of her son, Warquit's regency no longer had any validity and she was forced to cede power to a rival named Mesteouat, who played regent for her own young son Abba Uatto, and driven to seek

¹Ch. II. p. III, n. 3.

refuge in Shoa.¹ To restore Warqit to power may be a fair explanation for Menelik's first campaign. In so doing Menelik would not only show his gratitude to the former regent, but also ensure that he had an ally among rival Wallo rulers. But it could not have been the whole reason; in fact the Warqit incident only offered Menelik an immediate occasion for initiating a conquest which appealed so much to him. For nearly ten years (1868-76) Menelik campaigned vigorously in the Wallo country and succeeded in bringing under his control almost the whole country as far north as, and including, the fortress of Magdala. Although in later years Menelik had to give up the northern part of his Wallo conquests as part of peace settlement between the Emperor Yohannes and himself, he controlled the southern part more or less effectively until 1889 when he became Emperor and thereby reunited the whole of Ethiopia.

The real explanation for the Wallo conquest was the need to safeguard the northern frontier, at this time the most vulnerable of all the Shoan frontiers. The central position of the Wallo Galla country - between Shoa in the

¹Sellassié: Chronique.... Vol. I, p.118. A. Markham: A History of the Abyssinian Expedition, p.368. For the Wallo domestic rivalry see Domenico Brielli: "Ricordi Storici dei Uallo" in Studi Etiopici pp. 78-109.

south and the other Amhara provinces in the north - made the attitude of the Wallo a matter of crucial importance to the existence of Shoa as an independent Kingdom within the Empire. From the Wallo tribes themselves the Shoan rulers had little to fear since so great were their sectional interests that they could hardly ever take concerted action against Shoa. What was important to Shoan rulers was the attitude of the Wallo tribes to an invasion from the northern provinces. This fact was brought out during Theodros's three invasions of Shoa between 1855 and 1864 when Wallo resistance affected the success of the invasions. Even before the time of Theodros, Sahela Sellasie had fully recognised this fact, but not being strong enough to conquer the Wallo, he sought to win the friendship of the important rulers among them. Sahela Selässie attached great importance to his Wallo alliances and endeavoured, throughout his reign, to maintain them by occasional distribution of gifts to his allies and even by marriage proposals.¹ In spite of all the efforts of Sahela Selässie, relations between the frontier governors of northern Shoa and their Wallo neighbours remained, at best, uneasy.²

¹B.S.P. IG. 189 No. 2031 Harris, 10.11.1841. See Ch. I.

²Ibid., No. 2060D Para. 41, Harris, 27.11.1841.

Ibid., No. 2060I Para. 2 & 3, Harris, 31.1.1842.

Menelik did not appear satisfied with this state of affairs. As he saw it, the security of Shoa's northern frontier depended not on maintaining an uneasy relationship with the various Wallo rulers but on actually dominating them. He would then be able to regulate the frontier defences as he thought best, largely by fortifying a number of spots. Thus when Menelik conquered the southern-most district of the Wallo Region, he erected and fortified the town of Worra-Ililu in 1871-2 to serve the dual purpose of a frontier defence as well as a base for operations further afield. It was with much the same intention that the conquests were advanced as far as the impregnable Amba Magdala which fell to Menelik in July, 1876. All this - the conquest and frontier fortifications in the Wallo region - was part of the building up of Menelik's power and prestige in preparation for his eventual bid for the Imperial Crown.¹

The first expedition to the Wallo region was sent in the Autumn of 1868 and followed by another a year later in November 1869. In this second campaign Imam Abba Uatto was invited to submit, but he refused to do so and prepared for war. In a battle which took place during the second week of November the Wallo

¹Cf. supra, pp. 150-3.

were routed and only the Imam and a few of his followers succeeded in escaping; after repeated defeats, the Imam submitted, sought and was granted pardon and given a district to govern.¹ Yet, Abba Uatto kept on rebelling and appears to have appealed for help to Yohannes, who had by then become emperor, as a result of his victories over Gobazie. Nevertheless, because of the Egyptian threat of invasion on the northern frontiers of the Empire, Yohannes was unable to give the Imam any effective help until the Shoan conquest was already an accomplished fact. It was during the next campaign which took place at the end of 1871 that Warra-Ilu was built and fortified. In building this frontier post Menelik was only following a practice which his predecessors had adopted and which he came to find so vital to the success of his conquests. Until the construction of Warra Ilu all the expeditions were despatched from Litché in the centre of the Kingdom which was then the King's usual place of residence. The distance from Litché to the Wallo country was considerable and the hazards of the journey must have reduced the fighting strength of the King's soldiers. The construction of Warra Ilu as a frontier base was to eliminate this disadvantage. Thus having surrounded the town

¹Sellassié: op.cit., Vol. I, p.119. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.266.

with high walls, Menelik stationed an army estimated at 40,000 more or less permanently there while the conquest of the Wallo region was not yet completed.¹

Menelik appears to have had as a target of his Wallo conquests, the natural fortress of Magdala situated in the northern province of that region. The conquest of this fortress would bring Shoa's effective northern frontier to a naturally impregnable post, so for the next five years (1872-6) Menelik gradually extended his conquest towards this target. Arnoux, who accompanied one of these campaigns, described the extent of the conquest in February 1875 as reaching the foot of Magdala and covering the Yedju province.² Magdala itself fell to Menelik in July 1876. The conquest had taken nearly ten years to complete. From time to time there were revolts but these were put down and Shoan rule re-affirmed.

When a new district was conquered, its ruler, if considered unreliable, was imprisoned and his district given to a governor on whose devotion the King could rely. For example, the rebellious Abba Uatto was imprisoned and the governorship

¹Arnoux: in Lande "Un Voyageur Français..." Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, Dec. 1878, p.890. Arnoux gives a detailed description of the town and its fortifications.

²M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, pp. 350-1, Arnoux's Journal for 17.2.1875.

of his district was given to his brother Mohammed Ali. Later, when Mohammed Ali also proved rebellious, the governorship was taken from him and given back to a reformed Abba Uatto. Also one of the King's generals Dedjatch Oualie was given the governorship of the Yedju province.¹

That the Wallo campaigns were successful at a time when Shoa's military strength was only a fraction better than that of the Wallo was due in part to the disunity among the various Wallo tribes. Perhaps more important than this was the absence of interference from other Ethiopian princes.

The strategic importance of the Wallo region was recognised not only by Menelik but by his contemporary northern princes. That Menelik was left free to conquer this region to the obvious disadvantage of the other princes, was due to two factors both of which have already been alluded to. The first was the three to four years of civil war which absorbed the attention and energies of the two princes who had the military strength to affect Menelik's campaigns. The second factor was the preoccupation of the victorious Yohannes with external threats

¹Sellasié: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 121, 123. It was this Mohammed Ali who allied with the Emperor Yohannes in 1877-8, was converted to Christianity with the name of Michael (Mikael) and later promoted a Ras. See Supra, p. 165-6

of attacks on the frontiers of his Empire. In 1875, for example, the Egyptian threat of invasion induced Yohannes to suspend a projected attack on Shoa and to conclude an agreement with Menelik. On at least three more occasions during his reign Yohannes was forced by external events to call off a projected invasion of Shoa. That Yohannes considered the Wallo region an important possession is borne out by the fact that in the settlement which he made with Menelik in March 1878 the region was a vital issue in the negotiations; and in the 1882 settlement Yohannes persuaded Menelik to cede the greater part of the region to their newly married children.¹ Thus the preoccupation of the northern princes with other activities in the north contributed to the success of Menelik's campaigns in the Wallo region.

After securing the northern frontier, Menelik directed his conquests more closely to the Galla regions to the south, south-west, and south-east of Shoa. Before any serious campaigns could be undertaken, however, Menelik had to deal with a dangerous revolt which originated at his court. This was a chain of revolts involving the King's cousin, Mashasha Seifou, and the royal concubine Bafana to which we may refer as the "Bafana plot".

¹Cf. supra, pp. 162-3, 166

Soon after his return to Shoa Menelik got attached to Bafana, a woman of low birth, exceptionally pretty but old enough to be his mother. She had been married at least twice before and had had quite a few children. The relationship was depre- cated by everybody who had any position of influence in the King- dom, mainly because of the age-difference, but possibly also because of the ambitions of Bafana.¹ Despite the general dis- approval, Bafana continued to enjoy the King's confidence right into the early 1880s.

Bafana's ambition was that her children, or at least, her descendants, would one day become the rulers of Shoa.² She planned hard and took definite steps towards achieving this ambition. She gave one of her daughters in marriage to the King's cousin Mashasha Seifou. This was an ingenious design, since Mashasha was the next in line of successinn should any- thing happen to Menelik before the latter could have children; the marriage was thus a safeguard to ensure that at least Bafana's children's children might one day come to possess the crown of Shoa. But Bafana had not the patience to wait on events. Indeed, if she were to let events run their own course her ambition

¹Massaia: I.Miei, Vol. IX, pp. 42-3.

²Massaia: op.cit., Vol. X, p.190. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.270. ASSGI Cartoni VIC: Chiarini: "Memoria Sulla storia recente dello scioa dalla morte di Sahle-Sallassie sino ad oggi"(Nov. 1877) dated 23.11.1877.

would not be realized. So she schemed to achieve her objective. As she saw it Menelik and Mashasha Seifou were the principal obstacles to the realization of her ambition. Her plan appears to have been to get rid of Mashasha first, and then the King; yet she wanted to do all this without raising suspicion. To get rid of Mashasha, Bafana schemed to set him against the King, let him appear a rebel and thereby create a justifiable cause for his imprisonment. Without first dissolving the marriage, Bafana gave Siefou's wife in marriage to another person.¹ We do not know what Menelik's attitude to Bafana's perfidy was; what is clear is that Mashasha saw the action as an insult inflicted with at least the King's knowledge. He thereupon left the Court in anger and went to stay at the home of Dedjatch Gobana, one of the army leaders. The departure of the prince from the Palace gave rise to speculations and threatened a division among the soldiers, for Mashasha was respected by the soldiers; a situation for a revolt had thus been created, which might well have led to a civil war but for the timely intervention of Ras Dargue, a paternal uncle of both Menelik and Seifou, who settled their differences and

¹ASSGI, Cartoni VIC. Chiarini: "Memoria...."
Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p. 270.

offered to keep Seifou safe in his own home. The intervention of Ras Dargue was a setback for Bafana's plans; nevertheless she continued to insinuate to the King that Seifou was dangerous and succeeded in getting Seifou imprisoned in December 1876.¹ With the imprisonment of Mashasha Seifou, Bafana had achieved the first part of her project, and she then set to work to eliminate the King himself. The tail-end of the next scheme was to betray Menelik to the Emperor Yohannes.

It will be remembered that in the first half of 1877 Menelik invaded Godjam; that in the second half of the year the Emperor Yohannes projected an invasion of Shoa; and that on this invasion the Emperor allied with Mohammed Ali, Menelik's governor of the Wallo Province, who himself rebelled about the middle of the year. All these events appear to have been planned in part, and in other part skilfully manipulated by Bafana to further her scheme to eliminate Menelik. The details of the plot as given by Massaia and substantially confirmed by the chronicler, Cecchi and Chiarini were as

¹ASSGI, Cartoni VIC. Chiarini: "Memoria...." Cecchi: op.cit., I, p.272. G. Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.126.

follows: While Menelik was away in Godjam, Maredazmatch Haile Mikael¹ was to rebel and declare himself King of Shoa; the plot was planned for the rainy season when the Abay (Nile) would be flooded and not fordable so that Menelik could not cross into Shoa; then word would be sent to the Emperor Yohannes who would march on Menelik in Godjam and take the latter a prisoner. This done, Haile Mikael would hand over the throne to one of the sons of Bafana in return for a handsome compensation. Bafana would accompany Menelik to Godjam partly to avoid suspicion, partly to report his movements to the rebels and possibly the Emperor and partly to divert his attention from events in Shoa.² Events of the first seven months of 1877 support these details. Menelik left Shoa in December 1876 and by April was busy overrunning Godjam, having left the aged Dedjatch Ghermami and Azage Walde Tzadek as

¹One of the sons of Sahela Selassie and therefore a paternal uncle of Menelik and Seifou. He was the man first appointed by Theodros to govern Shoa when the Emperor conquered the Kingdom in 1855-6. He was imprisoned in the fortress of Tamo by Theodros in 1859 for inability to suppress revolts, but was released by Menelik on his return to Shoa. See Ch. II.

²Massaia: op.cit., X, pp. 190-1. Sellassié: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 132-6. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 272-9. Chiarini: "Memoria...", cit.

regents in the Kingdom with only a few hundred soldiers to give respect to the regency. He was accompanied by Bafana. At the end of April Maredazmatch Haile Mikael, having gathered men on the pretext of going to release Mashasha Seifou from prison, in fact rebelled. He defeated the regents in a battle on May 2, and took possession of Ankober. In a second battle two days later, however, the rebels were defeated, the Maredazmatch himself was wounded and taken prisoner.¹

It was when the news of the revolt reached Menelik in Godjam early in May that Bafana excelled herself in cunning. She successfully persuaded Menelik to send her with part of his army to Shoa to quell the rebellion while he remained behind to complete the conquest of Godjam. Further she managed to get from the King a written document with the royal seal purporting to transfer the regency from Ghermami to Bafana.² Her intention was to reduce the army which the King had with him in Godjam and thereby weaken the resistance which he might be able to offer to the Emperor when the time came for the Emperor to pounce on Menelik in Godjam. At the same time, by offering to go and suppress the revolt in Shoa she hoped to

¹Massaia: op.cit., Vol. X, pp. 194-7. Chiarini: "Memoria" cit. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 273-4. Sellassié: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 132-3.

²Unfortunately no trace of this document has been found.

divert Menelik's attention from events in Shoa. Once in Shoa, with the army now in her hands, she would herself take control over the situation and direct events as she had already planned. All this ties up very well with the details of the plot given by Massaia. Indeed she went a long way towards achieving success; it was only the development of a situation which she undoubtedly had not foreseen which in the end ruined her plans. Back in Shoa Bafana, fortified by Menelik's letter and the army which followed her quickly took over the regency, transferred all the rebel prisoners, including Maredazmatch Haile Mikael and Mashasha Seifou, from the fortress of Enoari to the more impregnable fortress of Tamo (Tammo). Next, she saw to it that all the military stores in the Kingdom and large supply of provisions were brought to Tamo and the fortress surrounded by armed soldiers.¹

It is not known for certain if Bafana sent any word of these developments to the Emperor Yohannes. According to Cecchi, the Emperor was marching on Menelik in Godjam when the latter, having heard of this in time, crossed the Abay at its confluence with the Gemma River into Shoa.² According to the chronicler,

¹Cecchi (I, 275) dates these events to mid-May 1877.

²Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 272-3.

Menelik crossed into Shoa from Godjam on May 25, and that he did this partly to avoid defeat in Godjam, and partly to see to the restoration of peace in Shoa.¹ It is known that Ras Adal, the ruler of Godjam, unable to withstand the Shoaan invaders fled to the Emperor and that he and his soldiers formed part of the Emperor's army which invaded Shoa in 1877-8. It is further known that by July 1877 the Emperor was already in the northern province of the Wallo region on his way to invade Shoa.² It is reasonable to suppose that the Emperor was in fact marching against Menelik in Godjam when, on hearing that the latter had crossed the Abay, he altered his course and made direct for Shoa by way of the Wallo country. But it is difficult to say if the advance towards Godjam and the subsequent change of direction were the result of Ras Adal's flight to the Emperor or of reports from Bafana. Probably it was the result of both. It is quite possible that the Emperor was following the development of Bafana's plot. This suggestion gains strength when one remembers what Massaia says that, after the peace agreement made between Menelik and Yohannes in March 1878,

¹Sellassié: op.cit., I, p.135.

²M.A.E. (Paris): Corresp. Politique des Consuls: Egypte: Massouah. Vol. 4, p.74. Carbonnel to M.A.E., 28.7.1877.

the Emperor revealed details of Bafana's plot to Menelik.¹

The return of Menelik to Shoa in the last week of May, clearly unforeseen and unexpected by Bafana, led to the collapse of Bafana's plot, for it brought Menelik into control over the situation in Shoa before the plot could mature. The part of the plot which was planned to take place in Godjam misfired, and that planned to occur in central Shoa did not mature, but the invasion of the Emperor was not called off, and caused panic in Shoa. Menelik's difficulty was complicated by a revolt about this time (June-July 1877) in the Wallo region, which might possibly have been part of the general plot. An attempt to suppress this revolt failed and the rebels joined ranks with the invading army of the Emperor.

The threat of invasion, the rebellion in the Wallo region, and the recent plot in central Shoa which had centred, in part at least, on Mashasha Seifou, brought home to Menelik the need to close ranks with his cousin. It was for this reason that in December 1877 Menelik and Seifou came to a settlement of their differences and Seifou was released from prison virtually

¹Massaia: op.cit., Vol X, p.201.

on his own terms.¹ The reconciliation between Menelik and Seifou, coupled with the peace settlement made between Menelik and Yohannes in March 1878, put the seal on the failure of Bafana's plot, and with it her ambition to win the Shoan crown for her children. Bafana herself was punished with deprivation and expulsion from the Palace; although she was later restored to favour and to her property, she ceased to be an important figure in Shoa in 1883 when Menelik officially and legally married Waizero Taitu. In 1879 another attempt at a revolt by Mashasha Seifou was nipped in the bud; the Prince was imprisoned and only released on the Emperor's intervention in 1882. After 1879 Menelik did not face any more rebellions of such serious implications from within his possessions although the Emperor's pro-Seifou attitude continued to cause him embarrassment.

Until 1878 the northern frontiers of Shoa were the main theatre of Menelik's military campaigns. From time to time expeditions had indeed been sent to provinces to the south and

¹ Chiarini's Journal for 19th December 1877 quoted in Cecchi, op.cit., I, p.284.

Massaia: op.cit., Vol. X, pp. 202-4. Massaia played a part in bringing about the reconciliation, and Chiarini was an eye-witness of the events he describes.

Mashasha was given control of the army which he had previously commanded, raised to the dignity of Dadjazatch and given governorship of the Soddo Galla country in the south on both sides of the Hawash.

southwest of Shoa, but it was not until after that year that these regions became the main centre of Menelik's expansion. This was because until the peace settlement of 1878 Shoa's northern frontier was too unsafe to enable Menelik to concentrate on other frontiers. It will be remembered that among the gains which Menelik derived from the settlement was the formal recognition of his position as King of Shoa and of his conquests in the Wallo region by the Emperor. These gains gave Menelik a sense of security and enabled him to turn his attention more closely to other regions.

Sahela Selassie had initiated the expansion of Shoa towards the southerly and south-westerly provinces and had made considerable conquests in these areas. His motives had been imperial, religious and economic. Menelik had all these motives, but the imperial and economic ones appear to have been dominant. This is not to imply that the religious motive faded out of his considerations. On the contrary, efforts were made to propagate Ethiopian Christianity in the Muslim and Pagan areas which were conquered. Churches were built in each new district that was conquered and Amhara priests put in charge of them.

Earlier in this chapter it was remarked that Menelik enter-

tained the ambition to become Emperor of Ethiopia and to reunite the northern and southern provinces of the Empire; that in preparation towards this end he strove hard to build up his reputation and military strength; and that one of the methods which he employed to do this was to increase his manpower resources by means of territorial expansion. This, indeed, was one of the reasons why the Galla and Sidama regions, with their untapped manpower resources attracted Menelik. Moreover, by conquering these regions he would thereby extend the frontiers of Shoa to incorporate all those provinces which had formed part of the Medieval Empire of Ethiopia. This in itself would considerably ease his task as the Emperor of a united Ethiopia when the time came.

By far the most important consideration, however, was the economic gains that those areas promised. It has already been remarked that the southerly and south-westerly regions were the richest in the whole of the Medieval Empire. Menelik, more than any of his predecessors, needed the wealth of those areas. His policy of military build-up was pursued not just by increasing the number of men under arms but also by improving on the quality and quantity of their weapons. Menelik obtained these improved weapons from the European arms traders who came

into Shoa in increasing numbers in the 1880s. He paid for these firearms partly in thalers but mainly with local products - coffee, ivory, gold, civette gum etc.¹ All these products came from the Galla and Sidama countries to the south and south-west of Shoa; hence Menelik's anxiety to conquer and control as much of this region as possible. There is thus a direct connection between the influx of firearms into Shoa and the pace of the conquest. On the one hand, the more firearms that were obtained the greater was the need for ivory, gold etc. to pay for them, and the greater this need became the more the campaigns were intensified and pushed further afield towards the very sources of these products. On the other hand, the more firearms that the King's soldiers employed the greater were their successes in these campaigns. This last point is brought out clearly by the fact that the campaigns which were undertaken in those areas after 1880 were more successful than those undertaken earlier. Part of the explanation, of course, is that before 1878 attention was concentrated in the north and, therefore, the greater part of the soldiers were employed in the north; but the

¹Henry Audon: "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde. 2e Semestre 1889, p.139, para. XI. ASMAI 36/3-28 Antonelli to Ro. Commissario Civile in Assab, dated Hori (Efrata) 19.1.1886. J. Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, Paris 1890, p.165, Antoto 10.11.1886.

main explanation is that after 1880 large stocks of firearms began to reach Shoa and as a result Menelik's soldiers became better equipped. The success of the campaigns of conquest was also affected by the political conditions in the areas under discussion.

The south-westerly region, that is, roughly the area south of Godjam, stretching from the south bank of the Abay River in the north to the Godjeb River in the south, from the Mugar River and the Upper reaches of the Hawash River in the east to the Didesa River in the West was (and still is) occupied by a large Galla group called Maca^V. Like all the other major groups of the Galla the Maca^V consisted of several smaller units. In the southern half of this region, constituted by the valleys of the Gibe (Gibie) - Upper Didesa-Godjeb rivers, mainly as a result of conquests initiated by nuclear units, larger units were built up which as time went on developed into strong unified kingdoms. By the early 1840s five major kingdoms had emerged, namely Goma, Limmu-Eharea, Guma, Ghera and Jimma Kaka.¹ Throughout our period these kingdoms continued to vie with each other for supremacy in the area. By the early 1840s when we first hear

¹Jimma Kaka is popularly known as Jimma Abba Gifar after the founder of the dynasty.

of them Limmu-Enarea was the most powerful, but the mediocrity of her later rulers and the vicissitudes of war led to a change in the balance of power and by the 1870s Limmu-Enarea had lost its foremost position to Jimma Kaka.¹

The tribes which inhabited the northern half of the region were not as well organised as those in the southern half. Here, each of the numerous units lived an independent existence, obeying their own leaders and owing no allegiance to anyone outside their own limited frontiers. Nevertheless, war was a constant feature of the relations between those petty units and one would like to think that, but for the Amhara conquest, the eventual outcome of the struggle might have been, as in the southern half, the emergence of larger, unified communities. A tendency towards this end was, in fact, visible in the Gudru and Lagamara provinces where rich and powerful families were gradually gaining influence over their poorer and less powerful neighbours. So complete did their influence appear in practice that the Catholic Missionaries who lived in the area in the 1850s and 1860s described

¹See M. Abir: "Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region", London Ph.D. Thesis 1964, pp. 106-163, also M. Abir: "The Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchies of Enarea and Jimma in the first half of the 19th century" in J.A.H., Vol. VI, 1965, pp. 205-219.

these dominant families as chiefs.¹

The struggle which went on everywhere² between neighbouring groups made a united resistance to an outside invader impossible. Further, it weakened them internally and reduced the effectiveness of their individual efforts. Thus when the "Amhara" armies invaded the area, the Galla were in no position to give any effective resistance, and fell one after the other to the invaders.

Naturally, Menelik's approach to the Maca group was to conquer the less organised northern tribes first before reaching out to the more organised Kingdoms on the Gibe-Godjeb-Didesa banks. The conquest of the Maca Galla region was almost wholly the work of Dedjatch (later Ras) Gobana, perhaps the most able of all Menelik's warriors. In a series of campaigns conducted between 1868 and 1878 Gobana conquered all the Liban tribes inhabiting the area between the Mugar and the headwaters of the Hawash rivers in the East and the River Guder in the west.³ Shoa's western boundary was thus brought to the eastern frontier of Gudru. It was in Gudru and the provinces

¹Massaia : I. Miei., Vol. II, pp. 187-9, also Vols. III and IV, and infra.

²Massaia and the other missionaries give this picture for the northern half while Cecchi, Borelli and other travellers give a similar picture for the southern half. Solleillet: op.cit.

beyond that the soldiers from Shoa came into conflict with those from Godjam. Godjamese advance into this region and the purpose behind it have been mentioned earlier in this chapter. In 1872 Godjam campaigned vigorously in Gudru¹ and by 1880 Leqa had become tributary to Godjam². It is reasonable to suppose that Lagamara, situated between Gudru and Leqa, was also tributary to Godjam by 1880. Thus by this time Godjam's influence reached up to the northern frontier of Limmu-Enarca.

In November 1878³ Menelik's soldiers penetrated into Lagamara which Godjam must have regarded as her sphere of influence. From 1878 to 1882 the "Shoans" and the "Godjamese" were in open conflict in the northern half of the Maca region.⁴ With the defeat and capture of Ras Adal, the ruler of Godjam, by the soldiers of Menelik in a battle fought at Gudru in June

(cont.) p.209, mentions a bloody war between Jimma Kaka and Gera in 1881. Borelli makes clear a continuous war between Jimma Kaka and Zingero throughout the first eighty years of the 19th century.

³B.N. (Paris) d'Abbadie Papers: Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises No. 10222. Massaia's letter dated 15.2.1876.

¹N.A.F. 10222, Massaia 9.6.1873.

²Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. II, p.555.

³Propaganda Archives. Series: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi: Vol. 8. Taurin Cahagne to Cardinal Simeoni. 4.1.1879.

⁴Sellassié: op.cit., Vol. pp. 171, 173, 174,179.

1882 the "Shoans" came into possession of the provinces conquered by Godjam. As a result of the peace settlement made between the Emperor Yohannes and Menelik in the Autumn of 1882 by which Yohannes recognised Shoa's conquests in the disputed provinces, Menelik was given a free hand in the Maca region.

Menelik seems to have planned his advance into the Gibe-Didesa-Godjeb monarchies from two fronts. While Gobana conquered the northern half of the Maca region, other expeditions were organised to approach the southern half from the north-eastern frontier of Jimma-Kaka, at this time the most powerful of the five monarchies. The route which led from south-western Shoa across the Hawash through the Soddo province, Cabiena, Botor and Badifolla to the north-eastern frontier of Jimma Kaka was one of the main routes which led from the Gibe region to the Amhara countries. It was the shortest to Shoa and at this time the principal outlet for products from Jimma Kaka.¹ The control of this route was therefore vital to Menelik. In May-June 1875 an expedition led by Menelik which went to northern Guraghe appears to have

¹Cecchi; op.cit., Vol. II, p.538. ASSGI, Cartoni VIII^D, Traversi to the President of the S.G.I. Let-Marefia 10.4.1888.

conquered Cabiena, for in the following year the governor of this province arrived in Shoa with tribute of civet to Menelik.¹

By September 1878 the provinces between Cabiena and Jimma Kaka had been conquered and Jimma herself had become tributary to Shoa.² With Jimma Kaka as tributary Menelik had got a foothold in the heart of the sources of those products which he needed so much. From Jimma Kaka Menelik sent expeditions to other parts of the region³ but up to 1880 these do not appear to have had any successes.⁴ By the end of 1882, however, the monarchies of Limmu-Enarea, Guma, Goma, and Ghera had all become tributary to Shoa.⁵ It appears that Kaffa also became tributary in 1882⁶ though probably for only a short period.

¹L. L. Lande: "Un Voyageur Français...." in Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. 31, 15.1.1879, p.390. Cecchi (II, 52) says that the governor Omar Baxa, seeing his province menaced by Shoa's advance, offered to become tributary in order to avoid conquest.

²B. N. (Paris), N.A.F. 10222, Massaia's letter dated Feb.13, 1879, p.50. ASSGI, Cartoni VII^C, Antinori to Bienenfeld, Let-Marefia 13.9.1878. Antinori reports that in Sept. 1878 15 men from Jimma Kaka arrived in Shoa carrying tribute from the King of that Kingdom.

³ASSGI, Cartoni VII^C. Antinori ibid.

⁴ASSGI, Cartoni VII^B. Antinori to the President of S.G.I. Let-Marefia 28.10.1880. Cecchi who was held a prisoner in Ghera from Feb. 1879 to Aug. 1880 gives the impression that Shoa's influence had by then not reached beyond Jimma Kaka.

(cont.)

There is no mention in the sources of tribute reaching Shoa from Kaffa after 1882. In fact the available information indicates refusal by Kaffa to pay tribute, and twice in 1888 the King of Kaffa refused, with impunity, to allow Traversi and Borelli to enter his Kingdom, though both travelled as friends of Menelik.¹ It was not until 1897 that Kaffa was conquered and only after a long and arduous campaign. With the conquest of Wallaga, which is situated to the west of the Didesa river in 1886² and the appointment of Menelik's own subjects as governors in all the conquered provinces except Jimma Kaka, the conquest of the Maca region was complete.³ The stage was thus prepared for the conquest of the Sidama provinces lying to the south and south-east of the Maca region. This stage of the conquest in the south-west which started about 1888 was completed in the 1890s.

⁵Soleillet: Voyages en Ethiopie, Rouen 1886, pp. 115, 143, 220. ASMAI. 36/2-11. Antonelli's report dated 22.5.1883. According to the Chronicler (Sellassié I, 171, 173) the first expedition to Ghera and Guma was sent in 1881.

⁶Soleillet: op.cit., pp. 115, 143, 185-6. Sellassié: op.cit., I, pp. 174-5. ASMAI 36/2-11, Antonelli, Report cit.

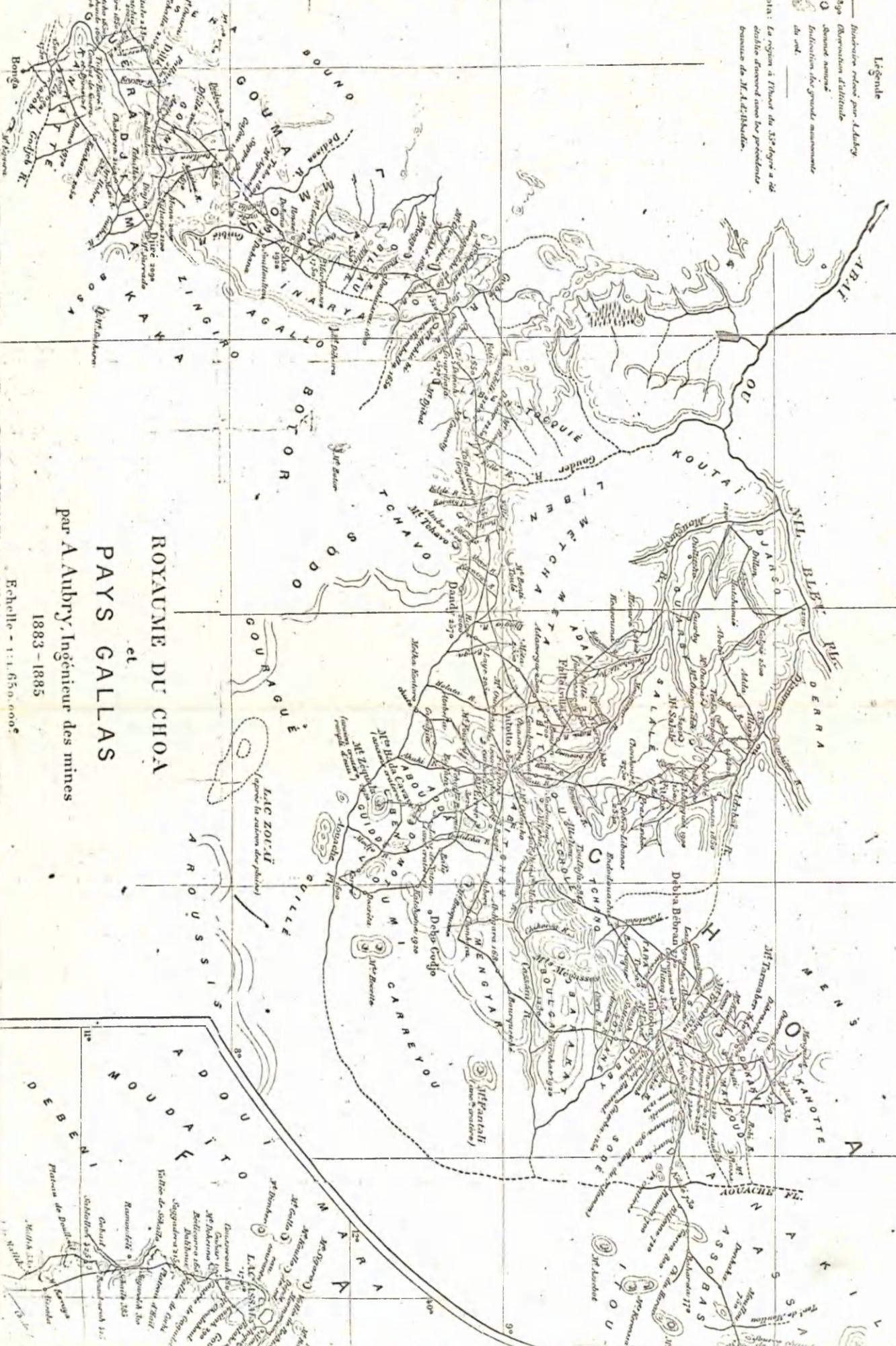
¹J. Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, Paris 1890, pp. 298, 367. On p. 260 under the date Antoto 24.10.1887, Borelli reports of Menelik writing to him to say "you can go to any territory under my control except Kaffa which has refused to pay me the tribute."

²Parts of Wallaga were inhabited by Shankalla, i.e. negroes.

³Jimma Kaka retained its local ruler throughout this period.

Legende

- Route tracée par L. Aubry
 - Observations d'altitude
 - Sommet connu
 - Indication des grands courants de vent
- Notes: Le rayon à l'échelle des 35° degré a été
 étalé d'après les mesures
 faites par M. A. L. Aubry.



ROYAUME DU CHOANG

et PAYS GALLAS

par A. Aubry, Ingénieur des mines

1883-1885

Echelle - 1:1,650,000

It was not only the south-westerly region which attracted Menelik; the Guraghe country situated to the south of the Hawash river, the large Arussi group of Galla and other Galla groups inhabiting the region to the south-east of the river also attracted the King. The attraction of these areas was much the same as that of the south-westerly region. In the conquest of Guraghe the memories and the Christian traditions of the Medieval Empire appear to have played a considerable role. In the whole of the southerly and south-westerly regions it was, perhaps, in Guraghe that the relics and some traditions of the Medieval Empire were best preserved.¹ The tradition that the islands situated in Lake Zeway harboured the treasures of the Ethiopian church taken there for safety during the Gran wars of the 16th century had been popular in Shoa. Like Sahela Selassie before him, the desire to recover these treasures was one of the motives which induced Menelik to the conquest of Guraghe. It was with this intention that an expedition was led by Menelik personally in the autumn of 1879 to the lake Zeway district. The district all round the lake was ravaged but the islands themselves could not be reached. To reach them the soldiers needed boats which

¹Cf. Ch. I, pp. 62-3 of this thesis. Also Traversi "Viaggio nei Guraghi" in B.S.G.I. serie II. - Vol. XII 1887, p. 279.

they did not have; and for this reason the expedition failed to achieve its objective.¹

Previous to 1879, Menelik had personally led two campaigns to Guraghe to pave the way for the conquest of the lake and its islands. The first which took place in May-June 1875 conquered the provinces in the north as far south as, but not including, the province of Cisha.² The second campaign was in October 1876. This does not appear to have made any new conquests, though it returned with what was described as a rich booty of hundreds of slaves and large numbers of cattle.³ To ensure the success of his campaigns to the lake district, Menelik had to have control over those provinces of Guraghe which were situated on the approaches to Shoa. This is what the campaigns of 1875 and 1876 were designed to achieve.

There was also an economic factor which increased Menelik's desire to conquer the whole of Guraghe, a task which was completed in the second half of 1889.⁴ The products which came

¹Traversi: "Da Entotto al Zuquala" in B.S.G.I. Serie II - Vol. XII, 1887, p.593, also p.270. Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, p.167. H. Audon, "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde, 2e Semestre 1889, p. 158, para. XIX.

²N.A.F. 10222, Massaia 23.6.1875. M. & D. (Africa) 62, pp. 359-63. Arnoux: "extraits du Journal" also in R. des deux Mondes, Vol. 30, pp. 896, 899-902. The provinces would be those of Aimelelle already tributary, Muhur, Abso, Ghedelei, and Esgia.

³ASSGI, Cartoni VI^C, Antinori's Journal (in pencil) for October 1876. Ibid., Chiarini "Memoria Sulla Storia...". Cecchi (Da Zeila, I, 271), says the King lost about one-third of his army and with-

(cont.)

to Shoa from Guraghe, although insignificant compared with those which came from the Maca region, were nevertheless important to the Shoan monarch. These consisted mainly in slaves; it is true that Menelik himself and the Christian population of Shoa in general, did not trade in slaves. Yet the taxes paid in Shoa by the Slave merchants on each slave brought, in transit, to the Kingdom constituted one of the important sources of revenue for the crown. Slaves from Guraghe were reputed, at the coast, to be the best and therefore the most sought after; they were hard working and docile.¹ Slaves and other trade goods from Guraghe did not all reach the coast by way of Shoa; part of it went eastwards by way of the Arussi country to Harar.² It was therefore in the interest of Menelik to control the whole of this limited but important trade. It is probable that Menelik's conquest of the Arussi region and of Harar itself was dictated by, among other factors, his desire

(cont.) drew to avoid greater losses.

⁴S.R. nei Congressi Vol. 10. Taurin Cahagne to Cardinal Massaia. Harrar 18.7.1889.

¹L. Traversi "Viaggi negli Arussi" in B.S.G.I., Serie II, Vol. XII, 1887 p.268.

²Traversi, Ibid., p.284. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. II, p.102. Taurin affirms the existence of a frequented route from Harar to Arussi; he describes it as passing through the Gara mountaings, across the Majo River, the plains of Wareris and the markets of Gulufa and Gesara. NAF. 10222, Taurin's letter dated Zeila 23.3.1884.

to control this south-easterly route to the coast.

Of all the campaigns which Menelik conducted before he became Emperor in 1889 perhaps the most sustained and the most bloody were those against the Arussi Galla. It took six different campaigns conducted between January 1882 and January 1887 to conquer that vast region.¹ On each of these campaigns Menelik's soldiers met with determined resistance from the enemy. The success of the Arussi resistance was due partly to the extensive nature of their country and partly to their numerical strength.² The fact that Menelik conducted more than one campaign at a time in different provinces and that armies were stationed more or less permanently in each province meant that the King's fighting strength against the Arussi was considerably reduced. Further, the Arussi adopted, with considerable success, the Galla fighting technique of making surprise attacks in the night while the "Amhara" enemy were at rest, inflicting some losses and then quickly making off before

¹ (i) January 1882 (lasted 3 weeks)
 (ii) December 1883-January 1884.
 (iii) March-April 1884
 (iv) November 1885.
 (v) May-June 1886
 (vi) December 1886.

After the fifth campaign an army was left behind in the region which completed the conquest. The sixth campaign thus appears to have been only engaged in the pacification of the country.

the enemy could organise a counter-attack. In one such nocturnal attack during the campaign of May 1886 the Arussi killed about seven hundred of Menelik's soldiers.¹ Nevertheless Arussi resistance broke down during the last campaign in November-December 1886 and the region then fell to the invaders. In the final analysis it was the firearms of the invaders which won them the contest.

With the fall of the Arussi country to Menelik, the conquest of Harar, the focal point of the south-easterly route could not long be delayed. In fact Harar was conquered in the first week of January 1887, soon after the breakdown of Arussi resistance. One gets the impression from the sources that for some time Menelik had had his eyes on Harar and took considerable pains to prepare the ground for the eventual conquest. As early as June 1885 Menelik expressed his intention to occupy Harar. In a letter to the King of Italy dated 4th June 1885 in which this intention is expressed, Menelik explained that Harar had formed part of the Medieval Empire and that to conquer it would

²Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I p.172, note 6. The editor refers to Paulitschke's estimate of the population of the Arussi in the 1880s at about one million, and to Martial de Salviac's estimate that the Arussi could raise a combined army of more than 100,000 men.

¹Sellassié: op.cit., Vol. I, p.234.
Traversi: "Viaggi negli Arussi" in B.S.G.I. cit., p.274.

only mean his resuming possession of what had once belonged to his ancestors.¹ It is true that the reunification of the scattered provinces of the Medieval Empire was a general motive for all his conquests. Nevertheless, Menelik had other reasons for wanting to conquer Harar.

The commercial motive has already been suggested. The Harar province had formed part of the Medieval Empire. With the spread of Islam into the eastern half of the Empire in the last five centuries of the Middle Ages and the consequent wars between the Christian Emperors and their Muslim subjects, Imperial control over the easterly provinces had become tenuous. Harar together with other south-easterly, southerly and south-westerly provinces had become completely lost to the Christian Empire as a result of the Galla invasions. From this period until it was conquered by Egypt in October 1875 the city of Harar lived the life of an independent, city-state. Throughout this period, by virtue of its geographical position - half way between the coast and the fertile south-easterly regions of the Empire - Harar was a commercial centre of no small importance. The ports of Zeyla, Tadjura and Berbera

¹Libro Verde No. XV. Etiopia: Doc. 95, p.202. Menelik to Umberto I. Entotto 4.6.1885. (28 ghenbot l'anno 20 del nostro regno)

on which Aden depended for her provisions, in their turn were dependent on Harar for these supplies. With the Egyptian occupation, European merchants began to enter and trade directly in the city¹ and by the early 1880s a French and an Italian Commercial House had been opened in the city.² There were also quite a few Greek and Armenian merchants established there. Harar's trade with the coast was until the 1880s clearly more important than Shoa's trade with the coast; even in the 1880s when Shoa's direct trade with the coast became increasingly important, that of Harar did not diminish in importance.

For Menelik it was not merely a question of getting control over the south-easterly route which led through Guraghe and ^rArussi to Harar. Indeed, Menelik intended to extend his control of the trade routes to as far as the coast and possibly secure a port for Shoa. Already he controlled, rather ineffectively, the routes which led from Zeyla, Obock and Assab

¹Until the Egyptian occupation the city was closed to Europeans and its trade with the coast was in the hands of Somali tribes and Arab merchants. The English traveller Richard F. Burton who reached the city in 1854 succeeded only because he disguised himself as an (Arab) Muslim merchant.

²The French House, a branch of the commercial establishment of Bardey in Aden, was opened in December 1880 and was until 1885 under the charge of Arthur Rimbaud. See Enid Starkie: Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia Oxford 1937. The Italian House, also a branch of the Bienenfeld establishment in Aden was in the charge first of Pietro Sacconi, then (after 1883) of Gaetano Sacconi and after 1887 of Ottorino Sacconi.

to the eastern frontier of Shoa. He even claimed control over the salt lake at Aussa only a few hours journey from the coast, and levied taxes on any of the Afar tribes who took salt from the lake;¹ it was for this reason that Menelik had to approve of the treaty which Antonelli signed in 1883 with the sultan of Aussa, Mohamad Anfari (or Hanfari) to secure the route from Assab through Aussa to Shoa. But he did not yet have any control over a port on the coast. The need for a port to which Shoa could have unimpeded access was brought home to Menelik by the Egyptian occupation of the Somali coast and the resulting blockade. Thus in May 1887, exactly four months after the conquest of Harar, Menelik wrote as follows to the King of Italy:

"My occupation of Harar is (notizia) good news for the commercial relations between Italy and Shoa, but more important than this ... is the (question of) Zeila. If your Majesty will see to its cession to me the route will be opened to trade not only from (i.e. with) Shoa but also from the countries

¹J. Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, pp. 42, 176.
L.V. No. XV. Etiopia: Doc. 111, p. 246-7. Antonelli to M.A.E. Entotto 15.11.1886. Doc. 111 (Annesso) Menelik to Umberto I, 14.10.1886.

of Arussi, Kambata, Gimma and Kaffa. Products from all these countries would be sent to Zeila...."¹

There was also a question of the security of Shoa involved in the conquest of Harar. Menelik feared an occupation of Harar by a foreign power which might possibly lead to an attack on Shoa herself. Egypt had tried to close in on the Empire as a whole from the north, the Somali coast as well as from Harar, and had failed partly as a result of defeats sustained at the hands of the Emperor in the north and partly as a result of her own domestic difficulties. Menelik had had great fears of the Egyptian "iron ring"; an occupation of Harar by a European power more powerful than Egypt would threaten the security of Shoa. France and Italy were both interested in occupying Harar on the withdrawal of the Egyptians, and were engaged in diplomatic and other preparations for this purpose. The object and the report of a French mission entrusted to the French vice-consulat Khartoum, M. Gaston Lemay, to the Somali coast and Harar in May-June 1885 and the activities of M. Henry, a French Engineer resident in Harar about this time might not be known to Menelik. Nor would he have known about the diplomatic activities that went on between Mancini and Lord Granville between March

¹ASMAI 36/4-40. Menelik to Umberto I, Antotto 7.5.1887.

and June 1885. But Menelik had at least one reason to fear Italian occupation of Harar. In April 1886, on the orders of the restored Emir, an Italian Commercial and Scientific mission to Harar led by Count Perro was killed to a man. Menelik feared that Italy might retaliate by invading Harar. With the Italians in Massawah and already pushing towards Tigrian frontier, yet protesting their pacific intentions, an Italian occupation of Harar would embarrass Menelik. The King who had been worried about the possibility of Italian occupation and had sought a clarification of their intentions regarding Harar from Antonelli in 1885¹ must have become even more worried. It would appear therefore that one of the reasons for the conquest of Harar was to anticipate its occupation by a European power and avert the dangerous implications which such an occupation would entail for the security of Shoa. It was probably for this reason that two days after the battle in which the Shoan soldiers routed the Harari soldiers, Menelik sent news of his conquest of the city to the Italian commissioner at Assab.²

¹L.V. No. XV. Etiopia, Doc. 91, p.196. Antonelli to Direttore generale degli affari politici al M.A.E. dated Ankober 25.6.1885.

²ASMAI 36/4-39. Menelik to Luigi de Simone 8.1.1887.

As part of the preparations for the conquest Menelik appears to have employed spies in the city whose task it was to report to him on the developments there regarding the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces and the movement of Europeans.¹ In October 1885, while the conquest of the Arussi was still in progress Menelik sent one of his generals to occupy the Ittu Galla country to prepare the ground for the conquest of Harar.² The sort of ground work that was to be done must have been clear to the general, Walda Gabriel: conquest of the Ittu country and gradual advance towards the frontiers of Harar. This is exactly what Walda Gabriel and his army did. By October the general had advanced pretty well towards the Harar frontier, to have repulsed an attack made on him by the Harari soldiers, the news of which he quickly sent to the King in Entotto.³ Preparations were immediately started towards a campaign. Although it was usual with the

¹In the letter to King Umberto in June 1885 quoted above there are these sentences "My men (or Messengers) (I Mieï) who have been in Harar for seven months write to me that the country has now fallen into the hands of the Galla In the latest letter they say that (nell' ultima lettera giuntami, mi si dice che) the Turks (i.e. Egyptians) have withdrawn all their troops ("... han finito coll' andarsene via")." In November 1884 when evacuation began, the Egyptian population at Harar was said to be 3,411 regular soldiers, 160 civil officials and 5,000 women and children. Paulitschke: "Le Harrar sous l'administration égyptienne 1875-85" B.S.K.G., Vol. 10, 1887, p.583. But the official report on the Evacuation prepared by Major Heath who was connected with the operation said

(cont.)

King not to disclose the destination of a campaign, it was widely believed in Shoa at this time that Harar was the destination of the impending campaign.¹ Accompanied by Dr. Ragazzi and Dr. Alfieri the expedition left Entotto on 12th November and marched by way of Arussi where Ras Dargue joined the forces, and the Ittu country and together with the governor of Ittu the other troops made for Harar. At a place called Chalanko (Ciallancio) probably in the district occupied by the Meta or Oborra tribe of the Ala group the Emir's men attacked the invaders on January 6, 1887. The battle lasted only half an hour; the Harari were routed; only the Emir managed to escape on horseback. Menelik then entered the defenceless city and occupied it.² The government of this important

(cont.) that "The garrison and followers, to the number of 8,359, were marched down to the coast in eleven detachments and embarked for Egypt."

F.O. 78/3971 "Report by Major Heath on the Evacuation of Harrar" dated 14th May 1885.

²H. Audon, "Voyage au Choa", Le Tour du Monde 2e Semestre 1889, p. 144, para XII.

³Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, Paris 1890, p.158, Antotto 29.10.1886. ASMAI 36/3-25, Antonelli to Sig. Commissario Civile in Assab, Antotto 12.12.1886. S.R.nei Congressi Vol. 10. Taurin Cahagne to Cardinal Simeoni, Zeyla 11.11.1886.

¹Audon, op.cit., p.154, para. XVI. Borelli: op.cit., ibid.

²ASMAI 8/1-2: V. Ragazzi to R^o Commissario Civile in Assab, Harar 13.1.1887. Also Ragazzi to S.G.I. same date in ASSGI, Cartoni VI^C. It is this

(cont.)

province was given to the King's own faithful cousin Dedjatch Makronen.¹ It was from Harar that campaigns were organised for the conquest of Ogaden in 1891.

By 1889 when Menelik became Emperor, the area of the Shoa which he inherited had been increased several times as a result of his conquests. In the 1840s the area of Shoa was estimated at one hundred and fifty miles in length by ninety miles in breadth and its total population at two and a half million people.² About 1881 the area of the kingdom was put at 73956 square kilometres (about 46220sq. miles), while in 1878 its population was reckoned "at about five million inhabitants, Christians, Mohammedans and heathens".³ It was these conquests which paved the way for those made in the 1890s which more or less fixed the present day frontiers of the Empire. From time to time there were revolts in one or the other of the conquered provinces but these were successfully put down ^{and} the control of Shoa asserted.

(cont.) which was published in the B.S.G.I. Serie II - Vol. XII, 1887, pp. 195-6.

ASMAI 36/4-39: G. Sacconi to Bienenfeld, Harar 15.1.1887.

G. Sellassié: Chronique I, 242-9. The chronicler's account is very close to that of Tagazzi.

¹ Appointed Dedjazmatch about this time.

² I.O.L.: B.S.P. IG 204, No. 1216 Graham. Harris: The Highlands, III, p.28.

³ Cecchi: Da Zeila, I, p.187. F.O. Confidential Print (4082): Messrs. Mayer and Greiner to Lord Salisbury 17.12.1878.

The conquered regions were organised on a hierarchical basis modelled on that which obtained in the central provinces of the Kingdom for purposes of administration. It is not clear how far the conquered Galla and Sidama peoples were assimilated. Although Amhara priests and monks followed each campaign it does not appear that much was done beyond establishing churches in provinces. This explains why several decades after the conquest Christians continued to be in the minority in these provinces. One thing, however, was certain, and it is that despite the periodic revolts, a measure of peace and security was brought to the conquered provinces by the conquerors.¹ It was this which made possible the exploration of those provinces. It is true that before the Shoan conquest of the south-westerly region, d'Abbadie and the Catholic Missionaries had visited those provinces; but the difficulties which they encountered were far greater than those experienced by the travellers who visited that region after the Shoan conquest. The "Pax Shoana" may be said to have been truly extended to the conquered regions.

¹A. Aubry: "Une Mission au Choa et dans les pays Galla" in Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Paris, 7e serie, Vol. VIII, 1887, pp. 467-8. Borelli: op.cit., pp. 168, 398.

Chapter IV

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Portuguese Manuel de Almeida, in his history of Ethiopia summed up the administrative structure thus: -

"... At the same time it should be known that none of these Kingdoms had Kings of their own when the Emperor controlled them nor have they today. He governed them all through viceroys or governors placed there by his own hand, though in some of them he used not to put strangers but natives of the same Kingdom, descendants of their own former Kings."¹

To what extent this is an accurate picture of the way in which the Medieval Empire was governed can only be established by a detailed study of the administrative system before the decline of the Empire.² Almeida's picture, however, fits the governmental structure of Shoa.

¹Manuel de Almeida: "History of Ethiopia" in Some Records of Ethiopia trans. & Edt. Beckingham and Huntingford. Hakluyt Society 1954. Bk. I, Ch. 3, p.19.

²R. Pankhurst in his Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia has a chapter on government, but this deals mainly with the central Imperial structure and has very little on the details of provincial administration.

Shoa developed a strongly monarchical administrative system which worked through a hierarchy of officials. Like the Imperial crown, the crown of Shoa was the most important unifying factor in the ever-expanding Kingdom. The Church played an important role in the life of the Kingdom. It preserved tradition and thereby kept a link with the past. Its influence over the monarchs was considerable. The expulsion of the protestant missionary Krapf in 1842 was largely the work of the priesthood. Propagation of Amhara culture in the conquered Galla provinces was mainly the responsibility of the Church. In 1887 when Menelik offered to mediate between the Emperor Yohannes and the Italians in Massawa, it was Abuna Mateos of Shoa who led a delegation to discuss the suggestion with the Emperor.¹ But as a unifying factor the Church's role was limited. This had to be so in a rising kingdom whose population was composed of diverse religious groups and whose Christian element was always heavily outnumbered. If Almeida's summary is accurate (evidence from other sources strengthens its accuracy) then there are indications which tend to suggest that the ad-

¹Borelli: Éthiopie Méridionale, Paris 1890, p.258. Antoto 18.10.1887.
ASMAI 36/4-42: Antonelli to M.A.E. Addis Abeba, 9.10.1887.
Libro Verde No. XV Etiopia, Doc. 133, p.310 (Annesso). Menelik to Umberto I. Antoto, 1.12.1887.

ministrative structure of Shoa was, broadly speaking, a miniature but improved reflection of the system which existed in the Medieval Empire. In the old Empire, the Emperors ruled the outlying provinces mainly through governors, sometimes local princes, whose main obligations to the central authority appear to have been the payment of tribute and the provision of soldiers, in times of need, for the defence of the Empire as a whole. As long as those obligations were faithfully met, the Emperors were content to leave the governors in charge of their various provinces. While this was a practical way of governing an empire as vast and heterogenous as pre-17th century Ethiopia was, it had serious inherent weaknesses. Among otherthings it did not eliminate the danger of the growth of princely families with strong local interests; on the contrary it made possible such a development. These princely families could make trouble for the central authority by exploiting their local influence to create petty, semi-independent states within the Empire. Indeed this is what appears to have happened, and its cumulative effect was to contribute to the decline of the Imperial authority.

In Shoa, although the system was somewhat similar to Almeida's account, the Kings employed methods to ensure that provincial

governors did not become a danger to the central authority. So central was the crown of Shoa in the government of the Kingdom that it will be best to start an examination of the administrative structure with an analysis of the part played by the King

By the 1840s the administrative experiments of the previous rulers had developed to such a point that the King was absolute master of the Kingdom. He controlled not only the property but also the lives of his subjects, and was the fountain of honour and the source of both power and property. Although, among the Christian provinces of Ethiopia, Shoa was perhaps unique in this respect, the development of monarchical absolutism was by no means peculiar to Shoa. In other parts of Africa absolute monarchies of varying strength had already developed or were developing almost contemporaneously with Shoa. In many respects parallels could be found between Shoa and these other states. These parallels appear to be particularly close in the interlacustrine kingdoms, and in the discussion which follows references will be made especially to the contemporary Kingdom of Buganda. No inhabitant of Shoa could possess or own anything except what the king, out of his bounty, granted him. The whole land of the Kingdom was the personal property of the King.¹ It

¹Charles Johnston: Travels II, p.185. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, pp. 247-8. I.O.L.: BSP LG 206 No. 1600, paras 12 & 13.

was (to some extent it still is) a general African conception that the land of a particular state ultimately belonged to the king or supreme ruler. The king was the supreme symbol of the state and indeed often personified the state. On the strength of this conception the land of Shoa would belong not to the king of Shoa but to the Emperor of Ethiopia who, as his title made clear, was the supreme ruler of the whole of Ethiopia. This was not an empty claim even with regards to Shoa. Although Sahla Selassie had been completely independent of the Imperial power, Shoa had been conquered by the Emperor Theodros, and despite the re-establishment of its independence, Menelik was in effect a vassal of the Emperor Yohannes and paid him tribute. Nevertheless, to consider the Emperor of Ethiopia as the "owner" of the land of Shoa is to over-simplify the issue. The fact was that Menelik's position in Shoa was more than that of an ordinary ruler of a province within a state. In Shoa the symbol of supreme authority was not Yohannes but Menelik, and this made a world of difference on a continent where the symbol of the state was often identified with the state itself. By the treaty of 1878 the king of the kings of Ethiopia had acknowledged Menelik as the hereditary king of Shoa. In so doing he had in fact acknowledged Menelik's rights to all the powers, rights and

privileges which had been enjoyed by the latter's ancestors as the supreme authorities in Shoa. One of these privileges was their right to the "ownership" of the land over which they were kings. It has been seen that the development of Shoa was made possible largely because of the relative weakness of the Imperial authority. The right of the Shoan kings to the ownership of the land of the kingdom may therefore be said to have had its strongest basis in conquest. It has been shown in the previous chapters that the whole of the territory comprising our Shoa was conquered by a succession of rulers from one Amhara family. The kings of our period were heirs to the earlier conquests to which they continued to add new territories. Thus in Shoa all the conquests were made not merely in the name of, but in fact for, the King. The King could therefore do whatever he liked with the conquered land. He could reserve each new conquest as crown land, or dispose of it to the Church or to individuals, or leave it for the use of its conquered inhabitants. In practice, however, the King left as much land as possible for the unrestricted use of the subjects, and contented himself with extracting tribute from them.¹ The royal

¹The system of land tenure in Ethiopia is very complicated and differs from one province to another. For introduction to the subject in English see Ullendorff: The Ethiopians, Lond. 1960, pp. 187-9. M. Perham: The Government of Ethiopia, Oxford 1947, pp. 277-92. The Ethiopian Observer: Vol. V, No. 4, 1962, pp. 302-339. R. Pankhurst: An Introduction... 1961, Ch.10.

claim to all land was demonstrated in practice by Sahla Selassie's policy of resuming possession of the land he had granted to any individual on the death of that individual.¹ There is no specific mention of Menelik doing this, but the indications are that he adopted a similar policy. In an agricultural country where the land was the source of all property, the King's exclusive right to the land meant that the only way by which a subject could acquire not only property and wealth but even a living was to support the monarchy. Thus the severest punishment in the Kingdom, with the possible exception of mutilation and the death penalty, was deprivation of property.² The effect of the Crown's claim to all the land, therefore, was to attach the subjects to the Crown.

The administration of Shoa, like that of other African kingdoms, was highly centralised. All important appointments were made by the King and each official in the hierarchy was directly responsible to him. Officials continued at their posts for as long as they retained the royal favour, which they endeavoured to cultivate by acts calculated to impress the King with their devotion

¹C. Johnston: *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 184-6, 210.
B.S.P. LG 189 No. 2060G. Harris 5.1.1842. Para 2.

²"Property" here is meant to have wide connotation and covers the office held by a person and the lands, rights and privileges attached to such an Office.

and fidelity. Generally, these acts took the form of faithfully discharging the duties attached to their offices: military service in the campaigns of expansion, payment of annual tribute, defence and maintenance of law and order in the provinces under their individual control. An official who failed in any of his duties was duly deprived of his post and the office given to another person. Thus late in 1841 Ato Gogbru, governor of Mindjar province was deprived of his post for inability to check the repeated rebellions of the Galla tribes under his government.¹

In January 1842, Ato Tinta, the Amhara governor of the important market town of Aliu Amba was dismissed and imprisoned for embezzlement, and the post given to a Muslim². Menelik imprisoned Abba Uatto for rebellion. He also dismissed and restored to his post prince Mashasha Seifou according to whether or not he could rely on the fidelity of Seifou.

Besides faithfully discharging his duties, an official raised his position in royal favour if, from time to time, he offered presents to the King. This practice, it should be emphasized, was not peculiar to Shoa.³ Thus on the occasion of the

¹B.S.P. IG 189 No. 2034 Harris, 12.12.1841, para. 3.

²B.S.P. IG 185, No. 1440, Barker, 7.1.1842, para. 9.

³See for example the practice in the kingdom of Kongo, in Doc. 18, esp. pp. 132-5 of Cuvelier and Jadin: L'ancien Congo d'après les archives Romaines 1518-1640 (Louvain, 1954).

marriage of princess Zauditu of Shoa to Ras Areya Selassie of Tigre, in 1882, Ras Gobana offered Menelik presents consisting of 1300 horses, five hundred mules, gold, ivory and musk.¹ Dedjaz Ghermami as well as other officials, from time to time, gave feasts in honour of the King and his entourage.² In fairness to the Kings it must be emphasized that they were not easily swayed by such presents. They expected their subjects to be faithful, and lavishly rewarded devoted services with honours, posts and lands.

The monarchs did not neglect to interest themselves in the improvement of the Kingdom. Sahla Selassie personally supervised the building of a bridge across the Beresa river in 1842, as well as the erection of barricades at the frontiers to improve frontier defences.³ Menelik's personal attention to the building of bridges, frontier defences and new towns surpassed that of his grandfather. The King's personal attention to the building of a new palace at Antoto in 1883 is described

¹P. Soleillet: Voyages en Ethiopie, Rouen 1886, p.97.

²See for example: Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique du règne de Ménliko II... ed. M. de Coppet, Paris 1930-2, Tome I, p.294.

³L.G. 189 No. 2060 I, Harris 31.1.1842. LG 196 No. 3489, Harris 4.7.1842, para. 18.

by an eyewitness thus:

"He (Menelik) personally supervises the workers; without any hesitation (he) puts his hand to the work, taking measurements, designing the plans and the elevations of the building himself."¹

The crown was also the head of the army in the Kingdom. This was not merely titular, for the Kings of Shoa always took practical part in the campaigns of conquest and expansion. The early rulers gave active military leadership, which sustained the early phase of the rise of the Kingdom, and their example was faithfully followed by the later rulers. By the 1840s Sahla Selassie had created a contingent of some six hundred soldiers of which he was the direct commander. This contingent was the only standing army in the Kingdom, and was composed entirely of the personal servants in the royal household. Under Menelik the strength of this contingent was estimated at between 10,000 and 12,000 and was said to provide the finest soldiers in the Kingdom. Most of these were servants in various capacities at the Court, but some were recruited from outside the Court. Again at this period this contingent was the only part of the army which could be said to have been permanently under arms, and during campaigns was under

¹ A. Aubry: "Une Mission au Choa et dans le pays Galla" in Bull. de la société de géographie de Paris, 7e Serie Vol. VIII 1887, p.471. See also Massaia: I.Miei... Vol. X passim.

the personal command of the King. The supplies of the royal troops came directly from the royal arsenal.¹

Sahla Selassie personally led many of the campaigns of conquest which were undertaken during his reign. On these campaigns he often killed a number of the enemy with his own hand, and displayed skill and bravery which won the admiration of the warriors.² Menelik also led some of the expeditions of conquest in person and exhibited military talent by no means inferior to that of his ancestors. Among campaigns which were led by Menelik personally were those which conquered the Wallo country between 1868 and 1876, that of 1879 to lake Zeway in Guraghe, those of the 1880s in Arussi country, and that of 1887 which conquered Harar. It was the policy of Sahla Selassie and his successors to keep to themselves the destination of an expedition. In those campaigns which were noted by the King personally, only the commander-in-chief was entrusted with the destination and tactics to be employed. The conduct of a campaign was, therefore, the personal responsibility of the crown.

The dynamic example given by the monarchs during the campaigns contributed not a little to that display of daring on the part of Shoan warriors on which European travellers com-

¹LG 189 No. 2060D. Harris 27.11.1841, paras. 41, 42. Ch. Johnson (op.cit. Vol. II, p.75) estimates the strength of the royal contingent in 1842 at "at least a thousand".

mented with admiration. It must also have contributed to boosting up the morale of the warriors in difficult circumstances. Such, for example, was the case during the campaigns against the Arussi Galla.¹

The judicial functions of the Crown were as important as its administrative and military duties. Plowden paints a depressing picture of justice and judicial administration in the Empire in the 1850s. He says, among others, that:

"The office of a judge is rather to settle and profit by disputes brought before him than to punish offences against the law. In case of murder, for instance, unless the victim has some relative, who acting as accuser seizes the homicide himself, proves the crime and is ready to slay him with his own hand, the culprit will be untouched, justice furnishing neither accuser nor executioner.² Having no prisons, the

(cont.) ASMAI 36/4-41. Antonelli to M.A.E., Entotto 19.9.1887.
ASMAI 36/5-43. Same to Same, Addis Abeba 23.11.1887.

Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, Paris 1890, p.180. See also below, Chapter on Army.

²Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la côte orientale de la Mer Rouge etc. Paris 1841. pp. 168-72, 240-9 and passim. LG 189 No. 2060B Harris 29.10.1842, para 10. LG 189 No. 2060 K Harris 28.2.1842, para 3.

¹See Chapter III pp. 202-203

²Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia 1846-68, p.117.
 Plowden to the Earl of Clarendon, July 9, 1854, enclosure.

right hand of the prisoner is chained by the wrist to the left hand of some other person, by a chain of some two to four feet..... Thus an innocent person must always suffer with the guilty..... Mutilation is practised, in general, on one hand or foot or both.....A thief is mutilated on the third or fourth conviction..... The ears and nose are cut off for some other offences such as spying, being taken in adultery etc....."¹

Plowden's account, it must be emphasized, referred to the northern provinces of the Empire. It contrasts strongly with what we are told by travellers of justice and judicial administration in Shoa in the nineteenth century, and puts into perspective the peaceful and orderly nature of Shoan society during this period. In Shoa every facility existed for airing grievances and securing redress for wrongs done, and offenders hardly ever got away with their offences. Harris describes capital punishment inflicted in June 1842: "The malefactor, a Christian who had in cold blood murdered an Amhara in his bed a few days previously, being arraigned before the royal tribunal,

¹Plowden: Travels in Abyssinia.... London. 1868, pp. 94-7.

received sentence of death, and was immediately led forth for execution..... The culprit standing in an open spot..... was suddenly knocked down from behind by a violent blow with a club on the nape of the neck when.... two of the King's executioners rushing in, transfixed the prostrate body with their spears."¹ There is no mention of offenders mutilated for their offences, although, in theory, mutilation was a form of punishment; nor is there mention of culprits chained to innocent persons. Chaining, indeed, is mentioned as being employed in Shoa, but the sources positively say that only the culprit was chained, and that both hands or legs were chained; often he was imprisoned as well.² Far from there being no prisons, there was a security prison at Guncho where the cells were said to be vaults from which escape was impossible.³ Here were to be found offenders of all kinds including political prisoners. The jailor was usually the governor of the province in which Guncho was situated. Under Sahla Selassie the governor was the

¹LG 193 No. 2919. Harris 10.6.1842, para 35.

²LG 196 No. 3489. Harris 4.7.1842, para 10.

³LG 204 No. 1172. Harris, 31.10.1842, para 1.

Muslim, Walasma Mohamed, whose son, usually referred to as Abogaz Walasma, was the governor under Menelik. When the Abogaz died in 1884, his duties as state jailor, together with his other duties, were transferred to Azaj Walde Tsadek, governor of Ankober where there was another prison. Besides, the fortresses of Tamo (Tammo), Afqara and Fekerie Ghemb served as places of security for political prisoners. The existence of a machinery for settling disputes and securing justice in Shoa earned for the kingdom the reputation of being the most orderly and peaceful kingdom in the Empire.¹

The judicial machinery was linked up with the administrative and military structure, and was, therefore, hierarchical. Each official constituted "an appeal court" for those immediately below him; the King was at the apex of the whole structure and constituted the final court of appeal in the kingdom.

There is mention in the sources of a special court of Wimberoch at the palace. These were "judges of an inferior kind who (relieved) the King of all first hearings of cases except in the most important ones, and who (sat) in judgment in one of the

¹M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 13. Rochet d'Héricourt: "Considerations politiques et commerciales sur le royaume du Choa", p.279.

courts of the palace".¹ In the early 1840s their number was estimated at seventeen, nineteen, or twenty-one.² There is no indication as to which persons constituted this court, but we are told that the 'court' always travelled with the King.³ It would appear from the absence of information about its members that the court of Wimberoch was not institutionalised and that it was an ad hoc council called to deal with cases as they came. Its members would include any important dignitary who happened to be within reach at any particular time when the 'court' was to be convened; its composition at any time would include dignitaries at the royal household, such as leaders of the royal troops, the Afa Negus⁴ the Malafia Agafari, the King's father confessor. The fact that the total membership of the 'court' is estimated at an odd figure suggests that in its hearings the decision of the majority was accepted as the verdict. Appeals from the royal judges lay with the King himself.

Both Sahla Selassie and Menelik took their judicial duties seriously and spent many hours a day dispensing justice. Every

¹Johnston: Travels... Vol. II p.160, also Borelli: op.cit., p.156 Antoto 24.-27.10.1886. A. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.359.

²Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p.251.

³ASMAI 36/5-43. Antonelli to M.A.E. Addis Abeba, 23.11.1887.

⁴Literally the "mouth of the King", his duties were roughly similar to the linguist in the Akan kingship system.

inhabitant in the kingdom, rich or poor, master or servant, had the right to present his grievances before the King. Appeals were made in a curious manner; the party who intended to appeal would go to the royal palace or tent and cry repeatedly for "justice" in the King's hearing. The King's serious attitude to his judicial duties was reflected in the fact that cases were heard not only in the palace but wherever possible, even during military campaigns.¹ The King sat alone as a "one-man court"; court sittings always took place in the open and could be attended by anybody interested. Open court and other procedure employed by the King were reflected in the "lower courts". The judge sat on a raised platform, while the plaintiff, the defendant and the public sat in a semi-circle at the foot of the platform. The plaintiff and the defendant were introduced by the agafari. One party explained his case freely without interruption, after which the other party recounted his version of the story. There is no mention of witnesses, and one would suppose that they were not employed. While the parties spoke, the King listened attentively. After both the plaintiff and the defendant had spoken the King would cross-examine them and then give his verdict. Generally the "judges of the royal court" would be present to explain

¹LG 189 No. 2060. Harris, 14.10.1842, para 8. Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la côte orientale de la Mer Rouge . . . etc. Paris 1841, pp. 151, 165. Borelli: op.cit., p.157. ASMAI 36/5-43 Antonelli, Report cit.

how they came to their decision.¹ If the King considered the verdict of his judges fair, he endorsed it, otherwise he gave what he considered to be the correct verdict. The Kings of our period had a reputation for fairness. The ease and precision with which they disentangled complicated issues won the admiration of European eye-witnesses.²

In dispensing justice, the King and his judges undoubtedly consulted the Fetha Nagast, the legal code which was used throughout the Empire. They must also have taken into account local customs, as was the case in other provinces of the Empire. Punishments for various offences are prescribed by the Fetha Nagast. It was in the infliction of punishments that local customs and the sympathetic disposition of the Shoaan kings provided a moderating effect. In Shoa mutilation, although prescribed by the law code for certain offences, appears to have been hardly ever inflicted. Our sources do not mention people mutilated for offences. Commenting on mutilation as a form of punishment, Harris wrote that in Shoa "no criminal ever suffers under the barbarous mutilation".³ This is confirmed by Borelli

¹Borelli: op.cit., p.94. 22.6.1886.

²LG 196 No. 3489. Harris 4.7.1842. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage... p.253. ASMAI 36/5-43. Antonelli Report cit.

³LG 193. No. 2919. Harris 10.6.1842, para. 8.

who visited the Kingdom in the 1880s. Discussing forms of punishment he mentioned that mutilation exists in the law code for stealing and many other offences; he commented, however, that in practice, "toutefois, ce châtimeut, qui ne tient aucun compte des degrés de culpabilité, tend à disparaître" and in its place chains and imprisonment substituted.¹ In fact according to the same traveller, mutilation even of an enemy killed in war was punishable by death.² Also executions must have been limited in number, for executions recorded in the sources are few indeed. This is significant because European travellers in non-European countries have always been quick to record and comment on executions, mutilations and other practices which they consider to be barbarous. On the other hand, recorded examples of deprivation and imprisonment are many and suggest that these were the commonest forms of punishment inflicted in Shoa. This is not to imply that Shoa society was devoid of criminals. What is being suggested is twofold; partly that crimes which warranted execution or mutilation appear to have been committed far less often in Shoa than was the case elsewhere in the Empire;

¹Borelli: op.cit., p.95. 22.6.1886.

²Ibid., p.176. Antoto 1.12.1886.

and partly that the Kings of Shoa, enlightened as they were, substituted less severe forms of punishment for mutilation and, to a limited extent, for execution. By establishing a strong and efficient monarchical administration the Shoan rulers succeeded in removing many of the factors which gave cause to animosity and crime. An orderly society was thus built up in Shoa, one of whose attributes was respect for law and authority.¹ It was the existence of a strong central government in Shoa which made possible the peaceful development of a society whose component elements - Christian, Muslim and pagan - were such as could well have impeded an orderly development. The bane of the northern provinces of the Empire, in contrast to Shoa, was the absence of a strong central government which could instil into the society respect for order and love of peace.

For purposes of administration the Kingdom was divided into provinces. It must be emphasised that the system of provincial government evolved very gradually and became better defined as Shoa expanded territorially. Under Asfa Wassen, there were said to be four provinces² but the number increased

¹LG 216 No. 1600. Graham para 63.

²J. L. Morié: Histoire de l'Ethiopie (Nubie et Abyssinie) depuis les plus recluses jusqu'à nos jours. Paris 1904, Tome II, pp. 411-412. Cecchi: Da Zeila... vol. I, p. 248-9.

as the Kingdom expanded. In the early 1840s one could distinguish about fourteen more or less defined provinces with a couple of ill-defined ones beyond the effective frontiers of the Kingdom. These provinces fell into three blocks. The eastern block facing the Adal (Afar) country comprised, from north to south, the provinces of Argoba, Efrata, Ghedem, Ifat. The population of these provinces was mostly Muslim and included Adals as well as Galla. The central block was made up of the provinces of Geshe, Manz, Tegulet, Ankober, and contained nearly the whole of the Amhara element in the Kingdom but there were some Galla as well. The western block consisted of the provinces of Morabiete, Shoa-meder and Morat. The population of the western block was largely pagan Galla. Stretching across the south of all three blocks were, from east, to west, the provinces of Bulga, Mindjar and Angolala, whose populations were wholly Galla. Beyond these, in the south and west, were a number of Galla tribes, tributary to the kingdom but over whom the King's control was rather tenuous. These included some Abitchu in the west and south-west, the Soddo in the south, and beyond the Soddo across the Hawash river Aimelele, the northernmost province of Gurage. During the reign of Menelik, the number of provinces more than doubled as a result of vast

territories conquered in the south, south-east and south-west.

There is no indication in the sources as to the bases or criteria for the division into provinces. Indeed the divisions might not have been the result of a conscious effort. They tended, however, to correspond to the units which were conquered, and one would suppose that geographical and physical features and probably kinship groupings might of themselves have been the dividing factors. Thus, in the 1840s, the limited tract of the Abitchu country conquered by Sahla Selassie constituted one province (Angolala) while the large and mainly Amhara occupied nuclear province of Manz also made up a single province. When the Maca^V country was conquered in the early years of the 1880s the whole of it was constituted into one administrative province until 1886, when the administration of this region was re-organised. Similarly, the Soddo country on both sides of the Hawash formed one province, so did the Ittu Galla country, the large Arussi^r country and the city of Harar together with the territory immediately surrounding it.

A governor was appointed by the king to administer each province, and invested with a silver sword as a badge of office.¹

¹Harris: The Highlands, III, p.30.

For reasons which will become clear later this official might be considered as a governor-general for the whole province. In Shoa, as in other centralised states in East Africa and indeed Africa in general, the provincial governor was in many respects the "king" of the province.¹ His powers were limited but his duties were a miniature reflection of those of the King, both civil and military. A provincial governor owed a duty to the King on the one hand, and to the inhabitants of the province on the other hand. To the King he had to pay tribute annually; this represented tribute paid by the whole province and not by the governor as an individual. It was his duty to collect the tribute and see to it that it was regularly paid. The value and nature of the tribute paid by each province is not known. However, the information available on tribute reaching the King from some of the provinces suggests that much of the tribute took the form of local products. In the 1840s tribute paid by the province of Manz was said to consist principally in Sekdat, a coarse black cloth manufactured from the fleece of the sheep bred in that province.² The Karaya district of the

¹J. Vansina: "A Comparison of African Kingdoms" in Africa, Vol. 32, 1962, pp. 324-8.

²Journal of Isenberg and Krapf... etc. London, 1843, pp. 298-9.
W. C. Harris: The Highlands... Vol. III p.287.

province of Mindjar had to contribute "an annual tribute of twenty oxen, and the left tooth of every elephant slain or found dead".¹ Tribute brought to Antoto from the province of Goma in 1885 was described as consisting of fifty elephant tusks, about two hundred horns filled with musk, and a bag of thalers. In addition, the King was offered, as a gift and not part of the tribute, about ten small ingots of gold, of the size of a hazel-nut.² Tribute brought from Jimma Abba Gifar in 1886 consisted of long elephant tusks, trunks of bamboo filled with civet, jars of honey, local tissues, lances, shields embossed with silver, and other local manufactures.³ When in 1887 Harar was conquered, a total annual tribute of 50,000 thalers was imposed on the city by Menelik.⁴

In addition to paying tribute, the governor owed the King military duty. He was expected to join the King with a contingent of soldiers from the province under his control whenever summoned, either to take part in the campaigns of conquest or to help in the defence of the Kingdom against external danger. Thus in 1855

¹IG 193 No. 2917. Harris 17.4.1842, para 39. Also Harris: The Highlands... Vol. III, p.253-4.

²H. Audon: "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde, 2e Semestre 1889, p.147.

³J. Borelli: op.cit., p.159.

⁴Ibid., p.214.

on the approach of the Emperor Theodros, the provincial governors rallied round the King with their forces. This was repeated at least three times during the reign of Menelik when the Emperor Yohannes projected invasions against the Kingdom. While on a campaign each provincial governor commanded the inhabitants of his province, though on occasions the King furnished one or more provincial governors with additional soldiers from the royal contingent. This happened mostly in the reign of Menelik, and was especially so when a governor was sent out to conquer a new territory. Further, the provincial governor was responsible to the King for the defence of his province against external threats, and for the maintenance of law and order within the province. This was an important duty and inability to meet it was punished with deprivation and in a few instances with transfer. For example, in 1841 the governor of Mindjar was deprived of his post for inability to maintain order in the province; a year later the governor of Geshe was transferred for a similar reason.¹ The governors took this particular aspect of their duties very seriously and promptly put down any rebellion or signs of unrest which broke out in their provinces. Furthermore,

¹IG 189 No. 2034. Harris 12.12.1841, para 3.

the governor was responsible for the safety and maintenance of any strangers who travelled through his province with the permission of the King. For this reason, a foreigner who wished to visit any part of the country needed to have guides provided by either the King or the provincial governors of the provinces through which the route would pass.¹

To the inhabitants of the province, the governor owed the duty to defend them against outside foes and to provide the conditions in which they could pursue their various professions in peace. He had also judicial duties to perform. It was his duty to settle disputes and provide justice for an injured party. Ras Gobana, one of the most successful governors, was on several occasions seen by European travellers, sitting in judgment over cases brought before him.² Within the province the governor was the highest "court of appeal" and appeals from his court lay with the King.³ In times of disaster such as famine, or when

¹LG 206 No. 1600. Graham, para 66. A. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, pp. 416-7, 537. Soleillet: Voyages en Ethiopie, Rouen 1886, pp. 123-4, 200. Borelli: op.cit., p.99.

²See, for example, Soleillet: Voyages... pp. 142-3. A. Aubry: "Une mission au Choa et dans les pays Galla" in Bulletin la Société de géographie de Paris 7e Série Vol. VIII, 1887, pp. 471.

³Aubry: art. cit., p.471. Borelli: op.cit., pp. 157, 164.

individuals fell out of royal favour, the inhabitants looked up to the provincial governor for help. The governors clearly understood their obligations towards the subjects and from time to time offered alms and gifts to the poor. It was not unusual for the governors, especially on festival days, to feast by turns, the inhabitants of their provinces.¹

Onerous though his duties were the provincial governor enjoyed rights and privileges which were commensurate with his obligations. In Shoa as in Buganda and other centralised kingdoms in East Africa, a governor, on appointment, was granted lands situated within the province to which he was to be posted. These lands together with the inhabitants were set apart for the personal benefit of the governor and were at his disposal for as long as he held the post. He enjoyed both the produce from the land and the labour of its inhabitants who worked the land largely not for themselves but for the benefit of the governor. In compensation they received from the governor a portion of the land for their subsistence and expenses.² The relationship between the governor and the men living on his official estate has often been described as feudal. It was feudal only in the sense

¹See, for example, Aubry: art. cit., p.466. Borelli: op.cit. pp. 167-8 for a feast given by Ras Gobana to his soldiers.

²LG 204 No. 1216 Graham paras. 21 & 22.

that each provincial command had a territorial basis and that the inhabitants of the territory constituted the governor's immediate military following. It must, however, be emphasized that the governor's official estate was not his fief. As will be seen later in this chapter, the governorships were, almost without exception, not hereditary. Indeed the holders of these posts had not even a semblance of security of tenure during their lifetime. It has been said that in Buganda the primary loyalty of the subject was to his immediate governor.¹ In Shoa the situation was different. The subject obeyed and respected the authority of his immediate governor as far as it was possible, but his primary loyalty was to the state as personified by the king. This is what the system of transfers (which will be discussed below) was intended to achieve. The fact that the primary loyalty of the subject was not to the "feudal" chief but to the king meant that ambitious governors could hardly muster enough support to challenge the authority of the king. This explains why Ato Medako in his rebellion of 1838 had to rely on the support of the "conquered but disaffected Galla".²

¹C. C. Wrigley: "The Changing Economic Structure of Buganda", in The King's Men Edt. L. A. Fallers (Lond., New York, Nairobi 1964), p.20.

²See Chapter I, p.65-6

It is thus one of the factors which explains the absence of internal challenges to the kings of Shoa; the troubled political life of contemporary Buganda was due in part to the fact that the feudal chiefs enjoyed such support and loyalty of the subjects as the Kabaka could not always enjoy. The great loyalty which the King of Shoa, as opposed to his provincial governors, enjoyed from the subjects partly explains the relatively smooth development of both the monarchy and the Kingdom. It also helps to explain why the Kings of Shoa could afford to be benevolent although wielding absolute powers. Good kings were, of course, not unknown to Buganda but here, unlike in Shoa, cruelty of kings and summary executions for small offences were a common feature of life not only at the court but in the kingdom as a whole.

Besides the occupants of the official estates, the governor could also call on all the inhabitants of the province under his control, shumant by shumant¹, to work on his lands. Generally when they worked on the governor's lands they were given grain in return but it is unlikely that this was adequate compensation for their labour.² It was from these official estates

¹See below

²IG 204 No. 1216, Graham. para 22.

that much of the wealth of the governor was derived. Modeling their life on that of the king, each governor maintained a court of officials and personal servants whose size depended on the means of the governor. Successful governors, enjoying royal confidence, were liberally provided with lands and other forms of property by the king and therefore kept larger courts than less successful governors. In the 1880s the residences of Ras Gobana at Aman and Falle, that of Ras Dargue at Fitché, and those of Dedjaz Ghermami and of Azaj Walde Tsadek impressed the European visitors by their comparative grandeur.¹ From time to time a governor received from the King, as gifts or rewards for faithful service, mules, sheep, horses and prisoners captured during campaigns. Prisoners so received constituted the governor's household servants and the core of his army.

Each province was divided into a number of districts. For example, the province of Manz comprised among others, the districts of Lalo-Meder, Mama-meder and Gera-meder, Argobba included the districts of Antsiokia and Dawe; Ghedem counted among its districts, Kulla-Daa, Ighem and Kaot (Caot); the various provinces of Guraghe, upon the conquest of that country were con-

¹See description by Audon: art cit., p.138. Aubry: art cit., pp. 471-2, 461, 466. Cecchi: op.cit., I, p.165. G. Sellassié: Chronique, I, p.294. Soleillet: Voyages, p.126.

sidered as districts. Similarly the various Galla groups in each province must have constituted a separate district within the province. Thus the Abu, the Gidda, the Jiben, Gallan, Karaya etc. must all have formed separate districts. In the 1840s it was estimated that there were between fifty and fifty-one districts;¹ these, like the provinces, must have increased in number with the expansion of the Kingdom. About the same period the area of one district in Mindjar province was estimated at forty miles in length by thirty miles in breadth.² This is clearly exaggerated. When it is considered that, at this time, the area of the whole kingdom was estimated at one hundred and fifty miles in length by ninety miles in breadth³ the estimate for the district quoted might be too large for even one province.

A governor was appointed to administer each of the districts within the provinces. The district governor, like the provincial governor, was appointed by the King. Although immediately subject to the "governor general" of the province in which his district was situated, the district governor was

¹Harris: The Highlands... Vol. III, p.29. Journal of Isenberg and Krapf: p.90.

²Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.254.

³LG 204 No. 1216 Graham Para. 19.

directly responsible to the King. This must be explained. Tribute paid by a district governor reached the King through the governor general of his province; during military campaigns the district governor was under the immediate command of his provincial governor general, and his army formed a unit in the contingent from the province as a whole. Nevertheless, the district governor could not be dismissed or transferred by the Provincial governor but only by the King; and all his rewards for bravery or faithful service came directly from the King. The significance of this situation will become clear later. Often referred to in the sources as "guardian(s) of the frontier", the duty of the district governor was "to inform the King of the arrival of strangers. (He was) obliged, in general, to secure the boundaries against inroads or other casualties".¹ Informing the King of the arrival of strangers was an important duty which the governors had to perform. On arrival at a frontier town of Shoa a foreigner² had to wait until he was met by the "watchmen of the frontier", that is luggage was searched and taxed. The Provincial governor and his subordinate governors. His /

¹Journal of Isenberg and Krapf: p.90. Also Krapf in J.R.G.S., Vol. 10. 1840. p.479. Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, pp. 29-30.

²The word is meant to cover all persons not habitual inhabitants of the kingdom and would include Afar, Harari, Galla notyet subjugated, Godjamese, Tigrians, Gondaris, etc.

luggage was then taken from him and sent on to Ankober by special carriers, unaccompanied by the owner. The visitor himself was conducted by the officials to the city where all his luggage was then restored to him. Europeans who visited Shoa in our period remarked with disgust on this procedure. They were exasperated by the delay and the rigorous search to which their luggage was subjected by people whom they considered less civilized than themselves. Exasperating though it might have been, what took place at the frontier was Shoa's way of doing what is done by present day customs officials at points of entry into any country.

It must be noted that only governors whose districts were frontier districts could correctly be called watchmen or guardians of the frontiers. As frontier governors they shared their responsibilities with the provincial governor. In short, all the duties and obligations, rights and privileges of the district governor were the same as those of the governor general, but only within the limits of a particular district.

The districts were in turn divided into smaller units whose "governors" were called Shums. A shumant was the smallest administrative unit in the kingdom. It consisted of one large village or a group of small villages in the same neighbourhood.

In 1842, it was estimated that there were four hundred shumants in Shoa,¹ but this figure must have at least quintupled by the 1880s. Shums were generally headmen nominated by the villagers and formally appointed by the district governor to whom they paid twenty amoles² on appointment. Shums of important villages, especially market towns, were appointed by the King, and, being directly responsible to him, held office at his pleasure. Shums nominated by the villagers and appointed by the district governor held office for one year only. During his term of office the Shum was exempt from payment of tribute. This exemption was extended to cover the first year after the end of his term of office. His duties, like those of everyone in the administrative hierarchy, were both civil and military. In times of war the Shum assembled all the able-bodied men in the village capable of wielding a lance and led them to the camp of the district governor who was their immediate commander. In times of peace the Shum it was who collected the tribute which the village had to pay to the royal treasury. When collected, this was sent to the district governor who in turn gave it to the Provincial governor general. He organised the villagers to do public works such as

¹Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.29.

²An Amole was a piece of block salt valued at $2\frac{1}{2}d$. Twenty amoles = 1 Maria Theresa dollar (thaler) i.e. $4\frac{1}{2}d$.

building roads or churches, or working on the land of the governors.¹ It was also the duty of the shum to settle disputes and provide justice between individuals or two parties in his shumant. Appeals from his 'court' lay with the district governor. The Shum also had to provide accommodation and the daily needs of any stranger accompanied by a messenger from the King or the governor who quartered in the village.²

It is clear from the preceding paragraphs that the ordinary citizen was perhaps the most important element in the provincial administration. It was he who paid the tribute, did public work and cultivated the land on which the prosperity of the Kingdom depended. It was also largely on his military ability that the reputation of the hierarchy and the fame of the kingdom hinged. It was important therefore that he should be protected against abuses and exploitation by officials, and encouraged in his public spiritedness as well as devotion to the regime. The rulers of Shoa appreciated this necessity and provided for it accordingly. One way by which the ordinary citizen

¹M.A.E. (Paris) M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 105, p.13. Soleillet's letter dated 2.9.1883. According to Soleillet two out of every five working days were spent on the lands of the governor.

²Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, pp. 281- Borelli: op.cit., pp. 94, 399-400. A. Aubry: art. cit., pp. 471, 472, 473. A. Cecchi: Da Zeila... Vol. I, pp. 485-9 & Vol. II passim.

was protected against exaction and abuse on the part of officials was the imposition of severe punishment for officials accused of exaction. For example in 1842 the governor of Aliu Amba was deprived and imprisoned for exactinn and embezzlement. In December of the same year the governor of the south-western[?] district of Ghedem was "removed on charges of oppression".¹ Early in 1888 Dedjatch Waldie, governor-general of Guraghe, was deprived for extortion and other abuses.²

The nature of Shoan society also offered, in a somewhat curious way, protection for the individual against exploitation. It has been seen that in Shoa an official owned whatever he had not by right but through the confidence of the King which he happened to have. The corollary of this statement was also true and the loss of the confidence of the King meant destitution and complete ruin. Awareness of this fact was great on the part of officials, and must have induced them to exercise caution and moderation. The belief which has been general among students of Ethiopian studies that the gabbar, the ordinary peasant working on the land, was a fraction better than a serf, and laboured

¹LG 185 No. 1440. Barker 7.1.1842; LG 189 No. 2060^B. Harris, 29.10.1842. LG 189 No. 2034. Harris 12.12.1842, para. 15, 39.

²Borelli: op.cit., p.300. Djiren 9.1.1888.

only for the advantage of others¹ could hardly be a true reflection of the situation in Shoa during our period. Indeed this conception may have to be re-examined as a result of detailed study of the evolution of the system of land tenure in the various provinces of the Empire. In this connection it is necessary to point out that the gabbar system as it existed in the Empire before the 1931 Constitution was a late 19th and early 20th century development. It was the direct result of the creation of a large army which was for the most part unpaid but which was gradually becoming divorced from the land. The gabbar system was thus the solution found for the problem of how to reconcile the need to provide for such an army with the indigenous systems of land tenure in the conquered provinces. As a system therefore it developed mainly in the conquered non-Amhara occupied provinces. In the Amhara provinces the system of rest (family or kinship ownership) was more widespread.² In Shoa, during our period, the condition of the peasant was not as deplorable as has generally been believed. As has been seen,

¹See p.218 note i.

²The evolution of the system of land tenure in Shoa has been studied in a Ph. D. thesis presented in Paris in 1965 by Mr. Berhanou Abbeba: "Evolution de Propriété Foncière du Choa (Ethiopia) du règne de Ménélik à la Constitution de 1931." Thèse de Doctorat en Ethnologie, Paris (Sorbonne) 1965 Polycopié. The present writer's attention was drawn to this study by Professor Tubiana but has been unable to consult it before writing this chapter.

the peasant in effect held his land not from a complex hierarchy of landlords but direct from the king who was the sole proprietor of all land in the kingdom. It is not clear from the sources how the land of the peasant was inherited. The indications are that it required the sanction of the king for we are told that the kings resumed possession of the land of any of the subjects who died, not only governors and other state officials but also ordinary citizens, and that no "man (could) part with his field to any individual without the expressed consent of the (king)...."¹ Thus the peasant paid, not a multiplicity of land tax to various officials, but a single unified tax to the king only. It is true that this tax reached the royal treasury through a hierarchy of officials, but that did not alter the true situation. It was merely a form of protocol. It has also been seen that the different officials derived their wealth not by exacting and bleeding the peasant dry, but from the lands and the labour of those who inhabited those lands which were invariably attached to their offices. The Shum who had no lands attached to his office enjoyed the privilege of exemption from taxation for two years. The peasant indeed worked for the

¹LG 204 No. 1216 Graham, para. 20. See also p.218-9 above.

governor on his lands, but this obligation could hardly have been exploited by the governors in view of the severe punishments which were inflicted by the King on officials who abused their rights and privileges. Captain Graham put this point nicely thus:

"... should he [*i.e.* a governor] tax his people too roughly.... complaints invariably (reached) the royal ear, which (were) certain to strip the offender of government and remaining property...."¹

Nor did the King himself exploit the labour or services of the ordinary citizen. It is true that the peasant fought in the King's campaigns of expansion, but as soon as a campaign was over he was disbanded and sent back to work on his own land.² In theory the King could employ the citizens on various works; while there is evidence that the ordinary citizens were employed on public works such as building of roads, bridges and churches, there is no evidence that they were employed to work on the King's private domains. The King reserved a good deal of the cultivable land, usually the most fertile, as crown land; much of this was always under cultivation, but not with the labour of the ordinary peasant. There

¹LG 204 No. 1216 Graham, para. 23.

²See Chapter on the Army.

were hundreds of servants in the royal household in each of the palaces in the various towns. These servants were mostly prisoners of war captured in the campaigns of conquest. It was the habit of the Shoan rulers to maintain residences in various parts of the Kingdom. In the 1840s the household servants in the royal palace at Ankober, the capital, was estimated to have "(exceeded) by far one thousand..... The number of slaves (i.e. servants) at each of the three other residences (Angolala, Debra Berhan, and Kundi) (was) not quite so large as that of Ankober; but there (were) many hundreds at each".¹ Menelik also maintained hundreds of servants at each of his residences at Litche, Ankober, Warra Ilu, Debra Berhan, and some thousands at Antoto.² It was these household servants who cultivated the crown lands and did most of the work which would otherwise have been done by the ordinary citizen.

Besides offering protection for the citizen, the nature of society in Shoa also provided encouragement to the individual in his public duties and in his attachment to the regime. There were no castes in Shoa. In the 1840s a few families in the recently

¹Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.120. Ch. Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, p.75.

²ASMAI 36/5-43. Antonelli to M.A.E., Addis Abeba, 23.11.1887.

recently conquered Galla provinces were allowed to retain the government of the provinces. Under Menelik, the ruling family of Jimma Kaka was allowed to retain the government of that country after the Shoan conquest. This policy of retaining a few ruling families in power might have been a reflection not so much of a feeling of insecurity in those provinces as an indication of the King's confidence in the fidelity of the local rulers. However, both Sahla Selassie and Menelik were not unaware of the dangers inherent in the practice, and they both sought to counteract that potential danger. On several occasions Sahla Selassie dismissed and as often restored, Walasma Mohamed the governor-general of the province of Ifat.¹ In 1841 the King abrogated the hereditary system in the province of Morat and it was speculated that he was only waiting for an opportune moment to abolish the few remaining hereditary governments in the Kingdom.² On the death of Abogaz Walasma, the governor general of Ifat, in 1884, Menelik discontinued the practice of hereditary succession in that province and appointed Azaj Walde Tsadek to that office. The absence of castes and the fact that promotion depended on merit, though not without a

¹See for example, IG 204 No. 144. Harris 30.1.1843.

²Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.300.

touch of favouritism, meant that there was, for the subjects, a semblance of equality of opportunity for advancement. It therefore became the ardent desire of every inhabitant of the Kingdom to attract royal attention by some act of bravery or devotion. The opportunity for such a courageous display of one's worth often came in military campaigns. The Kings of Shoa actively encouraged this phenomenon by rewarding those who distinguished themselves with medals, horses, offices, lands, servants, and occasionally the hand of an illegitimate princess. For example, Ato Berri, who was described in 1842 as "quarter master general of the army" was "formerly a Mohamedan pedlar ...". He entered the service of Sahla Selassie and proved such an able warrior and a faithful servant that "he.. received from the King a large grant of land (in the province of Mindjar) and (by 1842 enjoyed) the honour of conducting every military campaign in person."¹ Again Abba Mualle, a Galla by birth, won Sahla Selassie's favour by his courageous display in the conquest of the province of Angolala; he was rewarded with the governor-generalship of that province and won the King's confidence by his determined resistance to the neighbouring

¹LG 189 No. 2060. Harris 14.10.1842, para. 40.

Galla. He was then rewarded with the hand of one of the illegitimate daughters of the King.¹ Ato Aboye, who was said to be a servant at the royal household during the reign of Sahla Selassie, rose to the position of Dedjaz in the reign of Menelik. Indeed in this reign, the policy of encouraging faithful service with rewards was followed very seriously and is best illustrated by the career of Ras Gobana.

Gobana was born, according to Soleillet, in 1817 of Abichu Galla parentage and was in the service of both Sahla Selassie and Haile Malakot.² He does not appear to have distinguished himself at this period, for there is no mention of him in the reign of either Sahla Selassie or Haile Malakot. He is first mentioned about 1864 as an ordinary but an able soldier in the service of Bezabu, one of the administrators appointed by Emperor Theodros in 1859 to govern Shoa.³ On Menelik's return to Shoa in 1865 Gobana joined forces with the prince. Gobana must have impressed Menelik with his military skill during the reconquest and the early years of the cam-

¹LG 189 No. 2060^B. Harris 29.10.1842, para 7.

²Soleillet: Voyages..., p.114.

³A. Cecchi: Da Zeila..., Vol. I, p.260.

paigns in the Wallo country, for about 1870 he was appointed a Dedj Agafari and soon afterwards he was made governor of a province.¹ Henceforth, Gobana was to become the leading figure in the military history of Shoa. By the end of 1882 he had conquered for Menelik the whole of the Maca country and had even penetrated into Kaffa to exact tribute from its ruler.² Gobana continued to be an intrepid conqueror and a faithful servant of Menelik's until his death in June 1889. Gobana's services were not unappreciated or unrewarded by the grateful King. By 1875 Gobana had been promoted a Dedjazmatch³ and three years later was made a Ras, one of the only two appointed by Menelik before he became Emperor in 1889.⁴ Gobana's promotion as a Ras, the highest military rank in the Kingdom, reflects to what extent he was in royal favour. Linked with his promotion Gobana was made governor-general first of the whole of the Maca country but in 1886 was transferred to Wallaga which he had conquered earlier in that year. Attached to his offices were lands, servants and an army estimated at 30,000 soldiers.⁵ By the 1880s Gobana

¹Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.267, 268.

²See Chapter III, p.197

³M.A.E. Paris: M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62. Arnoux's Journal, Entry for 13th May 1875. p. 358.

⁴The other was Dargue, Menelik's paternal uncle.

⁵Audon: art. cit., p.138. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.417.
ASMAI 36/5-43 Antonelli to M.A. E. Addis Abeba 23.11.1887.

had become one of the richest men and probably the most powerful warrior in the Kingdom. Such was the extent of his wealth that in 1882 he was able to offer Menelik presents consisting of one thousand three hundred horses, five hundred mules, gold, ivory and musk.¹ And so great was the King's confidence in him that on a number of occasions when the King was away from the capital or the Kingdom, Gobana was made regent. For example, in the first half of 1888 when Menelik went up to meet the Emperor in Wallo country Gobana governed the Kingdom in his absence. Again in February 1889 when Menelik left Antoto with a large army on his way to help the Emperor against the Dervishes Gobana was left in Shoa as a regent.²

The career of Gobana illustrates an important principle which was basic to the structure of the administration: that, in Shoa, race, birth or religion was in itself neither a passport nor a barrier to a position of importance and confidence. The absence of castes meant that every individual inhabitant could rise to an eminent position in the society. The policy of drawing officials from all groups in the population regardless of their birth, religion or race was introduced by Wagsen Saggad, the sixth

¹Soleillet: Voyages..., p.97.

²Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, p.401. Antoto 16.6.1888.
ASMAI: 36/6-53. Antonelli to Crispi (M.A.E.) dated Ghedem 26.3.1889. It was about this time (March 9 or 10) that Yohannes was wounded by the Dervishes and died on March 11. His death brought Menelik to the Imperial throne.

ruler of our Shoa. Until his reign only the sons of the Maredazmatch and a couple of Amhara devotees were made governors in the provinces. The assumption behind this, no doubt, was that the princes would feel themselves bound to the interests of their father in the government of the provinces. This assumption did not prove altogether correct. On the contrary the princes tended to exhibit a sense of importance and a liking for power; the result was that instead of proving to be unquestionably faithful the governors tended to be rebellious. An example of this was Wassen Saggad's rebellion against his father Asfa Wassen.¹ Taking a lesson from his own previous activities, Wassen Saggad introduced the criteria of merit and capability into the administrative and military systems, and he began to recruit governors from among everybody who proved to be loyal to the cause for which the Maredazmatch stood. His successors were quick to realise the advantage in the innovation; they appointed loyal Amhara, pagan Galla and Muslim Adal as officials both in the royal household and in the provinces. The new policy had one big advantage; it avoided the feeling of discrimination which might otherwise have developed among that

¹See Chapter I, pp. 37

section (or sections) of the society from which governors were not drawn. Put in a different way, it developed in all sections of the society the feeling as well as the awareness that they belonged to the Kingdom and shared in, or contributed to, its development. In this way all sections of the society became bound to the interests of the ruling family. They came to believe that their welfare was closely bound up with that of the royal family. This sense of belonging and of oneness was an important factor in sustaining the cause of the ruling family and in preserving the unity of the kingdom during the period of the conquest by Theodros, when the royal family, the greatest symbol of unity, was temporarily brought to an end.

The Shoan rulers were tactful in the distribution of governors. The eastern block of the kingdom where the Muslim subjects were concentrated was, as far as possible, given Muslim governors. During the reign of Sahla Selassie, two of the Muslim governors in this region were Abogaz Hussain of Argobba, and Walasma Mohamed, of the province of Ifat. Under Menelik the governor of Ifat was the son of Walasma Mohamed called Abogaz Walasma.¹ A careful scrutiny of the governors and shums of the eastern block of the Kingdom reveals that nearly

¹Walasma Mohamed and his son Abogaz Walasma claimed to be the descendants of the Walasma dynasty which established the Muslim sultanate of Ifat in the 13th century.

all of them were Muslims. The purpose of this, as has been mentioned already, was to create in the Muslim subjects of the Kingdom a sense of belonging and of partaking in every aspect of the life of the Kingdom. In this case, however, there was another objective. The eastern block of provinces was the only directly in contact with the Muslim peoples inhabiting the lowlands between the eastern plateau of Shoa and the sea. The shortest and most direct route from Shoa to the sea passed through the lowland country. It was therefore important for the Shoan rulers to give the rulers of the lowlands the feeling that their subjects and co-religionists who traded to Shoa ran no risk to their persons or goods. Shoan rulers realised that this feeling could best be created and sustained if, the lowland peoples, in their dealings with Shoa, negotiated through governors whose religion, if not race, was the same as theirs. The truth of this belief was borne out in 1884-5 when on the death of Abogaz Walasma in April 1884, Azaj Walde Tsadek, a Christian of Guraghe origin, was given control over the provinces formerly governed by the Abogaz. The confidence of the lowland peoples was shaken and for a time Shoa's relations with the Muslim rulers of the lowland were strained.¹ Thus, far from compromising

¹ ASMAI 36/2-17. "Estratto dal Giornale di Viaggio Antonelli 1884." As a result of this, Antonelli on arriving at the coast in August 1884 on his way to Shoa, found to his dismay that the sultan of Atssa, for example, was no longer enthusiastic about the route from Assab through Aussa to Shoa which had been opened by the Italian in 1882. For this reason, Antonelli had considerable difficulty in organising his caravan for the journey.

their position, the appointment of Muslim governors for the eastern provinces ensured the Shoan Kings not only the faithful support of their Muslim subjects but also friendly relations with the Muslim people inhabiting the lowland country.

The governors in the provinces were basically military men, each commanding an army during military campaigns. The army which they commanded had, in each case, a core of men who were mostly household servants of the governor and always at his disposal. Like the servants in the royal household, these men were mostly war captives. In the case of governors who were high in royal favour, such as Ras Dargue or Ras Gobana, this core of household servants was very considerable. There was therefore the danger that successful governors might turn against the central authority and set themselves up as petty independent princes in the province under their control. This danger was particularly great in the provinces which were remote from the centre of power, especially because communications were extremely poor. The Kings of our period were aware of this danger; they did not content themselves with relying merely on the fidelity or devotion of the governors but took definite measures to counteract the danger. One of the methods by which the crown exercised effective control over its officials was by keeping all important appointments in its own

hand and making each official directly responsible to the Crown. Although, for the most part, staying in the capital of the Kingdom, the Kings followed closely the attitudes and movements of the governors in the provinces through a network of spies. A governor, on his appointment, received not only a sword of office but also servants for his household duties. These servants were in reality the spies of the King who informed him about the actions of the officials.¹ The spy system was not limited to the officials and subjects of the Kingdom; it was extended to cover foreigners, especially Europeans, as well. European visitors to the Kingdom were given a couple of servants from the Palace, one of whose duties was to make known to the appropriate authority the daily needs of the foreigner. The servants had a special duty to spy on their foreign masters and report anything of interest to the King or his officials.²

Linked with the direct royal control over officials and the spy network in the administration, was the sense of insecurity which, in theory at least, was implied in the governmental system. Each of the officials understood that security

¹Krapf: Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen years' residence in Eastern Africa, Lond. 1860, p.91. Libro Verde No. XV Etiopia. Doc. 95, p.202. Menelik to Umberto I, Entoto 4.6.1885. (28 ghenbot l'anno 20 del nostro regno)

²See for example, LG 189 No. 2060^F. Harris 31.12.1841. para 27 where he writes: "I had long seen reason to be dissatisfied with

of tenure was dependent upon continuing to retain the King's confidence, and knew the consequences of loss of royal confidence. The fear of these consequences might well have kept the officials in check and restrained any ambitions they might have had. This is not to imply that abuses were completely eliminated from the administration. On the contrary, abuses were not unknown and examples have already been cited of officials known to have been punished for abuses or inefficiency. Nevertheless, the various methods of control must have considerably reduced the incidence of abuses.

By far the most effective method by which the danger of governors becoming rebellious was avoided was the system of transfers which was adopted by the Crown. Vivid accounts are given of these transfers in the sources. Writing on the subject of transfers Captain Harris continued as follows:

"At noon (on 25th February 1842) several new appointments were proclaimed by the Herald outside the palace gate. Habta Michael, governor of Mans, transferred to the government of Geshe. Habta Mariani, governor of Kitama-Woira, transferred to Machfoot. Gadeloo trans-

(cont.) the proceedings of the head Afero (messenger) on the establishment of the Embassy who... has proved a most active spy, never failing to report to the royal notice the most minute occurrences in the Residency. His system of espionage extended to the personal property of every individual...."

ferred to Semama in Mans. Ato Lencho, governor of Geshe transferred to Kembibit. Ato Dori Gembi, governor of Kembibit, to Katama-Woira. Wodach Kallide was also after an imprisonment of two years, restored to the government of the Derza Galla."¹

In 1882, for example, Ras Dargue was governor-general of Marabiete province but was transferred to Arussi in 1885. Ras Gobana governed the vast Maca country until early in 1886 when he was transferred to Wallaga. Similarly Dedjaz Waldie who governed the Yeju province in the 1870s became governor of the Soddo province in the 1880s in succession to Mashasha Seifou.² These changes were designed to prevent an official staying in one province for a period long enough to develop personal interest and acquire local influence. In this way the crown sought to counteract collusion and rebellion on the part of its officials in the provinces. The extent to which royal control over its officials was effective is shown by the fact that, apart from a few isolated instances of rebellion, the provincial administrators were, by and large,

¹IG 189 No. 2060^K. Harris, 28.2.1842, para. 29.

²Soleillet: Voyages, passim. Borelli: Ethiopie M' meridionale, p.150 and passim. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.421 and passim. ASMAI 36/5-43, Antœlli to M.A.E. Addis Abeba, 23.11.1887.

loyal to the central government. It was the loyal service rendered by these officials which made possible the peaceful development of the Kingdom.

In the sources there are references to either "counsellors" or the "Council". For example in December 1841 occurred the death of "Ato Bainor who was the nurse to the King in infancy and has been his principal adviser through life..."¹ On the approach of the Emperor Theodros to Shoa late in 1855, King Haile Malakot was said to have summoned a council of his chiefs to decide what course of action to take.² These references become more frequent during the reign of Menelik. On May 13, 1875, a council met at Warra Ilu to discuss, among other things, Arnoux's project. Those present with the King were Fitaurari Waldie, Fitaurari Mangasha, Dedjaz Dargue, Dedjaz Mannaje, Mehmer Guebre-Sellassie, Alaka Zename, Grasmach Walde Yez, Dedjaz Walda-Michael, and Dedjaz Gobana. The King's cousin, Mashasha Seifou was not at the meeting because he was said to be on military expedition to the south.³ A meeting of the "council" which took place at Litche on 1st June 1876

¹LG 189 No. 2060^F. Harris 31.12.1841, para 23.

²Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 251-2.

³M.A.E. (Paris) M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, p.358. Arnoux's Journal entry for 13.5.1875.

discussed the attitude of Egypt towards Ethiopia and her offer of alliance to Shoa. Those present besides the King were Mgr. Massaia, Mgr. Taurin Cahagne, Dedjaz Dargue and Azaj Walde Tsadek.¹ Late in 1877 there were a number of meetings of the "council" to discuss the terms of reconciliation between Menelik and his cousin Mashasha Seifou.² Again, on 12th February 1878 when the invading armies of the Emperor Yohannes were already in Shoa, Menelik was said to have called a council of the military chiefs to discuss whether or not to resist the Emperor.³ These references give the impression that consultations with "a council" of officials were not discounted by the Shoan Kings. One would have liked to identify the individuals present at each meeting of "the council" in order to determine if there were permanent or regular membership. Apart from those cited here, there is hardly any indication about membership of the "council" when references are made to its meetings in the 1880s. As regards the role of the "council" in

¹M.A.E. Paris: M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, p.382.
Same Journal entry for 1st June 1876.

²Massaia: I. Miei., Vol. X, p.203.

³Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 430-1.

matters of policy the information available indicates that the "council" was advisory whose advice the King was in no way bound to accept.¹ It would seem therefore that what is referred to in the sources as the "council" was not institutionalised but an ad hoc body composed of whatever officials happened to be near at hand and whose duty was merely advisory. Menelik, in particular, must have found advice obtained from such meetings useful for he appears to have made fairly regular use of these meetings throughout his reign. The Kings of our period are sometimes described in the sources as selfish despots. This is far from fair, since the same sources recognised that they were just and good men interested in the progress of their kingdom and the welfare of their subjects. It is true that they were absolute rulers, but they should be thought of as kings, enlightened for their period and country, who wielded absolute powers but who, nevertheless, did not decide on anything out of the ordinary without first taking advice from their officials.

The administrative machinery of Shoa was probably the most efficient in the whole of the Empire. It was a monarchical absolutism which worked through a hierarchy of officials. Its

¹Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 430-1. Massaia: op.cit., Vol. X, pp. 203-6.

smooth running and therefore efficiency, especially in the provinces, depended on faithful and devoted officials. The devotion of officials as well as the co-operation of the ordinary citizen were both readily forthcoming because the subjects of the kingdom had so much to benefit from the regime. After March 1889 the Shoan system was extended to cover the whole Empire and the efficiency of the system was one of the most potent factors which made possible the "Shoanisation of the Empire".

Chapter VAGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND TRADE

The economy of Shoa, like that of the rest of Ethiopia, was agricultural. There were small scale industries producing simple goods to meet local needs, as for example cotton cloth and baskets, and internal as well as external trade increased with the years. Nevertheless work on the land remained the main pre-occupation of the people. Neither Shoa nor indeed Ethiopia as a whole was peculiar in this respect. For, although minor industries and flourishing foreign trade have for centuries been known to various parts of the continent, the economy of Africa in general was, and has remained to this day, primarily agricultural.

No writer on Ethiopia has failed to mention its congenial climate and fertile soil, and Shoa need not be singled out in this respect, since she shared with the rest of the Empire both the advantages and the disadvantages of the Ethiopian climate. The physical nature of the country is such that it enjoys the best of both temperate and tropical climates. Three zones are distinguished by the Ethiopians themselves: the Dēgā or highland - 7,000 feet and above - the Woyna Dēgā or the intermediate zone, and the qolla, the lowland. The eastern half of the kingdom is generally low lying and is said

to be hot and arid. The Woyna Dēgā and the Dēgā with numerous rivers flowing down to irrigate the slopes and the valleys have a climate which is reminiscent of northern Italy. Owing to the different altitude a variety of vegetation associated with both cold and temperate climates is to be found within the boundaries of the Empire. With the natural advantages of a hospitable climate and a fertile soil all that was needed to induce the inhabitants to a large scale agricultural activity was an atmosphere of peace and security. This is what the rulers of Shoa provided for their subjects. Travellers often remarked that Shoa was the best cultivated "province" of the Empire. This was not because the inhabitants of Shoa were by nature more industrious than those in other parts of the Empire. It was rather because the almost incessant inter-provincial and inter-district wars in which the other provinces were engaged made agricultural pursuits difficult in those provinces.

In the 1840s the extent of cultivation in Shoa was said to be "very considerable throughout the Kingdom", although it was estimated in the 1870s that less than ten percent of the cultivable land was actually under cultivation.¹ Part of

¹LG 204 No. 1216 Enclosure Graham, paras. 3 and 4. ASMAI, 36/1-4. SGI to M.A.E.: Roma, 31.10.1879. The estimate by the SGI was based on the reports of the members of the Antinori Mission. See Chapter 3.

the explanation for the apparent contradiction in these estimates is that by the 1870s the success of the campaigns of expansion led to a considerable increase in the area of the kingdom so that there was too much land left uncultivated although in fact land under cultivation had increased. Moreover, since most people were still primarily farmers and, since, with the exception of providing for the needs of their pastoral Afar neighbours, agricultural produce was mainly for home consumption, it was prudent not to cultivate more land than was needed to meet the demand.

Farming methods in Shoa were similar to those in vogue elsewhere in contemporary Africa - paring, burning, fallowing and shifting cultivation being in general practice. Nevertheless considerable industry was evidenced in collecting and distributing water from the rivers by means of trenches to irrigate the land and rotation of crops was practised,¹ although perhaps without much deliberate or conscious premeditation on its advantages. It may be that there was hardly any scientific basis for the practice of crop rotation and that this system was merely the natural response of an agricultural people to the advantages of a fertile soil and a hospitable climate. It

¹IG 204 No. 1216 Enclosure Graham, paras. 3 and 4.

is also to be noted that, instead of the hoe which was in use in many parts of Africa, a plough, albeit rude, was in general use in Shoa and in other parts of Ethiopia. This machine, called marasha in Amharic, was of a very simple construction. The ploughshare was made of wood, reinforced with a small amount of iron, and the instrument had only one handle for the guiding hand of the driver. Owing to its simple construction, it was said that a clean furrow could not be cut up and turned over, so that the soil could be broken only by frequent crossing and re-crossing.¹

In farming communities, the planting and harvesting seasons are more or less dictated by the incidence of the rain. Ethiopia enjoys two rainy seasons a year. The heavy rains are from June to about the middle of September, and the light rains fall for not more than two months any time between the end of January and May. The fairly even distribution of rainfall and sunshine would seem to make possible sowing and reaping all the year round. This in fact appears to be the case from a register of work and weather compiled for the year 1841 by a member of the Harris Mission to Shoa.² Although the register gives the

¹ LG 204 No. 1216 Enclosure Graham, paras 38-9. See University College of Addis Ababa Ethnological Society Bulletin No. 4 Dec. 1955 p.23 for a diagram of the traditional plough with a description of the component parts.

² Graham, ibid., para. 17.

impression of a faint attempt at a division of employment for the various months there is little doubt that the planting and harvesting seasons constituted the periods of the greatest exertion. After the Keremt (heavy rainy season) cotton was shown to take advantage of the sunshine and the light rains which follow and came to fruition in the spring when it was harvested about April. At the same time, between October and December, the land was ploughed in readiness for the sowing season which began about January. From that month until the end of May sowing of barley on the highlands, peas, wheat, beans, chick-peas in the Woyna Dēgā, oilseed, teff and cotton in the valleys and the lowlands constituted the main agricultural activity. These would come to fruition during and after the Keremt when they would be harvested and the land ploughed and prepared for the sowing season which followed the heavy rains. One must not get the impression that farming in Shoa consisted solely of crop production. Pastoral farming was also important and provided not only meat but also the baggage animals which were so central to whatever trade the Kingdom had. In the province of Manz, for example, sheep were bred in large numbers and the animal was probably the most important single agricultural product from that province.¹

¹Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.304.

According to the latest study, the average farm in Manz today has a herd of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty sheep.¹ In other parts of the Kingdom oxen, cows, donkeys, mules and horses were reared.

Although the peasant's ownership of the land which he farmed was never absolute, it is important to emphasise that economically the land was his property. In other words, the peasant had rights of usufruct to the land which he cultivated. The hierarchical nature of the administration, the military and territorial basis of the Provincial administration, and the consequent subordinate status of the peasant has led European observers to remark that the peasant was practically a serf of his overlord.² This misrepresents the true situation. In the institution of serfdom as existed in, for example, contemporary Russia, the peasant was in effect the chattel of his master and was treated like any other property. He could be disposed of at the will of the master without anybody raising a finger. He could not change from a bad master to a better one and had hardly any rights even to

¹D. N. Levine: Wax and Gold (Chicago & Lond. 1965), p.29.

²See for example Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur les Deux rives de la Mer Rouge... Paris 1841 p.288. Also M. Abir, Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region 1830-1855. Lond. Ph.D. thesis 1964 p.373 Note 3, where he writes: "According to the feudal system of Shoa each subject was not only the serf of his master working the land but a part-time soldier as well."

the fruits of his own labour on the land. In Shoa no such relationship existed between the peasant and his overlord. Even in contemporary Buganda or Kongo in the seventeenth century or Dahomey in the eighteenth century, where the rulers were not averse to selling their subjects into slavery, the peasant could not correctly be considered as a serf. For in those kingdoms as in Shoa the peasant could, and probably not infrequently did, move from one province and overlord to another province within the kingdom, a thing which was impossible in serfdom. In Shoa as well as in other African states, the peasant was indeed subordinate to the Chief of his district or province as the case might be, but it must be emphasised that the chief's territory was not his estate or manor but only an administrative domain. The relations between the peasant and the chief were therefore more political than economic, and the duties and obligations of the one towards the other were accordingly political rather than economic. On the part of the peasant those obligations consisted in military service and payment of tribute either in kind or in labour. Even this tribute had very little economic significance; its real significance was political, and was in this respect in no way dissimilar to the tribute which each official

in the administrative hierarchy paid to his superior, the type of tribute which Professor Vansina has called the "tribute of allegiance".¹ It may be said to have been part of the price which the peasant had to pay for the protection which he enjoyed from the state whose official and representative the local chief, after all, was. Beyond this tribute of allegiance the peasant had no other obligation towards the chief, and he enjoyed the fruits of his labour on the land which he farmed, so that he could use the products from his land as best he would. These products provided the commodities which were sold on the local markets. In certain cases, such as cotton or sheep farming, the products from the land provided the raw materials which went to feed the local industries.

Of the industries which were in production in Shoa perhaps the most important from the point of view of utility was the manufacture of cloth. Cloth making had existed as a home industry not only in Shoa but also in other parts of Africa long before our period, though the raw materials employed probably differed from one region to another. In Buganda and the other interlacustrine states, for example, bark was the raw material while in some parts of Central Africa raphia fibres were used.

¹J. Vansina: "A Comparison of African Kingdoms" in Africa
Vol. 32, 1962 p.326.

In Shoa, as in north Africa where the climate was suitable for the cultivation of the plant, cloth was made with cotton. Besides cotton, some cloth was made in Shoa from the wool of sheep. Cloth made from this latter stuff was the monopoly of the province of Manz. Owing to the high mountains and the cold winds, cotton cannot be grown in Manz. On the other hand the Manzian climate was suited to the breeding of sheep with long dark fleece. The banna, that is cloth (or blanket), made from the fleece is called sekdat in the sources. It is said to be thick and warm and therefore particularly suited for use in the cold highlands. Specialising as it did (and still does) in the production of this type of cloth, it was to be expected that tribute paid by Manz to the Monarch would take the form of Sekdat. The King, we are told, used this black cloth for his tents or for charity to the poor.¹ In Shoa the cloth-manufacturing industry was not integrated. The evidence indicates that the farming of the plant, spinning of the thread and the weaving of the cloth were separate industries which were hardly ever combined in the same hands. It is nevertheless conceivable that the first two processes could have been combined,

¹Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.299.

spinning being done by the women in the farmer's household. The weaver would thus appear to have been one of the few people who were more or less detached from the land and who must have depended to a large extent on their skill and industry for a living. His industry would have thriven, initially at least, on the custom which still exists in some parts of Africa, of weaving on request. And since the finished cloth was in great demand the looms could not have been idle for any length of time. Also the practice existed of a customer handing over to the weaver a certain quantity of the raw material for fabrication, a scale being fixed for the remuneration of his labour. Ten amole of cotton was said to produce a thick cloth thirty cubits in length and one and a half cubits in breadth. The fee for weaving to these measurements is given as seven amole.¹ Fees must have been correspondingly high when coloured and worsted stripes were introduced into the manufacture, for not only did this entail extra labour but also the coloured stripes were not local produce, but items of import from the coast. In this way a weaver amassed enough money to enable him to

¹IG 189 No. 2060G "Report on the Present State of Trade in the Kingdom of Shoa". Harris 5.1.1842, para. 36. An amole was a piece of block salt used as currency and valued at 2¹/₂d. See below.

make cloths for sale on the markets. Weaving was generally carried on in the open air. The loom has been described as consisting of a few rough uprights planted in the ground for the day to support the cotton twist and a simple shuttle for throwing the crossing thread.¹ Considering the simple nature of his tools, one cannot help admiring the skill displayed by the weaver in the making of the cloth which impressed European travellers with its closeness, warmth and durability.² There can be little doubt that it took the weaver much time and labour to produce anything of the size which could conveniently be used as cloth. It must be mentioned that cloth making was widespread as an industry and that at least one weaver was to be found in each town and probably also in most of the villages. The King, it must be emphasised, had weavers specially employed to make cloth for the royal household. In the 1840s it was estimated that six hundred women were employed in the Palace to spin cotton to provide thread for the looms of the royal weavers.³ At first sight this figure

¹Harris, Ibid.

²Rochet: Voyage, p.298-9. LG 204 No. 1453 Medical Report Kirk 17.4.1843 para 34.

³Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.120.

would appear too huge to be believed, but it should be remembered that those six hundred women were probably not all employed for the sole purpose of spinning cotton. It is possible that only a few of them were full time cotton spinners and that the rest combined spinning with their other duties as employees in the Palace. But even if all of them were full time cotton spinners we should hesitate before dismissing the estimate quoted as exaggerated. We need to remember that the weavers for whom the women had to spin cotton manufactured cloth for the use not only of the royal family, but also of a host of others who were employed in the Palace and who as a rule derived their keep from the King. This group included the royal troops who were, at this period, estimated to number "at least one thousand";¹ it also included the hundred\$ of men and women employed in various capacities in the Palace and who constituted the palace establishment: water carriers, wood carriers, cooks, those who prepared the hydromel, to mention only a few. If we consider the fact that those spinning women did not know of the spinning Jenny and the other improved tools then in use in contemporary Britain, and

¹Charles Johnston: Travels, Vol. II p.75.

that they employed simple time-consuming methods in their industry we can better appreciate the need for a large number of spinners. Although we have no estimate of the weavers themselves, there is little doubt that they also numbered some hundreds. And the number for both spinners and weavers must have increased considerably in the reign of Menelik when, as we have already seen, both the Palace establishment and the royal troops increased in size. The fact was that given the simple, slow methods and the heavy demand which had to be met there was created a problem which could be solved only by employing more hands.

Although the manufacture of cloth was probably the most profitable local industry, it was by no means the only industry in Shoa. Indeed it would have been inconceivable if, until regular foreign trade brought into the kingdom imported alternatives, the inhabitants had not had the means of providing for their material needs however simple or imperfect the finished products might have seemed to the European travellers. As a kingdom built on military conquest, two of the most treasured possessions of the inhabitants were the lance and the shield. The manufacture of military weapons was the province of the blacksmith and the associated professions,

the joiner, the iron caster, the skin tanner and many others. The importance of these industries in the military life of the kingdom was clearly appreciated by the kings who, therefore, did everything they could to encourage the workers to improve their skills and step up production. The interest which the monarchs showed in improving the skills of the local handicraftsmen and artisans was reflected in the efforts they made to recruit foreign artisans with better skills to come to Shoa and train the local craftsmen. European missionaries who worked in the kingdom in our period found to their dismay that the rulers would have liked them better as instructors in various skills. Nor were they alone in this experience. The Emperor Theodros of Ethiopia and the Kabaka Mutesa I of Buganda (1857-1884), a contemporary partly of Theodros and partly of Menelik of Shoa, no doubt like many other contemporary African rulers, made similar demands on the missionaries who visited their states. All the rulers of Shoa in their letters to the European rulers with whom they were in contact stressed their need for skilled artisans. And, as has been explained elsewhere, it was this desire for European artisans that induced the kings of Shoa to welcome into the kingdom missionaries and travellers of all descriptions.

The efforts of Sahle Selassie to recruit skilled foreign craftsmen met with very little success. An Armenian called Demetrius worked on various projects, including the construction of a corn mill, which never started production because it was condemned by the priesthood as a work of the devil. Corn mills were however established by the Frenchman Rochet d'Héricourt and by the English mission which was led by Major Harris as part of the presents from their respective governments.¹ Although Major Harris observed that the King was "greatly gratified at the comparative facility with which wheat was converted into flour"² it is very doubtful if production continued after the departure of the Europeans in 1843. Apart from the establishment of these mills, there is no evidence that the Europeans taught any skills to the local craftsmen. Menelik's efforts to recruit skilled Europeans met with better success than those of his predecessors. One of Arnoux's companions established a powder mill at Malha Wanz near Ankober in 1875;³ another Frenchman, Pottier, tried unsuccessfully to train a group of Shoan youths in European

¹LG 193 No. 2919. Harris 10.6.1842 para.39.

²Harris Ibid.

³L. L. Lande: "Un Voyageur Français..." in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, 15th Dec. 1878 p.888.

military techniques;¹ Swiss engineers were employed in road making and in the construction of bridges;² two Italian doctors, Alfieri and Traversi, put their professional skills at the disposal of the King and his subjects;³ and an Italian armourer, Aprico, was for a short time in the Kingdom engaged in the manufacture of gunpowder.⁴ To make it easier for education and improvement of skills many of the local craftsmen were concentrated at Ankober.⁵ The choice of Ankober was probably because, until the foundation of Antoto in the 1880s, Ankober was the recognised capital of the Kingdom, and both the kings and the artisans themselves must have seen some advantage in having the important industries concentrated in the capital. However, when Menelik made Antoto his official capital the manufacturing industries continued to be at Ankober.⁶ It is likely that not all the craftsmen were concentrated at Ankober and that some were scattered throughout the Kingdom. As was to be expected the craftsmen who, like the

¹See Chapter III. P. 122-2; 133-4

²See Chapter III. *ibid.*

³See Chapter III. *ibid.*

⁴ASMAI 36/3-8. Antonelli to R^o Commissario civile in Assab. Debra Berhan 27.9.1885. Traversi to Conte A. Bouturlin, Ankober 25.9.1855.

⁵Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.62. A. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, pp. 292-4.

⁶Cecchi: ibid.

royal weavers, worked exclusively for the king, had their workshops within the palace enclosure.¹ They constituted one of the numerous groups of employees on the Palace establishment; one could therefore assume that with the transfer of the official capital from Ankober to Antoto this group of manufacturers would also have been transferred to the new capital. The chief of the blacksmiths was the head of all the handicraftsmen throughout the Kingdom, and might, in modern terminology be called the Minister for Industries. In the early 1840s this important post was held by Ato Habti.² The holder of this Office was probably the most important Palace official in the Kingdom in the 1840s and 1850s, although by the 1880s his importance had diminished considerably. There are at least three reasons to explain why he was so important. First, as the head of the craftsmen who manufactured the local fighting weapons, he was responsible for equipping the royal troops, who as we have seen elsewhere, constituted the only standing army in the Kingdom. One would suspect that this aspect of his duties diminished in importance as more and more European firearms were imported to equip the troops in the 1880s. It is

¹Krapf in Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. 10 1840, p.470.

²Harris: The Highlands of Aethiopia (London 1844) Vol. III, p.24.

also possible that it was this officer who was put in charge of the storing and distribution of the imported firearms, and that far from diminishing in important this aspect of his duties acquired fresh dignity as Quarter-Master-General of the royal troops. Secondly, he it was who fabricated the heavy iron containers in which the treasures of the monarch were kept and of which he was, in fact, said to be in charge. As the state treasurer he was one of the few people who knew where those treasures were hidden.¹ Thirdly, the chief smith was traditionally the physician to the monarch and the royal family.² This is easily understood when it is remembered that in African traditional beliefs the art of the smith has magical and supernatural associations. All these important functions, combined as they were in the office of the chief of the smiths, greatly enhanced the importance of that office. With the exception of the royal troops who were supplied from the royal arsenal, all other subjects had to buy their weapons on the market. It was for this market that the local arms manufacturers provided.

¹IG 189 No. 2060G. Harris 5.1.1842, para 34.

²Harris: ibid. Also Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.24.

Besides the blacksmith who was mainly devoted to the manufacture of weapons, there were, as was to be expected, other smiths who utilised gold, brass and silver to make ornaments and trinkets. Unlike gold, silver and brass which were items of import, iron was a local product the extraction of which has been vividly described in the sources. Deposits of the ore were said to abound in the kingdom especially in the province of Bulga.¹ Prospecting for iron deposits was one of the objects of a French mission which visited the Kingdom in the 1880s and of which Alphonse Aubry was a member.² Although Aubry, the chief mining engineer in the group, made a report which was by no means unfavourable, nothing further was done about it, and throughout our period the iron caster relied on his traditional methods to meet the national demands for the metal. A small village in Bulga² province called Guriyo was said to be the centre of the industry and the process of smelting and refining the iron was described as follows. "The ore having been broken into small fragments and coarsely pulverized was mixed with a large portion of charcoal and placed

¹LG 189 No. 2060G. Harris, 5.1.1842, para 28. Rochet d'Héricourt, Voyage sur le Deux Rives de la Mer Rouge, pp. 297-8. Also see: Economic Progress of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa 1955, p.12. This is a publication by the Ethiopian Ministry of Commerce and

(cont.)

in a clay furnace resembling a smith's hearth, but furnished with a sloping cavity sunk some depth below the level of the blast-pipes. The non-metallic particles being then brought to a state of fusion by the constant action of four pairs of hand-worked bellows, the iron with the scoria sunk to the bottom. This was again broken with the hammer and fused a second time when the dross flowing off, the pure metal was discharged in pigs, which by a repetition of heating and wilding were wrought into bars." It was estimated that about two pounds weight of "excellent iron" were produced from each furnace after eight or ten hours labour.¹ And Harris remarked that the process described above which had been common in one form or another to every age and country from the ancient times was still in vogue at this period not only in Africa but also in Asia and Eastern Europe.

In addition to the industries already mentioned there were others such as basket weaving, leather making (skin tanning)

(cont.) Industry outlining some of the aspects of the Empire's development in the first 25 years of the present Emperor's reign.

²A. Aubry, "Une Mission au Choa et dans les pays Galla," in Bulletin de la Société de géographie de Paris 7e Serie Vol. VIII, p 1887.

ILG 193 No. 2919 Harris, 10.6.1842, para 22. Rochet: op.cit., p.297.

and pottery making, all of which were made by methods widely used throughout Africa, though not necessarily with the same raw materials. In the making of baskets, for example, whereas in some parts of the continent raphia or palm branches or cane were used, in Shoa baskets were made with the inner fibre of the ensete plant which is a species of plantain. This plant, the musa ensete (ensete edulis of the botanist) which grows in the southern regions from the Hawash river almost as far as the northern banks of the Lake Stephanie was, and still is, of immense importance to the people among whom it was found.¹ It provided the fibres for making strings, ropes and baskets. Its leaves, which are of gigantic dimensions were used for roofing houses and for making mats. More important still, its roots and stem, when fermented, served, and still serve, as food.²

It has been said in some of the sources that industries in Shoa produced "almost exclusively for the King and the Queen".³

¹See W. A. Shack: The Gurage: A people of the Ensete Culture, Lond. 1966, p.54, for a diagram of the plant; and p.3. for a map showing the Ensete Culture Area.

²P. Soleillet: Voyages en Ethiopie. Rouen, 1886, p.188. W.A.Shack: op.cit., passim. Also see Simmonds, N.W. in Tropical Agriculture Vol. 35, 1958; and Smeds, E., in Acta Geographica Vol. XIII, No. 4, 1955, both cited by Shack.

³See for example H. Audon: "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde, 2e semestre 1889, p.158.

This is far from the truth. It is clear from the same sources that outside the Palace there was a wide, indeed an expanding, market in the kingdom for the output of the craftsmen. We have already seen this with respect to the manufacture of cloth and military weapons; it will not be wrong to say that it was the case with most, if not all, manufactures in the kingdom. Undoubtedly some of the manufactures, as for example, jewels and trinkets, were a royal monopoly; but it must be emphasised that the royal monopoly did not extend to every industry in the kingdom. As has been seen above, the King had his own group of industrial workers who produced for the domestic needs of the Palace establishment. Apart from this group of royal craftsmen, all other artisans in the kingdom manufactured not for the benefit of the Palace but for sale on the markets. That this was so was reflected by the variety of people and goods which were found on the markets in Shoa.¹ In this connection it should be noted that the royal craftsmen worked for the needs of the Palace and not for sale on the markets. As commodities for immediate profitable trade to Europeans who

¹See below.

wanted to open up commerce between Shoa and the coast, the kingdom's manufactured products were undoubtedly insignificant. But that was not because production was dictated by the exclusive needs of the palace. It was rather because the general market for which the industries produced, although expanding over the years, was still limited.

It would have been noticed that in reconstructing the agricultural and the industrial life in Shoa we have depended mostly on information from the first half of our period. This is not because the situation was any different in the second half of the period. Indeed the evidence from the latter half of the period generally corroborates that derived from the first half. If we have tended to lean too heavily on the evidence from the pre-Menelik period it is because paradoxically that evidence is more exhaustive in its details whereas the evidence from Menelik's period tends to sketch only the outlines.

The trade of Shoa, both domestic and foreign, like the frontiers of the Kingdom, expanded with the years. And there was a direct relationship between her trade and her territorial expansion. On the one hand, foreign trade brought into

the kingdom, among other things, European firearms. Armed with the improved weapons the Shoaan soldiers met with greater successes in their campaigns of conquest and thereby extended the frontiers of the kingdom. On the other hand, the success of those campaigns and the resulting territorial expansion opened up new markets and fresh sources of raw material to the farmer and craftsman alike, a factor which must have led to expansion of trade.

During the reign of Sahle Selässie, Shoa's trade must have been limited. This would apply not only to trade with the neighbouring countries but even more so to trade within the kingdom itself. There was at least one good reason for this. As far as foreign trade was concerned the greatest impediment to expansion was insecurity on the routes along which the tide of commerce flowed. This point will be elaborated later, when we come to discuss foreign trade. Internally, however, insecurity could not have been a factor playing against expansion of trade because, as has been seen in Chapter I, Shoa was relatively secure and peaceful under Sahela Selassie. Insecurity probably became a factor during the period of the inter-regnum (1855-65), when the absence of a strong government and the incessant wars against the imperial administration

must have made conditions unfavourable to both commercial and agricultural pursuits.¹ It would seem that the factor which inhibited a brisk internal trade was the ubiquity of amateurism in the marketable enterprises. In other words too many people were producing most of the things which they needed on their farms or homes so that the market for the produce of the specialist was very limited.² This problem, it would seem, was not peculiar to Shoa but was general in Africa at this period. Indeed it is a general problem in undeveloped agricultural economies. In Shoa there was probably a good market for cotton cloth and local military weapons, but such commodities as baskets, skins and farm products must have had a limited market indeed. This is not to claim that each family in Shoa was self-sufficing. All that is being emphasised is that the fact that many of the household requirements could be produced by the household must have limited purely domestic trade to only a few specialised products or manufactures. The situation altered, albeit almost imperceptibly, during the reign of Menelik. A number of factors accounted for this change. The development of what might be

¹See Chapter II.

²See Ferret and Galinier: Voyage en Abyssinie, Vol. II, p.393.

be called a standing army¹ gradually divorced more and more people from the land and their erstwhile amateurish practices, thereby making it necessary for them to buy from others many of the things which they had until recently produced themselves. Moreover, the rapid expansion of the kingdom meant that more people had to be taken into account, and what with Menelik's concern for roadmaking and the construction of bridges across the rivers which could not be forded, districts which had hitherto been inaccessible now came within the reach of both farmer and craftsman alike. Furthermore, the territorial expansion and the consequent growth in foreign trade brought into Shoa an ever-increasing number of foreign traders who stayed in the kingdom for considerable lengths of time, and who, in the meanwhile, contributed not a little to internal trade.²

Information on the internal trade of Shoa has tended to be concentrated on the big markets; yet those big markets were more centres of foreign than of domestic trade. As a result our knowledge of the minor markets and the nature of purely

¹See next chapter.

²See below.

domestic trade is scanty. Yet any account of Shoa's domestic trade must consider the minor markets because they were the real centres of that trade, more so than the markets which often drew the attention of the European traveller. It is clear from the accounts of the travellers that besides the big markets which they wrote about, there were minor ones in the towns, the larger villages and in some smaller and remote villages. Such, for example, were the markets at Litché, Debra Berhan, Warra Ilu in Wallo, Tolli, a small village in the Soddo country south of the Hawash river, and Sellalle a small village in the district of that name. It was in markets such as these that the local people obtained the commodities they needed. Goods exposed for sale on those markets were limited both in scale and in variety. In 1878 Cecchi and Chiarini discovered that mules could not be obtained in Ankober except at Debra Berhan, which was said to be a centre for transport animals.¹ Again in 1887 Borelli found out that he could not get certain commodities he wanted to buy on the small market at Sellalle and had to travel to Djarso, one and a half day's journey, in order to get them.² Generally the goods

¹Cecchi: Da Zeila, I, 290, 292. Also Borelli, Ethiopie Méridionale, p.141. Krapf in Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. 10, 1840, p.480.

²Borelli, op.cit., p.202. 15.2.1887.

displayed for sale in the minor markets reflected local specialisation and consisted of cotton cloth, baskets, military weapons, foodstuffs, transport animals and the like. Salt, important as it is in the household, could only very rarely be obtained on the smaller markets. The reason for this was that salt was not merely a kitchen commodity, but was also a medium of exchange in large scale transactions. For that reason the trade in salt was limited to the larger markets to which foreign merchants resorted. On the medium sized markets, of course, a wider variety of goods could be obtained. These medium sized markets were generally larger than the village markets, though they were not centres of foreign trade. Usually situated in the towns or in large villages, their importance derived from the size of the population in the town or the neighbourhood. An example of medium sized market was that of Antoto or Litche. At Antoto the market was held on Saturdays. When Borelli visited it twice in August 1886, he found that it was well attended and that the goods on sale represented a cross-section of the local produce. He found too that imported articles such as mirrors and beads, which were normally only obtainable in

the larger markets were also on sale.¹ Although we have said that articles were exposed for sale, it must be emphasised that in this part of the world at that time trade was carried on largely by barter. Money was indeed not unknown and gradually more and more came into circulation, but transactions were made more through exchange of goods than through currency. According to Bianchi, merchandise was rarely weighed but was generally measured by sight.² While it is true that measuring by sight was sometimes resorted to, there is also evidence that elaborate scales of weights and measures were employed in commercial transactions.

Throughout our period Shoa carried on an increasing trade with her neighbours, the Galla and Sidama states to the south south-east and south-west, Harar, the Afar, and the other Christian provinces of the Empire. As Shoa expanded to incorporate more and more of these countries, her trade with them became domestic, but it should also be remembered that commercial

¹Borelli, op.cit., p.123, 14.8.1886; p. 127 21.8.1886.

²G, Bianchi: Alla Terra dei Galla, pp. 483-4.

contact with the countries beyond the expanding frontiers remained essentially foreign trade. The part played by the Amhara subjects of the Kingdom in the expanding foreign trade was very small indeed, for the Amhara, like the Baganda,¹ and unlike the Mande people of the Western Sudan or the Nyamwezi of West-Central Tanganyika, were not commercially inclined. Moreover, the Amhara of Shoa had a morbid fear of the lowland regions through which the commercial routes to the coast lay. This fear was based largely on the inhospitable climate of these regions. As a result nearly the whole of the Kingdom's long distance trade was controlled by Muslims, mostly Afar, and by the Galla. The Muslim control over trade in Ethiopia as a whole dated back some centuries. One reason for this was that the Church prohibited the Christian subjects from trading in certain commodities such as slaves, and also from cultivating others, such as tobacco. Thus the trade in these goods fell into the hands of the Muslims. Moreover, it was only Muslims who could trade successfully with the Muslim states which developed on the eastern, northern and north-western

¹See M. S. Kiwanuka: "The Traditional History of Buganda," London Ph. D. Thesis 1965, Vol. 2, p.452.

frontiers of Ethiopia in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, with the object of stemming the tide of Islam which had been winning increasing adherents, some of the restored Emperors had introduced anti-Muslim laws. The social effect of those laws had been to deprive the Muslims of the right to own land or practise agriculture. Thus restricted, the Muslim inhabitants had taken gradually to commerce and soon became so proficient that they attracted into their hands the trade of the whole Ethiopian region.¹

Shoa's foreign trade fell into three directions: with the southerly and south-westerly countries; with the coast (i.e. the easterly and south-easterly countries); and with the northerly provinces. Trade with the south-westerly countries formed the basis of the Kingdom's commercial network. It has been pointed out elsewhere that the south-westerly region was the richest part of Ethiopia; it was from there that all the marketable products, often referred to at the coast as Abyssinian products, came. Shoa as such, indeed Christian Ethiopia as a whole, had very few commodities of her own to offer to the coast; her trade was,

¹J. S. Trimingham; Islam in Ethiopia, 1952, pp. 102-3.

therefore, essentially a transit trade of which the coast and the south-west constituted the opposite ends.

Before Menelik's reign, Shoa's trade with the south and the south-west must have been small. This was because Shoa was then only one of three possible routes which led from the south-westerly countries to the coast. One of the other two routes lay northwards through Godjam, Gondar and Tigre to the Red Sea port of Massawah. The other went eastwards through Arussi country to Harar and thence to the Gulf of Aden ports of Zeila, Tadjura or Berbera.¹ In the absence of adequate statistics it is impossible to determine the volume of trade which went by each of these routes. All that could be said is that Shoa's share of the trade was probably small at that period. This statement is based on the fact that the d'Abbadie brothers, who visited the south-west in the 1840s and the Catholic Missionaries who followed in the 1850s, both give the impression that merchants who traded to the north and to Harar were to be found more often than those who traded to Shoa. In the 1860s

¹For the trade along these routes in the first half of the 19th century see M. Abir: Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region, London Ph. D. Thesis 1964.

and 1870s, however, the situation altered and Shoa's share of the trade increased correspondingly. The reason for this change is not hard to seek. Before the 1860s Limmu-Enarea was the most powerful of the south-westerly states, and controlled the larger part of the trade of the area; the market of Sakka was then the centre of the south-westerly trade. In the 1860s Jimma Abba Gifar gradually emerged as a rival to Limmu-Enarea and by the 1870s the balance had shifted in favour of Jimma Abba Gifar. In the contest the one great issue was who should control the trade of the region. Jimma Abba Gifar succeeded partly because her geographical position - situated between Limmu-Enarea in the north and the Sidama sources of supply in the north - enabled her to divert the bulk of the trade from the northern route through Limmu-Enarea to a north-easterly one via her north-eastern province to Shoa.¹ By the 1880s, therefore, partly owing to the success of Jimma Abba Gifar and partly owing to the expansion of Shoa, the bulk of the trade from this region was probably reaching the coast by way of Shoa.

¹For the beginnings of the struggle see M. Abir: "The Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchies of Enarea and Jimma in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century" in J.A.H., Vol. VI, No. 2, 1965, pp. 205-219. See also Abir: Thesis cited.

In Shoa the markets of Roggie and Anduodi on the opposite banks of the southern Awash were the centre of the Kingdom's trade with the south-west. There were, of course, other markets in the area south of the Southern Awash river and dotting the routes from Shoa to the south-west, which were by no means unimportant centres of trade, but the real emporium of the trade from the south and the south-west was Roggie, with Anduodi as a depot.¹ Of the three routes which in the 1880s were said to lead from Shoa to the south-westerly countries, the northern and the middle ones started from Antoto and going by different provinces converged near the Dendi mountains in the Maru Galla country and passing through the Nanno and Agalo plains led to the north-north-eastern frontier of Jimma Abba Gifar. The southern route led from Roggie through Anduodi and the Soddo country and Cabiena to the north-eastern frontier of Jimma Abba Gifar.² Situated in the Gallan Galla district, at the northern foot of the Jerer (Yerrur) mountain, some six hours south of Antoto, the village of Roggie itself was very

¹Cecchi; Da Zeila, vol. I, pp. 488-92. Vol. II, pp. 40, 55-60. ASSGI, Cartoni VIII^D, Traversi al Presidente della SGI, dated Let-Marefia 10.4.1883 (B.N. Paris) NAF 21302 pp. 314-5 d'Abbadie.

²ASSGI, Cartoni VIII^D, Traversi Idem, d'Abbadie NAF 21302 pp. 314-5; also pp. 175-6.

small and owed its importance solely to the market which was held every Saturday. In 1878 the population of the neighbourhood was estimated at about 10,000 people, nearly all of whom were Muslims. Caravans from Jimma Abba Gifar and other south-westerly countries conducted by pagan and Muslim Galla came to Roggie in large number carrying slaves, gold, coffee, ivory, civet, musk, skins, hides and other products from the region. It is not known how often these caravans arrived. Considering the distance and the insecurity on the route, it is not likely that the caravans were regular in the first half of our period. With Menelik's conquest and pacification of the south westerly countries, both the numbers and frequency of the caravans arriving at Roggie must have increased. At Roggie the caravans from the south-west met others from Guraghe carrying slaves, coffee, tobacco, butter and other local products. Some caravans also came from the other large markets in Shoa as well as from Godjam and the northern provinces. These caravans generally brought European goods from the coast: coloured silks, coloured cotton cloth, beads and other glass trinkets, knives, scissors, copper, zinc, silver. The Galla tribes in the neighbourhood of Roggie provided foodstuffs, lances and shields, cattle, horses, sheep and mules.

It has been mentioned already that trade in this part of the world in those days was carried on mainly by barter. Nevertheless, currency was used in some transactions. In the Ethiopian region as a whole, with the exception of Harar, the currency which was often used was the Maria Theresa dollar, also called thaler. All the nineteenth century travellers remarked that the thaler had to be of certain specifications, otherwise it passed only at a discount. In this connection it should be noted that the Maria Theresa thaler first minted in 1751 continued to be produced with the queen's effigy even after her death in 1780, and that until 1866 production of the thaler was not limited to the Vienna mint but was done in other continental mints such as Venice, Prague and Milan.¹ They were even minted in Delhi during the Second World War for use by the British forces in the Ethiopian campaign. The thaler which passed at normal rate had to be of the year 1780 and to bear distinctly visible on it the three distinguishing marks of seven points in the diadem, a brooch surrounded with points on the shoulder, and the letters S.F. below the head.²

¹R. Pankhurst, "The Maria Theresa Dollar in Pre-War Ethiopia" in Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 8-10.

²Ch. Beke: Letters on the Commerce and Politics of Abyssinia ... addressed to the F.O. and the Board of Trade, Lond. 1852 p.17. LG 189 No. 2060G Harris 5.1.1842, para. 47.

³... ..

Valued at about four shillings and two pence, the thaler's subdivisions were reckoned in pieces of block salt called amole and valued at roughly two and a half pence.

There are no records of the relative prices of articles on the Roggie market before the reign of Menelik. In the late 1870s and the 1880s a good horse sold for between twenty and twenty-five thalers, while a mule cost thirty to forty thalers. Barley, teff, and other grains were sold by volume, the unit for which was a doulla, equivalent, according to Cecchi, to approximately 7331 cubic centimetres (about 447 cub. ins.).¹ Prices for grains varied between three and five amole a doulla. An excellent shield made of buffalo skin sold for two and a half to four thalers. Coffee, gold-dust and ivory were sold by weight. The units for measuring weight were the thaler, the wakiet, the amole and the rotoli. The weight of one thaler was equivalent to twenty-seven grams. A wakiet was equivalent to the weight of twelve thalers; a rotoli was of two kinds: one was equivalent to the weight of twelve thalers while the other was eighteen thalers. The rotoli

¹Cecchi: Da Zeila Vol. I, p.306. Also M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, pp. 369-70. Arnoux's Journal.

of twelve thalers was in use in many parts of Ethiopia, but in Shoa that of eighteen thalers was more common.¹ According to Cecchi there was a unit of weight called natter which was equivalent to a thaler and whose value when calculated in thalers varied from place to place corresponding to twelve thalers at Gondar, fifteen in other places and eighteen in Shoa.² Cecchi seems to have mixed up wakiet and rotoli here. It must be noted that Cecchi does not use the word rotoli although he uses wakiet; from his account, however, it is clear that what he calls natter was the same unit as the rotoli. It was estimated that 30,000 - 40,000 kilograms of coffee entered Roggie annually, the price for which was one thaler for seventeen rotoli. The price for ivory was between thirty-one and thirty-five thalers a wakiet and the total annual volume of the ivory trade at Roggie was put at two hundred good teeth.³ For purpose of selling gold dust, the wakiet was divided into either ten equal parts called derime or twenty equal parts called kemate or forty parts called kouara.⁴ It must be emphasised that Cecchi's

¹Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.306. G. Bianchi: Alla Terra dei Galla, Milano 1884, p.483. A.N. (Paris) F.12.7210. Lefebvre, "Le Commerce de l'Abyssinie", Appendix A, 10.1.1846. LG 189 No. 2060G. Harris 5.1.1842 para 45. M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62 pp. 369-79 Arnoux's Journal.

²Cecchi: Ibid.

³Cecchi: op.cit., I, 490; Bianchi: op.cit., 483-4.

⁴A.N.(Paris) F.12.7210 Lefebvre. "Le Commerce de l'Abyssinie" Appendix A. 10.1.1846.

estimate of the annual volume of the trade in ivory, and for that matter any estimate of the volume of the trade in gold-dust, civet, and musk, must necessarily represent only a fraction of the actual volume of that trade. The reason is that the king had a monopoly over those articles, and their possession, except only as a reward from the King, was strictly forbidden to all the inhabitants of the kingdom. Thus the King appropriated the entire quantity of the open trade in those products and in other European manufactures.¹ The royal monopoly over these valuable products must have encouraged surreptitious transactions in them. These would not have been too difficult, for we are told that at Roggie only the poor traders transacted openly and that the wealthier and more important merchants preferred to trade in private homes where all transactions were in private.² Thus the proportion of the trade which was done surreptitiously was likely to have been unknown to those who estimated the total volume of gold, ivory or civet which came annually to the Roggie market.

By far the most important commodities which were traded

¹LG 189 No. 2060 G. Harris 5.1.1842, paras. 16, 21 & 22.

²Cecchi: op.cit., I, 490.

at Roggie were slaves. Unlike the trade in gold or ivory, there was no secrecy about transactions in slaves, thousands of whom were brought to the market annually from the Galla and the Sidama countries to the south and south-west. It was estimated that between three and four thousand slaves entered the market each year.¹ This total consisted of both sexes most of whom were aged from six to about sixteen years. Prices tended to depend on age and for the age group mentioned it varied between fifteen and forty thalers. For obvious reasons the older slaves did not attract good prices, which fell correspondingly with their age. Although Roggie was an important slave market, the greatest mart in Shoa for the trade in human beings was Abdel-Rassul near Aliu Amba. It will be profitable therefore to defer considering the details of the slave trade until we come to discuss Shoa's eastern markets and her trade with the coast. Suffice to say here that a tax of one thaler was imposed by the King on each slave brought into the Kingdom.² It would seem that the tax

¹Gecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.490. Vol. II, p.538.

²Gecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.491.

had increased over the years, for in the early 1840s only four amole were imposed as the tax on slaves per head.¹

Besides Roggie, there were other markets for foreign trade in other parts of Shoa. One of these was at Djarso in the north-western province of Marabitie, and was about two days journey from the Abay river. Like Roggie, Djarso was the focal point of commercial routes from the south-westerly countries and from the northern provinces of the Empire by way of Godjam.² Merchants and merchandise on this market were of the same variety as were to be found at Roggie, but being nearer to Godjam there were probably more Godjamese traders to be found at Djarso than at Roggie. In mid-April 1883 when Soleillet arrived on the bank of the Abay river he found encamped there about a hundred Godjamese (more likely northern) traders who had attended the market at Djarso the day before and were returning to their country.³ It is regrettable that there is no information on the volume of trade which passed through Djarso to enable us to assess the

¹LG 196 No. 3491, "The Slave Report" Harris. 20.7.1842. paras 23, 39. Harris: The Highlands of Aethiopia, Lond. 1844 Vol. III, pp. 300-1.

²d'Abbadie in Athenaeum 1847 No. 1042 p. 1078. LG 196 No. 3941 "The Slave Report", Harris paras 22, 38.

³P. Soleillet: Voyages, p.295. See also Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, p.202.

relative importance of the market. Nevertheless, it is clear from the available evidence that Djarso was one of the large markets in Shoa where foreign traders concoured.

Of all the markets in Shoa the most important in every respect was undoubtedly Aliu Amba. Indeed it was said to be the third most important market in the whole of Christian Ethiopia.¹ Its importance derived from the fact that it was the centre of Shoa's trade with the coast. It was purely a geographical accident which gave Aliu Amba its central position in the commercial network of the kingdom. It was situated five to six miles south-east of Ankober on an amba which would fall into the zonal division of a Woyna Dega.² The distance from the village to Shoa's effective eastern frontier was about thirteen miles, nearly two days journey by caravan.³ Situated as it was in a Woyna Dega, the temperature at Aliu Amba was congenial to not only the Afar who dreaded the bleak climate of the highlands but also the Galla as well as the Abyssinian who entertained a morbid fear of

¹A.N. (Paris) F.12.7210. LeJean "Note sur les marchés Abyssins."

²See above, p 269

³Kirk in J.R.G.S. Vol. 12, 1842, p.237.

the scorching conditions in the lowlands. This explains why Aliu Amba, unlike Roggie or Djarso, was frequented by Afar, Harari and Somali merchants besides the usual pagan and Muslim Galla traders and the Abyssinian peasant. Throughout our period Aliu Amba consisted of three to four hundred huts with a floating population of between two and four thousand, most of whom were Harari, Afar and a few Somali merchants.¹ So important were these three peoples to Shoa's trade with the coast that they were treated with much deference by the Shoan kings. At Aliu Amba they lived in more or less organised "national" groups under the immediate supervision of their own leaders, but subject to the general oversight of the Shoan governor of the town. The Harari were the best organised, and there were probably more Harari than Afar or Somali at Aliu Amba, for the route from Shoa to Harar was said to be the most frequented.² This of course referred to the 1840s but one would assume that the frequency was maintained, if not in fact increased, during the reign of Menelik when the

¹LG 185 No. 1440 Barker 7.1.1842, para 7. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, pp. 259-60. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.302.

²M.&D. (Afrique) Vol. 13. "Considerations Politiques et commerciales sur le royaume du Choa" Rochet d'Héricourt, p.283 Also, LG 189 No. 2060G. Harris, "Report on the Present state of Trade in the Kingdom of Shoa", para II.

expansion and pacification of the provinces brought security to the roads. The chief of the Harari community at Aliu Amba was appointed by the Emir of Harar probably with the approval of the King of Shoa; his duty was to see to the general welfare of his countrymen. In 1842 the post was held by a certain Abdul Sihi.¹ As a representative of the Emir he combined the functions of ambassador and a commercial agent. It should be noted that it was the policy of the Emirs of Harar to maintain representatives in all the places with which Harar had important commercial contact. Henry Salt speaks of such a representative at Mokha in the first decade of the nineteenth century, while Burton mentions another at Berbera in the middle of the century.² In the reign of Sahela Selassie relations between Shoa and Harar were friendly. In August 1841 it was reported that an embassy from the Emir of Harar arrived in Ankober with a letter to the King of Shoa requesting him to help keep open the routes between the two states. The embassy left Shoa on September 6 with what was believed to be a favourable reply.³ Again in

¹LG 185 No. 1440 Barker, 7.1.1842, para 15.
Ch. Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, pp. 247-9.

²H. Salt: Voyage to Abyssinia, Lond. 1814 pp. 131, 133.
Sir R. F. Burton: First Footsteps in East Africa, Memorial Edition, Lond. 1894, Vol. II, p.26.

³Barker in J.R.G.S., Vol. 12. 1842, p.242.

1842, when Captain Barker intended to return to the coast by way of Harar, he was given a letter by Sahela Selassie which was to serve as his introduction to the Emir of Harar.¹ The friendly relations between Shoa and Harar appear to have continued until at least 1886, for Menelik in one of his letters to the King of Italy made it clear that he had agents at Harar.² By late 1886, however, Menelik's determination to conquer Harar appears to have become known to the Emir and from that time relations between the two states gradually worsened until in January 1887 Menelik defeated the Emir's soldiers in battle and annexed Harar to Shoa.³

The market of Aliu Amba was held on Fridays and was, as we have said, a truly varied gathering. The market place was a plain occupying the southern half of the amba (crest of an eminence) on which the village stood.⁴ Wares of every description were displayed for sale or barter. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood brought farm products and articles of

¹LG 185 No. 1440 Barker 7.1.1842. LG 189 No. 2060B, Harris 29.10.1842, para. 6.

²LV No. XV. Ethiopia: Doc. 95 Menelik to Umberto I, Entotto 4.6.1885.

³See Ch. III. pp 209-210

⁴Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, p.229.

local manufacture; foodstuffs, fowls, cattle, mules, horses, lances and shields, baskets, cotton cloth and others. Traders from the south-westerly countries sold products from those countries, principally coffee, tobacco, butter. Harari, Afar, Somali and merchants from Godjam, Gondar and Tigre were the agents of European type of goods: zinc, brass and copper wires, beads, coloured silks, and other articles of European manufacture.¹ The Afar merchants were also dealers in salt.

It has been mentioned that salt was one of the commodities most sought after in Ethiopia as a whole, and that it was not merely a kitchen item but also a currency. All the salt that was used in the Empire came from the Afar country; it was for this reason that the rulers of Shoa were so anxious to maintain friendly relations with the chiefs of the Afar tribes living beyond the Eastern frontier of Shoa. Two types of salt were in circulation in Shoa and probably also in other parts of the Empire; the first was the piece of block salt which served as currency and was called amole, and the ordinary salt which was broken in thin, small pieces which was of no use as currency and was employed for culinary purposes.² This latter type came from

¹LG 189 No. 2060G. Harris 5.1.1842, "Report on the Trade... of Shoa", paras. 11-14. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, pp. 259-62. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, pp. 301-3. Soleillet: Voyages, pp. 96-7.

²Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, p.237. Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, p.305.

the salt lake at Aussa, a couple of miles inland from Tadjura, while the amole came from the mines in the northern Afar country on the eastern frontier of Tigre.¹ The shape and size of the amole has been compared to a mower's whetstone. Generally it was about eight inches long and cut thinner at the two ends than in the middle; the breadth across the centre was about two inches while at the ends it scarcely measured one inch; the thickness was uniform and was usually about one inch and a quarter.² As currency, amole provided the sub-divisions for a thaler. The number of amole which made up one thaler depended partly on the distance from the market to the source of supply and partly on the season. During the rainy season, owing to dampness, the amole could not be preserved for long. For this reason the supply tended to be limited and the number of amole to a thaler was consequently small. Moreover, there was some difference in the rate of exchange between a new specimen and one that had been in circulation for some time. This was because salt, being soft and deliquescent, became denuded by use and so

¹Cecchi: Ibid. A.N. (Paris) F.12,7210 Lejean "Note sur les Marchés Abyssins". Also Ibid Lefebvre "Le commerce de l'Abyssinie", 10.1.1846.

²Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, p.232. NAF 21301, p.118, para. 346 d'Abbadie. Cecchi: op.cit., I, p.305. Soleillet: Voyages, p.96. See Pankhurst: An Introduction, pp. 262 for a diagram of amole.

there was considerable difference in weight between an old and a new amole. In the 1840s the exchange rate for a new amole was given as follows: In Tigre fifty to seventy amole to a thaler; in Gondar thirty to forty; at Basso in Godjam twenty- to twenty-five; at Sakka in Limmu-Enarea ten to twelve; in Wallo thirty to thirty-five; in the Shoan province of Giddem twenty-three to twenty-five; and at Aliu Amba eighteen to twenty.¹ By the 1880s the exchange rate had fallen by almost half in Shoa and her dependencies, and was now fifteen at Warra Ilu in Wallo; ten to eleven at Litche; nine to ten at Aliu Amba, Ankober, Abdel Rassul and Roggie; and five to seven in Jimma Abba Gifar and Kaffa.² It is possible that the fall in the rate of exchange noticeable in Shoa in the 1880s was due to shortage in supply which was probably the result of the uneasy relationship that existed between Menelik and the Emperor Yohannes. As we saw in Chapter III, this relationship, for the most part took the form of cold war, but occasionally escalated into open hostility. This suggestion gains weight when one recalls that between December

¹NAF 10222, p.13, d'Abbadie. Beke: Letters on the Commerce and Politics of Abyssinia, p.17. Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p. 443. IG 185 No. 1440 Barker, para. 10.

²Cecchi: Da Zeila, I, 305. Soleillet: Voyages, pp. 96, 196. Borelli: op.cit., pp. 331-2.

1877 and April 1878, when the Emperor invaded Shoa, amole became very scarce and at Aliu Amba the exchange rate fell to seven and a half to a thaler.¹ Thus it would seem that in his dealings with Shoa, Yohannes employed not only political but also economic weapons to keep Menelik and his kingdom weak.

At Aliu Amba, as well as at the other large markets in Shoa, a governor was always present at the market place whenever it was a market day. It was his duty to settle any disputes that might arise in the course of the market; he also collected the market dues which all traders had to pay for the convenience of selling or bartering their goods on the market. It should be pointed out that payment of market dues was a general African practice.² In Shoa the dues were paid either in kind or in amole at the discretion of the governor. The value of the toll was ten per cent the total value of the articles exposed for sale. However, the tax on slaves was initially four amole per head, but this was later increased to one thaler. The severity of these taxes struck the Europeans

¹Cecchi: Idem.

²See J. Vansina "A Comparison of African Kingdoms" in Africa, Vol. 32, 1952, p.327.

who wanted to open up large scale commerce with Shoa, and in the treaties which they signed with the Kings of Shoa to this effect it was stipulated that the taxes had to be reduced to five per cent at most.¹ One wonders if the high taxes did not have the effect of discouraging trade with Shoa. Although the taxes were high, it should be remembered that Shoa was throughout our period the most inviting part of the Empire for trading purposes, because there was in Shoa greater security to both the life and the property of the trader than there was anywhere in the Empire.

The lack of information on prices at the other Shoan markets before the reign of Menelik makes any attempt at comparing prices somewhat unrealistic. Nevertheless a careful analysis of the information available suggests that on the whole prices for local produce were higher at Aliu Amba than elsewhere, while articles of import from the coast were cheaper there. For example a doulla of grain which cost three to five amole at Roggie cost one thaler at Aliu Amba.² This is not surprising. As the centre of trade with the coast, there was a

¹See Chapter I, and Chapter III. Rochet (Second Voyage, p.377) stipulated a reduction to only 30/o.

²Cecchi: Da Zeila, I, 303. Rochet: Second Voyage, p.262.
IG 189 No. 2060G. Harris, paras. 41 & 42.

larger quantity and a greater variety of imported merchandise at Aliu Amba than elsewhere, so that the competition was greater and consequently prices of those goods were lower here. Moreover, it was largely from Aliu Amba that traders from Roggie, Ankober, Djarso and other Shoan markets got their supply of European type of goods for retail; it was thus to be expected that prices of those goods would be higher elsewhere than at Aliu Amba. On the other hand, the large number of foreign merchants who concoured at Aliu Amba and the consequent high demand for foodstuffs and other local products tended to keep prices for those goods high.

It will have been noticed that the trade in slaves has hardly entered into our discussion of the commodities sold at Aliu Amba. This is because slaves were not dealt in at Aliu Amba proper but at the village of Abdel Rassul, about three miles south of Aliu Amba. Abdel Rassul was the largest slave market in the kingdom; it was here that merchants from Harar, Zeyla and Tadjura collected their stock of the human merchandise. Roggie, as we have seen, was an important slave market, but it was so only as a point of entry and there is no evidence that the slave traders from Tadjura, Zeyla went to Roggie to make purchases. The whole pattern of Shoa's trade was bound up with

the commerce in slaves. The Afar, Somali and especially Harari traders were the important dealers. With the proceeds from the goods which they brought from the coast they would purchase a small quantity of slaves and take them up to Shoa's north-eastern frontier markets in Giddem and Argobba and later Wallo provinces where the slaves were exchanged for amole. With the stock of amole so obtained the merchants would return to Abdel Rassul to buy a fresh stock of slaves for resale in the north-eastern provinces of Shoa. As has been seen, the number of amole to one thaler was larger in those provinces than at Abdel Rassul so that they made considerable profits from the transaction. Having made a few such profitable trips the merchants were then able to purchase a large stock of slaves with which they would return to the coast.¹ While the foreign merchants remained in Shoa they contributed considerably to trade in the smaller local markets, for they bought their foodstuffs and other domestic necessities, and baggage animals from the various petty markets in the neighbourhood. They must have found it useful to purchase the domestic needs from the smaller markets because, as we have seen, the cost of those items was very high in and around Aliu Amba.

¹LG 185 No. 1440, Barker, para. 10. Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, p. 235.

In Ethiopia as a whole the Christian population, including the rulers, did not trade in slaves. This was expressly forbidden to them by law; in the same way the law protected the Christian subjects of the Empire against being sold into slavery. As a result, the slaves who reached the coast from the Ethiopian provinces consisted of pagan or Muslim Galla, Shankalla, Gurage, or Sidama. Although forbidden to sell slaves, the Amhara could nevertheless own slaves, and there must have been a considerable number of slaves in the population of Shoa. The King and his governors possessed many slaves. It must be emphasised however that these were not slaves in the sense in which that word was understood by contemporary Western world. They were mostly prisoners of war taken in the campaigns of expansion and retained in the service of their captors. Unlike the slave in the Americas before emancipation, the war captive retained as a domestic servant in Shoa or Christian Ethiopia had rights in the society. He could be emancipated after seven years, and like his counterparts elsewhere in Africa he could rise to a position of honour and status not only in the master's household but even in the community as a whole. For example, Ato Bezabu, one of the governors during the inter-regnum, was a "slave" in the

Palace in the reign of Sahela Selassie.¹ And Azaj Walde Tsadek for many years governor of Ankober and a leading figure in Menelik's reign was in origin a war captive from Gurage.² Domestic slavery as it existed in Africa was different both in nature and in scale from the overseas slave trade.

Probably many of the slaves who were brought to Shoan markets were the product of ~~in~~int~~er~~state and inter-state war, some were obtained through raiding expeditions specially organised for the purpose of capturing slaves. It appears that slaves from Gurage were obtained mostly through raiding, the techniques of which have been vividly described in the sources. Children used to sleep by the side of their parents, but notwithstanding this, kidnappers broke through the walls of the hut at night, put a large stick upon the neck of the parents, and quickly took their children away. If the children made an outcry a rag was put into their mouths. In many houses children slept on beams placed across, in the upper parts of the house, but kidnappers penetrated also to that place. And the people were kidnapped in going from one village to another.³ So great was the danger of capture from marauding slave parties that armed guards had to accompany women and children

¹P. Soleillet: Voyages, p.273.

²J. Borelli, op.cit., p.152.

³Krapf's Journal for 26.12.1839 quoted in C.M.R. 1841. The information was derived from a Gurage priest who visited Ankober in December 1839 to receive religious books.

wherever they went. For this reason Traversi in his travels through Gurage found it extremely difficult to secure guides from one province to another.¹ It is difficult to say whether this situation was the cause or the effect of the state of anarchy that was reported to exist in Gurage; but there is no doubt that the one intensified the other. Raiding for slaves was by no means limited to Gurage. The account given to Krapf by Dilbo, a slave from Enarea who was also interviewed by both Harris and Dr. Beke, makes it clear that slave raiding also existed in the south-westerly Galla states.² Nor were large scale war and raiding the only methods by which slaves were obtained, for Borelli, speaking of a case of which he was an eye-witness, gives the impression that in Jimma Abba Gifar, offenders were sometimes sold as slaves.³

From the sources of supply the slaves were carried in caravans of several hundreds and transported to the coast by one of three routes: the south-eastern route through Kambat and Arussi to Harar and thence to the coast at Berbera, Zeyla or

¹Traversi: "Viaggi negli Arussi etc." in B.S.G.I. Serie II, Vol. XII, 1887, p.284.

²Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.50. LG 196 No. 349
Harris: "The Slave Report" para. 21. Beke: "The Geography of Shwa" in J.R.G.S. Vol. 12. 1842 pp. 86-88. Harris: The Highlands of Aethiopia, Vol. III, p.298-300.

³Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, p.347, Djiren 3.3.1888.

Tadjura; the eastern route through Shoa to the coast at Tadjura, Zeyla and later Assabor Obock; and the northern route through Godjam, Gondar and Tigre to the port of Massowah. All along the route transactions were made so that many of the slaves changed hands several times before reaching Shoa. And as they changed hands the prices on them increased until at Abdel Rassul a slave cost at least twice as much as in the south-west. For example in Kaffa prices were between two and four thalers; in Jimma Abba Gifar, five to fifteen; at Roggie eight to thirty, and at Abdel Rassul ten to thirty. Young beautiful girls were generally more expensive, being destined for the harems of the South Arabian rulers, and their cost was always in the higher regions of the price range quoted.¹

Estimates of the number of slaves which reached Zeila and Tadjura directly from Shoa vary between two thousand and four thousand annually.² It should be noted that this figure is lower than the actual number of slaves which entered the kingdom. As we have seen, Harari and Gondari (i.e. those from the north generally) merchants bought slaves in Shoa and transported

¹Harris: "The Slave Report", para. 25.)
 NAF. 21300, p.487 d'Abbadie.) For the 1840s.

Soleillet: Voyages, p.196)
 Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.490.) For the 1870s and 1880s.
 Borelli: op.cit., pp. 289, 331-2.)

²Krapf: Travels Researches and Missionary Labour, etc. p.46)
 Beke: Abyssinia: A Statement of facts relative to the
transactions with the late British Mission to the Court of } For the 1840s.
 Shoa. 1845, p.27. (cont.) }

them partly via Harar to Berbera and Zeyla or Tadjura, and partly via Gondar and Tigre to Massawa. Although estimates exist for the number of slaves transacted at Massawa or Harar and Berbera it is impossible to say what percentage was bought from Shoa or directly from the sources of supply. At first sight Harris's estimate that eight to ten thousand slaves passed through Shoa annually¹ would seem too high to be believed, but it might well represent the total annual figure that passed through Shoa to the coast either directly or indirectly via Harar and Tigre.

One would have expected that the campaign by Britain to abolish the trade in slaves which had been going for some decades before the opening of our period would, over the years, have led to a significant diminution in the number of slaves reaching the coast from the Ethiopian provinces. This does not appear to have been so, for, as has just been mentioned, estimates remained the same for both the first and second halves of our period. Indeed the anti-slave trade campaign~~s~~ was less successful in East Africa as a whole than in West Africa. It is beyond the scope of this Chapter to attempt a detailed explanation for this; and only a few general points will be made

(cont.) Massaia: L. Niei, Vol. I, p.139 } For the 1850s-1880s.
 Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 490-1 }

¹Harris: "The Slave Report", para. 16-17. Harris: The Highlands, Vol. III, p.303.

here in this connection. Whereas the Atlantic slave trade was in European hands, the East African slave trade was mostly in Muslim Arab hands and had for its markets Asian, especially South Arabian, centres. So that much of the initial prohibitions passed by Britain and other European nations was technically inapplicable to the Muslim Arab traders. Anti-slave trade treaties were signed with local rulers in East Africa, the most effective of which were with the Sultan of Zanzibar, whose African dominions were important export centres for the slave traders. But the possessions of the Sultans of Zanzibar were limited to East Africa proper and did not extend to the Gulf of Aden ports which were the outlet for slaves from the Ethiopian region. Anti-slave trade treaties were also signed with local potentates in the Ethiopian region. The various treaties attempted with the different princes in Northern Ethiopia all had anti-slave trade clauses, but those treaties which were actually signed remained dead letters. And when, after 1868, Britain, the leader of the campaign, withdrew completely from the Ethiopian scene for some sixteen years, the campaign suffered a setback in the Ethiopian region and this enabled the Muslim Arab traders to continue their nefarious activities with impunity. Moreover, restrictions on the slave trade

in the territories of the Sultan of Zanzibar tended to drive some of the traders from the ports in the Indian Ocean to those in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, where restrictions were either ineffective or non-existent. The result, one would expect, was that instead of decreasing the slave trade, the campaign in fact led to its expansion in the Ethiopian region.¹ Further, Menelik's efforts to abolish the trade were, to say the least, half-hearted and therefore ineffective. He pronounced the trade in slaves illegal but did nothing to enforce the pronouncement.² The usual problem of economic interests tied his hands and restricted his actions. It is true that the King and his Christian subjects were not traders in slaves but Shoa derived substantial revenues from the trade in the form of taxes imposed on each slave that passed through the Kingdom. Furthermore, the trade in slaves was in Ethiopia closely bound up with other "Abyssinian" products such as coffee, ivory, gold and civet. It was the same caravans which carried both legitimate and "illegitimate" commodities. While this would seem to have facilitated the efforts of the advocates of legitimate trade, it complicated Menelik's

¹IOL: Aden Secret Letters Received (Various) Vol. 28. Cruttenden to Haines 31.10.1844, p. 245. Vol. 29, Same to same 20.4.1847, pp. 395-6.

²L.L.Lande: "Un Voyageur Français", in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, 15.12.1878, p.888.

problems. Apart from the tax on slaves, the legitimate commodities carried by a caravan which passed through Shoa paid a duty of ten per cent ad valorem. So that, in Menelik's eyes, to suppress the trade in slaves, the most profitable portion of a caravan's load, was not to encourage legitimate trade but in fact to discourage it, and with it, to whittle away a valuable source of his income. For, he believed that the slave traders faced with the prospect of decreasing profits arising out of the outlawing of the trade in slaves, would, instead of carrying more legitimate commodities to make up the balance, in fact reduce their visits to the sources of these commodities.¹ Looking back now, over half a century after the abolition of the trade in slaves and with a disinterested eye, we may be quick to detect how Menelik's reasoning was faulty but it was not so easy for him to realise the weakness in his line of thought. For these reasons Menelik could not seriously contemplate abolishing the trade in slaves outright, although he gave wide publicity to his anti-slave trade declaration and presented himself to the European powers as devoted to the ideals of the abolitionists.

¹A.S.S.G.I. Cartoni VII^B, Antinori to President of S.G.I.
Let-Marefia 28.10.1880. Borelli: op.cit., p.346.

This was, of course, largely propaganda designed to obtain firearms from the Europeans to pursue his expansionist policy.¹ That this was so is reflected by the fact that even after the "abolition" of the slave trade by Menelik, and his conquest of Gurage, Arussi and the south-westerly Galla states which were the sources of supply, the rate of flow of slaves remained the same as before the "abolition" and the conquest. For all these reasons the number of slaves which passed through Shoa and Ethiopia to the coast continued to be on the same scale, possibly even increased, during the reign of Menelik as before.

In Shoa as in other centralised kingdoms elsewhere in Africa, the King was a trading monarch and took an active part in the kingdom's long distance trade. In those days in Africa, the sort of commodities that came from the long distance trade, especially with the coast, were such that only the Court and the few rich subjects could buy them. In Shoa only the Court was rich, for, as was explained in the previous chapter, the wealth of all the subjects including governors and the other state officials, was strictly con-

¹See Chapter III.

trolled by the Crown. There was no indigenous merchant class in the kingdom, for the Muslims who handled the long distance trade were "foreigners". All that the subjects of the kingdom could trade in were local products and imports of basic necessities such as salt. Trade in precious or lucrative articles such as gold, ivory, and firearms, was prohibited to the subjects by law. This despotic restriction was part of the policy of the earlier rulers of Shoa to create an effective centralised government which controlled the most lucrative sources of patronage. So successful was this policy that by the opening of our period the Ras (later the King) had monopoly in the trade in precious and lucrative imported goods.¹

The pattern of royal trade with the south-westerly countries was simple. When caravans arrived from those countries, they were met at the frontier by the King's trading officials, who brought all the gold dust, ivory, civet, musk, and settled with the merchants the price in cloths, mules, copper and brass wires. The goods were then carried to the Palace where some of the

¹LG 189 No. 2060G. Harris 5.1.1842, paras. 16, 21, 22, 29. Soleillet: Voyages, pp. 225-7.

gold dust was worked up by the smiths into bars and ornaments. Under Menelik more and more of the gold passed out of the royal treasury in tribute to the Emperor. The rest of the articles went to swell the wealth of the Crown amassed over the years from which the King rewarded his governors and distinguished soldiers as well as financed his trade with the coast.

Information on the royal trade to the coast before the reign of Menelik is fragmentary and does not enable one to describe the nature of the trade with much confidence. It is known that caravans reaching the coast from Shoa carried, as part of their load, articles over which the King had a monopoly. For example, the caravan by which Rochet d'Héricourt travelled to the coast in March 1841 carried, among other commodities, civet and ivory.¹ It is possible that these were obtained through clandestine commerce in Shoa, but it is more likely to have belonged to the King. Also the King had agents who frequented the ports in both the Red Sea and the Somali coast for trade purposes. In 1838 Krapf met one such agent at Mokha; again, on their way to Shoa in 1839, Isenberg and Krapf met that same Agent, Haji Adam, who brought them a letter

¹ Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage Sur la côte orientale de la Mer Rouge, p.322.

from the King and told them that he was going on a mission to Mokha on behalf of the King.¹ Since Shoa had no political or religious relations with the Muslim rulers of Mokha, one could reasonably assume that Haji Adam's missions were commercial. Both Sahela Selassie and Haile Malakot were on friendly relations with the governors of Zeyla and Tadjura, and Haile Malakot appears to have had a commercial agent at Aden. Haji Ibrahim Shehem, often referred to as the messenger of the King of Shoa was probably not just a messenger but in fact a commercial agent.² Haji Ibrahim Shehem, it should be noted, had been a successful trader in the reign of Sahela Selassie and was the leader of the caravan by which the Harris Mission returned to the coast from Shoa in February-March 1843. Harris spoke of him as being "high in favour with Sahla Selassie".³

During Menelik's reign the king's trade with the coast became more regular and the volume increased. One reason for this was the opening of the Suez Canal, which made prospects of

¹Krapf and Isenberg in J.R.G.S. Vol. 10, 1840, pp. 466-7.

²IOL. Aden Secret Letters Received (Various) Vol. 32. Haines to Arthur Malet. Aden 22.3.1852, p.41. Same letter in FOI/7.

³IG 205 No. 1341 Harris 25 .3.1843, paras. 9, 13, 16.

trade in the Red Sea area easier and brighter than before. Another reason was the impetus which Menelik gave to the royal policy of territorial expansion which necessitated large stocks of imported firearms. Menelik's trading contact with the coast which may have started soon after his reconquest of Shoa took a serious turn with his appointment of Cesar Tian as his commercial agent in Aden in the Spring of 1871.¹ The agent appears to have worked hard at his post, for when Arnoux arrived at Aden in February 1874 on his way to Shoa, he met two of Menelik's men sent there to bring merchandise to Shoa.² By 1878 Tian had been replaced by Gabre Takle as Menelik's commercial representative in Aden.³ Gabre Takle, it should be noted, was one of the two "Shoan" officials who on the orders of Menelik accompanied Arnoux on the Mission to Europe with which the Frenchman was entrusted by Menelik in 1876. The other official was Joseph Negoussie, who was later to become Menelik's interpreter, secretary and roving commercial ambassador in the Somali and the Red Sea ports.⁴

¹IOL: Abyssinia Original Correspondence, Vol. 3. Menelik to (British) Resident at Aden dated 29 Ma'azia 1863) (May 1871); and Resident at Aden to Menelik 30.9.1871.

²L.L.Lande: Art. Cit. in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30. Dec. 1878, p.880.

³M.&D. (Afrique) Vol. 62. Menelik to President of France 15.6.1878, p.260.

⁴ASMAI. 36/--4 Sebastino Martini. "Promemoria" dated Cairo 22.3.1877.

It was seen in Chapters III and IV that Menelik strove hard to maintain friendly relations with the chiefs of the Afar tribes through whose territory the routes from Shoa to the coast passed; and that he encouraged the French and the Italians to open up ports at Obock and Assab as outlets for the trade of Shoa. It was also suggested that this encouragement had something to do with the Egyptian occupation of Tadjura and Zeila, the ports which had hitherto been used by Shoa, and the blockade which was instituted there. Menelik's desire to obtain a port free from Egyptian control for Shoa's trade was sharpened by the humiliating treatment meted out to Arnoux by Abu Baker, the Egyptian governor of Zeila. Menelik had furnished Arnoux with merchandise estimated by the Frenchman at about 200,000 Francs to take to Europe as an evidence of what Shoa could provide for European markets. When Arnoux arrived at Zeila in August 1876 all the merchandise was confiscated and he himself imprisoned for three months by Abu Baker. Persistent appeals from Menelik obtained only Arnoux's release without restitution.¹ There can be little doubt that

(cont.) The two Abyssinians did not continue to Europe but returned to Shoa from Cairo. Joseph Negoussie's full name was Joseph George Gabra Sellassie Negoussie.

¹M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62. Arnoux to President MacMahon, Cairo 5.1.1877, pp. 274, 282-3. ASMAI 36/1-4, Arnoux to M.A.E. Roma 10.6.1878.

the fear of a repetition of this behaviour by Abu Baker induced Menelik to look for ports free from Egyptian control as outlets for his commerce.

From about 1879 caravans carrying merchandise belonging to the King arrived at the coast at least once a year. The organisation of the caravans was the duty of Azaj Walde Tsadek who, in addition to being the governor of Ankober, could also be considered as the Minister for commerce. Azaj Walde Tsadek is often referred to in the sources as the Prime Minister of the Kingdom. Prime Minister is probably a misleading phrase, but clearly he was an important official. It is not an exaggeration to say that Azaj Walde Tsadek was in the civil administration what Ras Gabana was in the military sphere. As Azaj to the King Walde Tsadek was the administrator general of the royal domains. As governor of the province of Ankober in which the important markets of Aliu Amba and Abdel Rassul were situated and after April 1884, also of the province of Ifat, he was responsible for customs dues and market taxes and had general oversight over commerce with the coast and foreign merchants in the Kingdom. In this last capacity Walde Tsadek was responsible for the accommodation and dirgo (daily maintenance) of Europeans who visited the Kingdom.¹ The multifarious

¹Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 421-2 and passim. Audon: art.cit. in Le Tour du Monde, 2e semestre 1889, p.124, 128. Soleillet: Voyages, p. 116 and passim. Aubry: art. cit. in B. de la S. de Géographie 7e Serie Vol. VIII, 1887, pp. 460-1. Borelli: op.cit. p.85 and passim.

nature of his responsibility became obvious during Cecchi's imprisonment in Gheem when every single instruction or step taken in Shoa toward his liberation passed through Walde Tsadek.¹

The organisation of a caravan was a big affair and took many weeks. The pattern and procedure were the same for individual traders as well as for the King's trading agents. First of all the merchandise had to be assembled. For the royal agents this was easy since much of the goods consisted of articles over which the King had a monopoly and came directly from the royal stores. It should also be mentioned that gold, ivory, civet, musk and other articles were paid into the royal treasury as tribute by the conquered provinces. In addition the King had the right of pre-emption over all articles sold on markets in Shoa. After assembling the merchandise, the baggage animals needed to transport them to the coast were found before food and water for both animals and caravan guides were collected. All this was more difficult and more expensive for the individual merchant than for the royal agents. On many occasions the royal caravan was led by the Danakil chief Sheik

¹Antinori's letters in ASSGI Cartoni VIII(A)(B).

Abdel Rheman who was not always on friendly terms with the governor of Zeila. Menelik's own relationship with Abu Baker were at times uneasy. Neither the King nor the governor could afford open hostilities because their commercial interests required that they should not come to an open breach.¹

In a number of cases merchandise carried by the King's caravans were transported to Jedda, Mokha and Aden for sale. On occasions, however, they were entrusted to a European to take to Europe for sale and to use the proceeds to purchase firearms for the King. Such was the case with the caravan entrusted to Arnoux in 1876. In September 1885 a French arms trader Labatut was furnished with a caravan by Menelik to go to Europe in quest of firearms.² Again in February 1886 another French trader Léon Chefneux was given a caravan and a similar assignment by Menelik.³ In 1877 when Menelik sent the Italian Martin-Bernardi back to Italy to look for arms, he did

¹The commercial activities of the Abu Baker family, the attitude of this family towards the Egyptian conquest and the various Europeans on the coast, the relationship between this family and the other Afar chiefs near the coast, and the effect of all this on the course of the attempts to prohibit first the slave and then the arms trade will require a separate study.

²Audon: Art. cit., pp. 139, 146.

³ASMAI 36/3-38. Maggior-Generale Gené to M.A.E. Massaua 13.4.1886. Audon: art.cit., pp. 146, 148.

not give him merchandise, but provided money to the tune of 7708 thalers towards the expenses of the journey. And when Martini returned to Zeila in 1879, Menelik sent to meet him a caravan of one hundred and forty to one hundred and fifty camels, of whom forty carried merchandise.¹

One gets an idea of the volume of the King's trade from an examination of the loads carried by some of the caravans. The sources make it clear that royal caravans were always large and heavily laden. The best information, however, comes from Arnoux. The caravan entrusted to him in 1876 was composed of one hundred and sixty-five camels, whose load consisted of 2100 kilog. of ivory, 1300 kilog. of civet, 6900 kilog. of coffee, 1950 hides, twelve kilograms of musk, one hundred and fifty kilog. of coal (for sampling) and other articles such as shields embossed with silver, horses and samples of minerals.² Horses and coal might not form part of the load of all the caravans sent to the coast by the King, but at least, Arnoux's figures indicate the diversity and

¹ASSGI. Cartoni VIII^C, Antinori. Ibid. Cartoni VIII^B(B) Carlo de Amezaga, Comando del R^o Aveso "Rapido", in Navigazione 30.5.1879.

²M. & D. (Afrigue) vol. 62. Arnoux to M.A.E. 23/7/1878, p.267. Also ASMAI. 36/1-4: Arnoux to M.A.E.I. Roma 10.6.1878.

the relative volume of merchandise carried by the King's caravans.

Although Menelik obtained some firearms in the manner described above, the bulk of his stock of imported weapons were traded to him partly by Antonelli and the Italian Government and partly by individual French traders, for which he paid partly in thalers but mostly in ivory and coffee in Shoa. The details of the flow of firearms into Shoa will be discussed in the next chapter; suffice to say here that firearms constituted the largest single stock of import from the coast during Menelik's reign. By 1889 when he became Emperor, Menelik had at least 60,000 guns of all kinds, one million cartridges and about one million percussion caps, and many barrels of gunpowder.

One often comes across letters in the French and Italian archives purporting to have come from Menelik and asking to become the protectorate of Italy or France. The writers or translators of those letters must have misunderstood the intentions of the King. Indeed one suspects that the question of protectorates was an invention of the European travellers who either wrote or translated those letters: The French , because they saw it as an inducement to goad their

Government to back up their commercial efforts; the Italians, because they wanted a pretext for acquiring a colony. Menelik himself regarded his relations with Europe as anything but political. He was too jealous of his position and had too ambitious an imperial plan to have sought to become a subject of a foreign power. That he did not intend to give away an inch of his territory or an iota of his independence was shown by the promptitude with which he denounced the treaty of Uccialli when he learnt that the Italians interpreted Article Seventeen as implying protectorateship. Menelik's own attitude to his relations with Europe was clear from the numerous letters which he sent to the European nations, and from the treaties which he signed with Italy and France. He made it plain in those letters and treaties that he wanted friendship based on commerce, industry, the arts and technology, all of which he wanted to see introduced into his kingdom. If he agreed to exchange diplomatic representatives or to avail himself of the services of the Embassies of his European friends in countries with which he had no contact, he did so not because he wanted to compromise his independence but because he believed that they would facilitate the realisation of his basic aims. Menelik was a nationalist with imperial ambitions himself

and could therefore not co-operate with the foreign imperialists. He made this clear in his dealings with Egypt and Italy when both countries were involved in hostilities with the Emperor Yohannes with whom Menelik's own relations were, for the most part, uneasy. And he again demonstrated it on becoming Emperor, when his determined policy not only of consolidation but also of territorial expansion brought home to the European imperialists that they had to sign boundary treaties with Menelik in order to safeguard their own colonial acquisitions.

As the boundaries of Shoa were extended and her commerce expanded, the wealth of the Crown increased. As initiator of the campaigns of expansion the Crown more than any individual inhabitant of the Kingdom benefitted from the wealth accruing from the conquest. The Crown derived revenue from four sources: from royal domains, from customs dues and market tolls, from direct taxation of the subjects, and lastly from tribute paid by the conquered territories. The absence of statistics makes it impossible to give accurate picture of the extent of revenue derived from each of these sources or of the total value of the Crown's annual income. Customs dues and market tolls must have been a very valuable source of income. Europeans who visited Shoa during our period remarked that on arriving at the frontier

town of Farre the foreigner was met by royal officials who took an inventory of his luggage and imposed a tax of ten per cent on the total value of the goods, either in kind or in currency.¹ If on entering the kingdom the visitor decided to sell his goods in Shoa markets rather than carry them to the countries beyond the frontiers of Shoa, he had to pay another tax of ten per cent for the privilege of selling his goods in the Kingdom.² In effect therefore any imported goods, except slaves, sold in Shoa, paid twenty per cent of their value in taxes to the Crown. Slave dealers, as we saw above, paid four amole on each slave brought in transit to the kingdom and another four if sold on markets in Shoa but by the 1880s both the transit duty and the market toll had risen to one thaler each. In the 1840s market dues collected on the Aliu Amba market alone was put at "not less than three thousand thalers annually".³ In 1888 the value of customs dues derived from Harar was estimated at 20,000 thalers.⁴ Considering the increase

¹See Chapter IV, pp.244-5

²See above, p.317

³LG 185 No. 4440 Baker, para. 18. LG 189 No. 2060G Harris, para. 40.

⁴Audon: art. cit., p.154.

in trade both in slaves and in other articles during the reign of Menelik, the total annual income from taxes on trade must have been at least 50,000 thalers.

Another valuable source of income for the Crown was tribute from the conquered and the tributary states. Much of this was paid in ivory, civet, musk, gold, and other local products and its value is consequently difficult to assess in thalers. In 1886 it was estimated that about 70,000 thalers worth of tribute was paid in hard cash annually. This figure must have soared greatly after the conquest of Harar for, on its conquest, an annual tribute of 50,000 thalers was imposed on the city.¹ Probably all of it was not paid in thalers but it is conceivable that part of it would be paid in hard cash. Although nearly all the gold that Menelik possessed was paid out by him as tribute to the Emperor, revenue which came to him as tribute from his dependent territories annually was probably not less than 200,000 thalers in value. It is not surprising therefore that Menelik was able to pay for the large stocks of firearms which he imported from the coast. It is neither an exaggeration nor an over-simplification to say that the greatest gains to Shoa during our period were in the economic field.

¹Borelli: op.cit., p.214. L. Robecchi-Bricchetti, "In Viaggio per Harrar" in N.A., Vol. XXX, Serie III, 16.11.1890.

Chapter VITHE ARMY

The territorial expansion which has been described in the foregoing chapters was largely the result of military action. In a few cases diplomacy or marriage alliances were used either to win over the rulers of a new territory or to strengthen Shoa's hold over a recalcitrant tributary province, but the bulk of the territorial additions was made through military campaigns. It is necessary, therefore, that the nature of the army which was responsible for these acquisitions should be made clear.

Plowden divides the Ethiopian society as he saw it in the 1850s into four distinct classes: the priest, the husbandman, the merchant and the soldier.¹ This division, in so far as it was realistic, could only apply to the northern provinces of the Empire, where not only rulers but nearly every nobleman had troops of their own. Since, from about 1750 to Plowden's time, wars were almost a daily affair in one district or another in those provinces, the armed retainers kept by the noblemen were constantly engaged in fighting, thereby becoming almost professional soldiers. Thus a distinctly warrior group could be distinguished in the northern society.

¹C.W.Plowden: Travels in Abyssinia, Lond. 1868, pp. 45, 58.

In Shoa, however, the situation was different. Priests indeed there were, but apart from the priestly group any attempt at social classification along occupational lines would be misleading. It was seen in the last chapter that there was hardly any indigenous merchant class in Shoa. Similarly, there was no distinctive warrior class. A standing army developed only very gradually and for the most part every subject of Shoa was at once a farmer, a soldier and less so a trader according to the times and the circumstances. At the initial stages of Shoa's history, those who fought for the ruler were naturally his kinsmen and admirers; but the number increased and became more varied in composition as the sphere of the ruler's influence widened until by the 1840s the King could put to the field a force of thirty to forty thousand men.¹ In the 1880s it was estimated that a total force of at least 130,000 and anything up to 196,000 men could be rallied for war by the King of Shoa.² Also by the opening of

¹ Krapf: Travels, Researches, etc., p.35. Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la côte orientale de la Mer Rouge etc., p.233.

² ASMAI 36/5-43: Antonelli to M.A.E. Addis Abeba, 23.11.1887. The whole of this file deals with the military organization of Shoa. Same document is printed in LV No. XV Et Étiopie, as Doc. 131 (Annesso). It must be noted that in the copy of the Green Book kept in the Foreign Office Library in London this document is 128. The copy used by the present writer to cross-check the ASMAI material is in the Library of the Museo Africano in Rome. Also ASMAI 36/5-40: Antonelli to M.A.E., Assab 31.8.1888. ASMAI 36/6-53: Antonelli to Crispi (the M.A.E.), Ghedem 26.3.1889. This despatch reports on Menelik's movements between 16th February and March 12, 1889 when the news of the Emperor's death reached him, and his subsequent manoeuvres.

our period, commitment to war had become an essential constituent of Shoa's strength and prosperity for in war lay territorial gains, slaves and livestock. A few of the wars, especially in the early stages of her development, may be said to have been defensive, but right from the time of the earliest rulers, Shoa was on the offensive.

During our period, excepting the period of the interregnum (1855-65), military campaigns were conducted two or three times a year in the spring and after the heavy rainy season (June to September).¹ The timing of the campaigns, like working on the fields, was generally dictated by the incidence of the rains. Campaigns conducted after the Keremt (heavy rains) were often the most serious and tended to last longest. This was probably because the period from the end of September to the beginning of January is, in Ethiopia, the driest in the year so that the weather was favourable to sustained campaigns.

Of the army that could be summoned to the field the most important section was undoubtedly that which constituted the royal troops. These were the warriors who were under the King's

¹IOL: LG 206 No. 1600 Graham, parag. 46. ASMAI 36/5-43: Antonelli, Addis Abeba 23.11.1887.

personal command during campaigns. The strength of the royal troops in the 1840s cannot be accurately estimated; it must have numbered a couple of thousands since it consisted of all the male servants in the royal palaces not only at Ankober but also at Angolala, Debra Berhan and Kundi where there were other palaces. Of the royal troops there was a core which was estimated at this time at about six hundred to one thousand men who formed the King's bodyguard.¹ This was the only part of the army that could be said to have been a standing force; it was they who were under arms almost permanently. In the 1840s they were said to have been divided into three groups relieving each other in rotation after one week's attendance at the Palace. While they were off duty they were expected to be in the neighbourhood of the Palace so that they could be summoned at a moment's notice if the need arose.² In any case, all the royal servants lived in the immediate neighbourhood of the Palace and quite a few even lived within the Palace enclosures. By the 1880s the strength of the royal troops had increased to at least 19,000 men of whom nine to twelve thousand constituted the royal body-

¹Krapf: Travels, p.35. Johnston: Travels in Southern Abyssinia etc., Vol. II, p.75.

²Johnston: op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 76-7.

guard.¹ The body guard was equipped directly from the royal arsenal and was, as a result, the best armed in the Kingdom. Until the 1840s, while matchlocks were the most modern weapons possessed by the ruler, it was the bodyguard who handled them. And in the early years of the 1840s when the King came to possess muskets, percussion caps, pistols and cannon it was they who had a monopoly of their use. There was at least one good reason to explain the special consideration which was given to the royal body guard in matters of armament. First of all, it should be understood that the bodyguard were the men directly responsible for the safety of the King not just on ordinary days but more so during campaigns. It was to be expected therefore that they had to be brave and devoted as well as well armed. Since there was not enough of the improved weapons to enable every warrior in the kingdom to have one, it was natural that preference had to be given to those on whom the safety of the King depended. During the reign of Menelik, when the King's stock of firearms increased, many more people besides the bodyguard and the royal troops as a whole gradually became armed with the improved weapons. However, even at this

¹ ASMAI 36/5-43: Antonelli Addis Abeba, 23.11.1887.

ASMAI 36/4-41: Antonelli to M.A.E., Entoto 19.9.1887.

Borelli: Ethiopie Méridionale, p. 214, Antoto 14.3.1887.

time the most modern and the best weapons were given to the bodyguard.¹ As a result, therefore, the bodyguard or rather the royal troops became a corps d'élite who decided the issue of a battle. There is frequent mention in the sources to the effect that the King added soldiers to those already commanded by a particular general and sent the latter on a campaign. It was from the royal troops that such soldiers were drawn. Their presence among the soldiers to whom they were added was intended to, and did, strengthen both the morale and the striking power of the ordinary warriors. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the development of a corps d'élite was not peculiar to Shoa nor indeed to Africa as a whole. The military history of many other peoples elsewhere shows similar development. It would seem to be a process inherent in the development of states with absolute rulers. In Africa, the Zulu empire built up by Shaka in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and the contemporary Kingdom of Buganda show strikingly similar developments.² In Buganda it led to

¹ ASMAI 36/5-43. Antonelli. ASMAI 36/4-41. Antonelli to M.A.E. Entoto 19.9.1887.

² See E. A. Ritter: Shaka Zulu (1st edition Lond. 1955) passim. L.A. Fallers (edt.) The King's Men (Lond., New York, Nairobi 1964) pp. 25-6, 110-113 and Chapters 5 and 6. M. S. Kiwanuka: The Traditional History of Buganda, London Ph. D. Thesis 1965, Esp. Vol. 2.

significant social and political changes. As the guardsmen distinguished themselves in bravery and devotion they were promoted as chiefs of districts and provinces; soon this new generation of chiefs, progressive and well armed, found themselves in conflict with the older and established chiefs. A delicate situation was thus created which flared up in 1888 in an uprising of the guardsmen against the conservative forces who at this time had found a strong ally in the Kabaka.¹ Shaka, whose bodyguard was not as well equipped as that of either Buganda or Shoa, escaped one assassination attempt at the hands of a member of the royal troops and eventually met his death through the instrumentality of another.² In Shoa, however, the Kings enjoyed the advantages inherent in the development of a corps d'élite but escaped its dangers, at least during our period. This was no mere accident and the explanation for it is to be found in the differences that existed between the nature of politics in Shoa on the one hand, and in Buganda or in Shaka's empire on the other hand. One source of difference was in the characters and the personalities of the various

¹Fallers: op.cit.

²Ritter: op.cit.

rulers. The three Kings whose reigns span our period were famous for their sympathy and benevolence and their courts were completely free from the executions and other atrocities that were so marked a feature of the court life in Buganda and in Shaka's Empire. The comparative effect of this difference was that whereas in Shoa an atmosphere of gaiety and mutual confidence marked the relations which existed between the ruler and his subjects, fear and anxiety pervaded every section of the society in Buganda and in Shaka's Empire. A similar contrast could here be drawn between Shoa and the rest of the Ethiopian Empire during the second half of the reign of the Emperor Theodros II. Another and perhaps more important source of difference was the nature of succession. This was closely linked up with the character of the rulers. In Shoa, as has been explained in Chapter I of this thesis, succession was hereditary and by primogeniture, so that, all things being equal, an orderly succession was always assured. This was an important factor for it explains why in Shoa succession disputes and the activities of rival claimants did not play any part in politics. Even the potentially serious threat which Mashasha Seifou's relations with the Emperor Yohannes posed for Menelik never really got off the ground.¹

¹See Chapter III.

In Buganda on the other hand, succession although hereditary in one clan was elective and succession disputes and the ambitions of rival claimants were the bane of the Kingdom and had no small effect on the policies of the Kabaka. An excellent illustration of this is to be found in the reign of the Kabaka Mutesa I (1857-84).¹ Shaka's problem was not so much succession disputes and rival claimants as the fact that he was in origin an unwanted bastard. Although born of noble parentage he was an outcast and his later achievements had no basis in his noble ancestry. The circumstances of his birth and upbringing haunted him throughout his life and accounted for his iron determination, like Joseph Conrad's hero Lord Jim, to redeem himself from his tainted past with some noble achievement. It was also responsible for his contemptuous attitude towards those he considered to be made of soft mettle and for the summary executions to which he put those who showed signs of weakness and cowardice during military campaigns. In giving free play to this aspect of his nature Shaka bred fear and uneasiness among his subjects and not least among his body-guard. One realises therefore that the tension which tended

¹See Kiwanuka: Thesis cited, Vol. 2.

to exist in the political life of Buganda or Shaka's Zulu Empire and which found expression and leadership in the royal troops was non-existent in Shoa. And its absence goes far to explain why in Shoa the corps d'élite remained faithful to the monarchs.

The Kings of Shoa were anxious to keep the goodwill of this important section of their army and treated them extremely well by the standard of the time. While on duty at the Palace the royal troops were fed from the royal kitchen, and in addition they were given what European observers considered to be a monthly salary. In the 1840s this was three to seven amole according to their length of service.¹ By the 1880s the basic monthly pay had been increased to four amole and seven doulla of grain. An additional six doulla of grain was added for each of the dependents the soldier might have. Although the soldiers themselves received their basic military outfit from the royal stores, they were by this time paid five, ten, fifteen or twenty thalers clothing allowance a year.² Since the royal troops were

¹Johnston: Travels, Vol. II, pp. 76-7.

²ASMAI, 36/5-43, Antonelli.

for the most part under arms there is little doubt that the clothing allowance was given in consideration of the soldiers' wives and children. Here one has an example of Menelik's progressive and liberal attitude towards his subjects. As was to be expected, the leadership of the royal troops had better remuneration than the rank and file, at least, in the sense that they had prospects of promotion to governorships outside the Palace. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that there was no particular class from which this leadership was drawn. Although Antonelli says that the leaders of the body-guard were drawn from the children of Shoan nobility,¹ a careful look at what is known of the background of some of the prominent leaders indicates that this was an exception rather than the rule. For example, Ato Berri who in the early 1840s was described as the Quarter-Master General of the royal troops was originally a Muslim pedlar. Again Ato Melko who was at the period the commander of the cavalry division of the body guard was the son of a petty Galla chieftain who was for a long time a sworn enemy of the Shoan ruler.² Similarly, Ato Makorie who was the

¹ASMAI, 36/4-41. Antonelli to M.A.E. Entoto 19.9.1887.

²IOL: IG 189 No. 2060 Harris 14.10.1842, paras. 29 & 40.

Turk Pasha (Basha), that is, commander in chief of the royal bodyguard, in 1887 was in origin not a "Shoan" but a Tigrean.¹ The policy of the Kings of Shoa of drawing their officials from all and sundry was not limited to the district and provincial governors but was also extended to the Palace officials. Thus any ordinary soldier in the divisions of the royal troops who distinguished himself by devotion and bravery soon found himself in the leadership of the royal army. And quite a few of this leadership got promoted to district or provincial governorships in the newly conquered provinces. One such example was Ato Makonen, the brave and devoted cousin of Menelik who in the 1870s was a member of the bodyguard and was said to be high in royal favour. Makonen so distinguished himself that by 1886 he had been promoted to a district governorship in the Metta Galla country and in 1887 became the governor of the very important province of Harar.²

During campaigns the body guard was commanded by the King personally but in the absence of the King it was commanded by the

¹ ASMAT, 36/5-43, Antonelli.

² L. Louis-Lande: "Un Voyageur Français...." in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 30, Dec. 1878, p. 896, 897. Borelli: op.cit., p.109, 236-40. For an interesting though not always referenced biography of Makonen see S. Pierre Pétridès: Le Héros d'Adoua: Ras Makonnen, Prince d'Ethiopie, Paris 1963.

Turk Pasha. In Ethiopia as a whole, the title Turk Pasha was given to the commander of a body of soldiers equipped with firearms; in Shoa, on the other hand, since it was only the royal bodyguard who, from the beginning, were so armed, the title came to be applied to only the commander of this cohort. The title was believed to have derived from the fact that it was the Turks who first introduced firearms to Ethiopia.¹

Although they were the best armed, the royal troops were only a fraction of the fighting force in the kingdom. The great majority of the soldiers who fought in the campaigns were ordinary peasants normally working on the land but enlisted whenever a campaign was organized. The military organization was very closely linked with that of the state. Each governor, as has been seen, owed the King a military duty and was expected to organize the able-bodied men resident in his territory to take part in the military campaigns. Each subject too had a duty to follow his governor into war. Some of the campaigns were ordered by the king, but others were undertaken on the governors' own initiative, especially to quell any rebellions that might break out in their territories; for, as has been shown elsewhere, it was part of a governor's duty to maintain law and order in his territory. Unlike

¹Borelli: op.cit., p.154. Soleillet: Voyages, p.98.

the practice in Buganda and other African Kingdoms where prior consultations with chiefs were usual, in Shoa campaigns ordered by the King were usually decided upon by the King alone. Nevertheless, there is evidence to indicate that in certain cases the King consulted with some of his chiefs before undertaking a campaign. For example, in the autumn of 1855 when the Emperor Theodros invaded Shoa, the King, Haile Malakot, consulted with his chiefs before declaring war against the invader.¹ Similarly, on 12th February 1878 when the invading forces of the Emperor Yohannes were already in Shoa, Menelik called a council of his governors and generals before deciding on the course of action to follow. The council decided against fighting and accordingly the King sent envoys to the Emperor to sue for peace.² However, the occasions on which such consultations took place were few and exceptional. A campaign was ordered for one of several reasons. Failure on the part of a tributary province to pay the usual tribute -- which in fact signified rebellion -- was one of the commonest excuses; pillaging of the caravans which brought goods to Shoa was another excuse for a campaign; an attack by an independent Galla tribe against a tribe which was

¹Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.251.

²Cecchi: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 415-21.

either subject, tributary or friendly to Shoa was yet another excuse for a campaign against the offending people. Whatever the immediate pretext, each of the campaigns must be considered as part of a wider scheme of expansion, the more so since nearly every campaign led to annexation of new territory.

Having decided on a campaign, the King announced his intentions to his subjects by causing a nagarit (kettle or war drum) to be beaten. The sound of a nagarit drew large crowds to the palace gates, since the drum was used both for proclaiming wars and for announcing appointments.¹ The news was then given in one of many well known formulae, as for example:

"Hear oh, hear! Your sovereign hath enemies and would trample them in the dust two and twenty days from this date. Let every soldier present himself accoutred for an expedition for one month on pain of forfeiting his property for seven years."²

Generally this proclamation would be made at the place where the King happened to be, but since each governor in the kingdom

¹IOL: LG 189 No. 2060 Harris 14.10.1842, parag. 36.
ASMAI: 36/5-43, Antonelli.

²IOL: LG 193 No. 2919, Harris, 10.6.1842, parag. 21.
Also LG 189 No. 2060, Harris, 14.10.1842, parag. 36.
Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p.250. ASMAI 36/5-43, Antonelli.

was expected to join the expedition, one would suppose that messengers were sent to give the news to the governors in the province. It is clear from the proclamation that soldiers were responsible for providing themselves with equipment and provisions for a campaign. Unlike the practice in the northern Christian provinces of the Empire where soldiers depended on indiscriminate pillaging for their support during campaigns, soldiers in Shoa were prohibited to touch the property of subject or tributary peoples although they could pillage an enemy tribe. The provisions and weapons needed to last a campaign were therefore carried by women and boys who followed their masters into the battlefield and constituted the numerous body of camp followers which was so conspicuous a feature of an Ethiopian army in general.¹ And any firearms which might have been furnished by the governors to any of their followers had to be returned to the governor as soon as the campaign was over.

One would have thought that the campaigns would be a bother to the peasant soldier, for not only did he have to provide himself with provisions and weapons, but he was also taken away from his peaceful work on the land and exposed to the danger of

¹ Arnauld d'Abbadie: Douze ans de séjour dans la haute Ethiopie, Paris 1868, pp. 252-3. Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.357. ASMAI, 36/5-43. Albert Hans: "L'armée de Ménfik!" in R. des deux Mondes, 15.6.1896, p.871.

death no matter how slight the danger might have been. On the contrary, the ordinary "Shoan" found the campaigns very welcome since they offered him the opportunity to show his prowess and devotion to the state. The hierarchical and competitive nature of Shoan society had this effect that each individual strove to excel others in valour during the campaigns. This was because the greatest and most general rewards came as a result of courageous display in wars. This aspect of the military system of Shoa will be elaborated later in this chapter.

When a campaign was announced a rendezvous was given where all the troops had to meet. From here the whole group followed the king without any knowledge of where they were being led to, for the kings generally kept the destination of a campaign a guarded secret. If the king did not himself accompany any particular expedition, then **only** the governor general or commander-in-chief was entrusted with the secret of the destination and the strategy of the expedition. This, it should be noted, was also the practice followed by Shaka.¹ The purpose was to prevent any news of the impending expedition leaking out to the enemy,

¹E.A.Ritter: op.cit. (Panther 1961 Edition) p.154.

for the element of surprise was one of the powerful weapons by which the "Shoans", like Shaka's subjects, achieved military success.

It is clear from the sources that there was not much order or discipline during the march or when camping. At the camp only the King and the governors slept in tents; the rank and file as well as the camp followers had no tents and found shelter as best they could.¹ This probably was the reason why the dry season was considered the best time for making campaigns; it also explains, in part at least, why campaigns were generally short lived, for the soldiers could not be so exposed to the rigours of the Ethiopian climate for any length of time. These two suggestions are strengthened by the fact that the fifth campaign organised to the Arussi country in May 1886 which in effect, lasted throughout the rainy season, took the heaviest toll of the Shoan soldiers.²

Although the campaigns were usually short lived they were, nevertheless, generally a great success. The explanation

¹ IOL: LG 189 No. 2060B Harris 29.10.1841, parag. 49.
ASMAI: 36/5-43 Antonelli.

² Guèbrè Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 234-7. Borelli: op.cit., p.135. Traversi: "Viaggi negli Arussi" in BSGI (Serie II- Vol. XII), Anno XII Vol. XXIV 1887, pp. 274-6, See also: Ch. 3, pp. 202-3 above.

for this is to be found in two related factors. The possession of firearms by the "Shoans" was undoubtedly a factor, but it could not have been decisive until about 1880 when the supply began to increase. Until that date matchlocks were in use, but even this stock was limited to the royal troops who were after all only a small part of the total fighting strength of the Kingdom. Although Sahela Sellassie possessed pistols, a detonating double barrelled gun and a couple of cannon,¹ he did not, as Rochet d'Héricourt has remarked, use them as instruments of war. Instead, he only put them on display during feast days when their frightening detonation gave the ceremonies an atmosphere of solemnity and raised his reputation in the eyes of his subjects.² The success of the Shoan campaigns before about 1880 must therefore be sought in factors other than firearms. One of the factors was the weakness of the Galla tribes themselves. It was remarked in Chapter I that by the beginning of the Shoan expansion the Galla had lost whatever unity they had had and had degenerated into numerous petty tribes mutually hostile. The effect of this was that when one of these

¹See below

²Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p,128.

tribes was invaded by the "Shoan" soldiers it found itself caught between either submitting timidly to the invaders or offering resistance knowing full well that the odds were heavily in favour of the invaders. Calling on her neighbours for help was usually out of the question. Even if the neighbouring tribes happened to be friendly to the invaded tribes the former must have been generally reluctant to help for fear that by so doing they would themselves incur the enmity of the Shoan king. The result of the mutual hostility between the various Galla tribes was that often they found security and peace either as subjects, tributaries or allies of Shoa and were only too willing to fight for Shoa against other Galla tribes. By the opening of our period therefore, Shoa could put into the battlefield a force vastly superior to what any of the surrounding Galla tribes could muster. And this was the second factor which made for the success of the campaigns of Shoa. In Africa at that period when the shield and the lance were a common factor to both the invader and the invaded, numerical superiority was the determining factor on the battle field. And what with Shoa's strategy of surprise attacks the Galla enemy was often a helpless loser. In most of the campaigns, therefore, the Shoan warriors met with virtually no resistance

and they massacred and pillaged their way through the enemy territory burning down whole villages and leaving nothing of worth behind.¹

Nevertheless, not all the campaigns were a walkover for Shoa, for there are examples of expeditions which met with a fierce and determined resistance. The campaign conducted to the Motta Galla country in January 1840 which was accompanied by Rochet d'Héricourt was one such example. The Galla, although they knew that they were overmatched, fought gallantly, killing thirty and wounding ninety of the invaders before finally admitting defeat.² And quite a few of the campaigns conducted in the first half of Menelik's reign met with only partial success. This was partly because by that time Shoan frontiers were approaching the best organised of the Galla tribes; it was also partly because by then campaigns were conducted on different fronts at the same time so that the number of soldiers that could be put to the field against a particular Galla province was limited. Even in the 1880s when increasing stocks of firearms had strengthened the striking power of Shoa, it sometimes took more than one campaign to a particular province before the desired

¹IOL. LG 189 No. 2060B Harris, 29.10, 1841, parags. 22-23.

LG 185 No. 1440 Barker, 15.12.1841. Rochet: Second Voyage, pp. 165, 174-180. B. N. (Paris) NAF. 10222: Massaia's letter dated 13.2.1879. ASNAI 36/5-43; Antonelli.

²Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la côte Orientale de la Mer Rouge, etc. pp. 242, 233-255.

success was achieved. But when it came to serious military manoeuvres the "Shoans" rose to the occasion and proved that they were not only adept in surprise attacks but could successfully live up to a sustained and determined resistance. This was reflected in the battle against Godjam in June 1882.¹ It was even better reflected in the campaigns to the Arussi country where the "Shoans" met with what was probably the most determined resistance in the history of their kingdom. The first four campaigns conducted between January 1881 and December 1885 met with very little success but Shoan casualties were heavy.² The fifth expedition achieved success only after four months of continuous campaigning during which the Arussi killed over seven hundred "Shoans" in a single attack.³ And it needed a strong garrison under Ras Dargue to defeat the Arussi to a final submission. The success of Arussi resistance was due to the fact that the two factors which made for Shoa's victories elsewhere were here both conspicuously absent. Unlike many of

¹Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 176-180.

²Sellassié: op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 171-2, 209. Audon: "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde 2e Semestre 1889, p.146.

³Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 233-6. Traversi: Art Cit., pp. 274-6.

of the Galla tribes surrounding Shoa, the Arussi were fairly well organised, so that the invaders were feeling not with a petty tribe surrounded by hostile neighbours but with a comparatively united people. Moreover, since the Arussi were somewhat organised they were able to put to the field a force numerically superior to that of the invaders.¹ The breakdown of Arussi resistance was in the final analysis due to the superior armament of the invaders.

It is often said in the sources that the object of the campaigns was to plunder the enemy's land of cattle, women and children (and to induce him to pay regular tribute) and that the object of a campaign was achieved if large booty in live-stock and "slaves" was brought back home. Further, the rulers are criticised for failure to annex and garrison the subdued Galla tribes, and to this failure was attributed the occasional revolts which broke out in the peripheral provinces.² This criticism does not stand a closer examination of the facts. As to the object of the campaigns, it must be noted that the emphasis is here misplaced. It is true that thousands of cattle and war captives were brought back from the campaigns; for example, an expedition conducted in September 1841 to the Finfinni district

¹See Chapter III, pp. 212-3.

²See for example: IOL LG 189 No. 2060B Harris, 29.10.1841, parag. 34, Traversi: art. cit. in BSGI, Anno XXI - Vol. XXIV, 1887, p.272.

(where Antoto or Addis Ababa was later to be founded) returned with 14,042 head of cattle.¹ Another expedition which was made to the Soddo Galla country in March-April 1843 returned with what must have been an exaggerated figure of 87,000 head of cattle.² In October 1876 when the Antinori Mission arrived in Shoa, the King was on a campaign but he returned a few days later with 17,000 to 18,000 head of cattle.³ Similarly a campaign conducted by Mashasha Seifou, governor of the Soddo province in 1878 to quell a rebellion captured six to seven thousands head of cattle, some ivory and three to four thousand "slaves" of both sexes.⁴ However, these must be considered as the outcome rather than the object of the campaigns. The real object of the campaigns, as was seen in chapters one and three, was many sided but did not include the capture of booty, although admittedly this was an inducement to the ordinary subject of the kingdom to take part in the wars.

¹IOL. IG 189 No. 2060D. Harris 27.11.1841, parag. 1.

²Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage p.210.

³Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.174.

⁴Cecchi: op.cit., pp. 491, 497, 506.

As regards annexation and garrison in the conquered provinces examples are many. Before the reign of Menelik an army of occupation in the conquered provinces was rare but not unknown. It was rare because the Kings did not have nearly enough soldiers at their disposal to be able to spare some to garrison the various provinces which had been conquered. Nevertheless, a new Katana (town) was built in each newly conquered district and given to "Shoan" subjects for occupation. There are numerous examples of this in the sources. These new towns must be seen as frontier posts whose inhabitants, under the shums or the governors, served as garrisons. This, for example, was how Harr Amba, Kundi and Ankober itself had originated in the eighteenth century; similarly this was how Angolala and Cholie, in the Soddo country, grew up in the reign of Sahela Sellassie, and Litche and Addis Ababa in the reign of Menelik.¹ During the reign of Menelik when the number of soldiers that could be brought to the field had increased, garrison forces in conquered districts became an essential element in the process of expansion. These forces, together with their dependants, occupied the

¹See Chapter I.

frontier towns and served as an army of occupation. The frontier towns were usually built on an elevated spot. There were two advantages to be derived from such a location. First, from its higher location the town commanded a panoramic view of the surrounding area so that any suspicious movements of the conquered inhabitants could be detected in time and forestalled. Secondly, the elevation gave the town an element of impregnability against any sudden attack by the conquered people. And as if the elevation was not enough for its defence, the town was surrounded by a strong palisade. When the Metta Galla district was conquered in the 1870s Dandy was built as a frontier town and was occupied by a garrison under Fitaurari Garrado, a chief who commanded Ras Gobana's advance guard. The palisade around Dandy was said to be high and entry into the town was by two gates only.¹ Galamso, the katama of Dedjaz Walda Gabriel in the Tsiatsiar country, Boroma that of Ras Dargue in the Arussi region, and Sayo, that of Fitaurari Odadjou in Wallaga were all said to have been similarly garrisoned.² Arnoux gives a lucid account of the location and

¹Aubry: "Une Mission au Choa et dans les pays Galla" in Bull. de la Société de Géographie 7e serie Vol. VIII, 1887, pp. 472-3.

²Aubry: Ibid. Borelli: op.cit., pp. 130, 229-30.

garrison at Warra Ilu which was built by Menelik to safeguard his conquests in the Wallo region. Built on an elevated spot and admirably fortified on all sides by high strong palisades, Warra Ilu was, in the middle of the 1870s, occupied by an army of about 40,000 men.¹ And when Harar was conquered in 1887 a well equipped army of four thousand men was left behind under Dedjaz Makonen as a garrison. Indeed, it is clear from the sources that in the reign of Menelik armies of occupation were stationed in all the conquered provinces. A careful analysis of the estimates provided by Antonelli indicates that in the 1880s a total of, at least, fifty thousand soldiers were scattered in the various provinces as garrison.² It is inaccurate therefore to say that the conquered provinces were left without any garrison. The revolts which used to break out were not due to the absence of garrisons. It is certain that but for the armies of occupation there would have been more revolts than actually occurred. Incidentally, it was the existence of those garrisons which created the problem for which an answer was found in the gabbar system.

¹Lande: "Un Voyageur Français" in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Dec. 1878 pp. 889-90. See also Soleillet: Voyages, p.92.

²ASMAI 36/5-43 Antonelli. See also Borelli: op.cit. passim.

The general question which needs to be examined is what happened to the inhabitants of the conquered provinces. The problem of the gabbar is only one aspect of this question. No simple answer can, however, be given to the question. For military as well as political reasons it was unsafe for the conquering state to leave the conquered people in peaceful occupation of their lands. Yet there was a limit to the number that could be absorbed into the society of the conquering state. In some parts of Africa, the solution to this problem was found in the disposal of the conquered peoples as marketable commodities to the slave traders. Such, for example, was the practice in Dahomey. In Shoa, on the other hand, selling into slavery was not adopted as a solution to the problem since, as has been seen, the King and his officialdom did not trade in slaves and the slave trade was in the hands of those who had nothing to do with the expansion of the Kingdom. It has also been seen that the Christian population of Shoa could not, by law, be sold into slavery. It is not inconceivable, although there is no specific mention of it in the sources, that some people adopted Christianity if only to escape being sold into slavery. This would be particularly so with the people who lived near the frontiers of Shoa. Further, it is clear from the sources that

Generally speaking peace and order was brought into the conquered regions as a result of Shoaan expansion. It could be inferred from this that as the frontiers of Shoa expanded to incorporate more of the regions from which slaves were taken, the area of supply receded and became more and more limited. Thus, it may be concluded that, far from contributing to the expansion of the trade in slaves as was the case elsewhere in Africa, the territorial aggrandizement of Shoa in fact helped to limit that trade. If the diminution was not as significant as it could have been it was because the indirect economic interest which the kings of Shoa had in the trade restricted their actions and induced them to condone the trade when possible.

In Shoa, the solution to the problem mentioned above was found in two ways. The first was, of course, that a considerable number of the enemy was killed off during the campaigns. It has been seen that it was usual for the "Shoans" to burn down whole villages. One suspects that quite a few of these villages must have had their entire population killed off. In the campaign conducted to the Finfinni district in 1841 which has been cited already the invaders were said to have killed four thousand and six hundred of the invaded Galla.¹ During the Arussi campaign of

¹ICL IG 189 No. 2060D Harris 27.11.1841, parag. 1.

1886, a single battle fought on September 6 terminated with six thousand and more of the Arrusi left dead on the battlefield.¹ Considering the fact that, with the exception of the period 1855-65, campaigns were conducted two or three times annually it is not improbable that at least one quarter of the total original population of the conquered provinces was killed in the course of the conquest.

The second solution had to do with those who survived the campaigns. Of these some were taken captives to Shoa where they were recruited to swell the royal troops and also the troops of the various governors. Thus there must have been considerable population movement. The law required that war captives should be liberated after seven years. It is known that Sahla Selassie did liberate some of his captives. In the letter which Menelik sent to the European powers in 1878 he mentioned that he had liberated a number of his captives, five thousand on one occasion and twenty thousand on another, and had sent them all back to their original homes.² By the time the war captives were manu-

¹Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, pp. 236-7. Martial de Salviac: Le Galla, pp. 333-5. According to information given to M. de Salviac by the Arrusi some years after the battle their losses were not six thousand but twelve thousand (probably must be accepted only as an indication of how bloody the battle was).

²IOL: IG 194 No. 3077 Harris to Willoughby, 20.8.1842, parag. 11. See for example: LV No. XV. Etiopia Doc. 37, Menelik to S.M. Umberto I, Litché 28.11.1878.
IOL: IG 204 No. 1144 Harris to Willoughby 30.11.1843 parag. 28.

mitted they would have begun to feel at home in their new homes. Those who happened to show exceptional military prowess during the King's campaigns would have at least started winning royal favours. In such circumstances it is conceivable that some of the liberated captives would prefer to remain in the comparative prosperity of the master's home to going back to settle in the province from which they had been uprooted for at least seven years.

Those who survived the campaigns but escaped capture remained on the land to pay tribute to the conquerors and to form the peasant-soldier division of Shoa's army. It would seem that it was these people who became attached to the governors and their soldiers as gabbars. In view of what has been said above, one would suspect, however, that much of the governor's official estate consisted of unoccupied lands, that is, land whose original inhabitants had either been killed off or taken captives to Shoa. In any case, in Africa in those days, some unoccupied land was always to be found, though it was not without an "owner" as some of the European imperialists were inclined to think. The conquered people whose villages happened to be situated in a governor's official estate became his tenants and paid him tribute both in labour and in kind. Similarly if any liberated war captives returned to

settle on their original lands they now became tenants of the "Shoan" governor of the district. It was by means of the products of these official estates that the governors maintained their garrisons. Presumably the estate was worked partly by the soldiers and partly by the gabbar. The gabbar system then was a form of a compromise device by which the state catered for the increasing number of soldiers who were gradually becoming divorced from the land without interfering unduly with the agricultural pattern and prosperity of the kingdom.¹

The subjects of the kingdom joined in the campaigns not so much for fear of the punishment, which was invariably mentioned in the proclamation, as for the prospects of booty and promotion which the campaigns offered. Two-thirds of the booty brought back from the campaign were reserved for the king and the remainder was given to the governors and the rank and file.² But it was not the booty alone which attracted the ordinary soldier for his share of it could not have amounted to much. What was more attractive to the soldier was the opportunity it offered to show personal prowess. In Shoa, as in other African kingdoms, the triumph which attended the return of a warrior from battle was dependent on the number of trophies that he brought

¹See Chapter IV p. 249 n. 2.

²ASMAI, 36/5-43. Antonelli.

back with him. For each enemy killed in battle he was entitled to some conspicuous personal badge, a ring, a feather, or a bracelet, and with these he rose accordingly in the estimation of his relatives and fellow warriors. A signal success frequently paved the way to a royal preferment and a governorship in a province.¹ This was what the subjects aspired to and the opportunity to prove one's merit came during the military campaigns.

On return from a successful campaign it was usual for the King to feast the whole army, probably each province at a time. The account given in the sources of these feasts makes it clear that they were big affairs and took the best part of a day. Thousands of livestock, barrels of tejj (beer) and numerous basketfuls of injera (a kind of pancake) were consumed at each feast.² These feasts, together with the system of rewards for meritorious display on expeditions, were devices calculated to win the support of the subjects for the campaigns of expansion. The extent to which they achieved the desired effect was reflected in the enthusiasm with which the subjects welcomed the campaigns and the devotion with which they fought to win the battles.

¹IOL: LG 189 2060B. Harris 29.10.1841, parag. 34-5.
ASMAI: 36/5-43. Antonelli.

²Rochet d'Héricourt: Voyage sur la côte orientale de la Mer Rouge, pp. 153-5 (for feast held in 1840). Soleillet: Voyages pp. 104-5 (for feast held on 26.10.1882). Aubrey: art cited pp. 468-9 (for feast held in Sept. 1883). Borelli: op.cit. pp. 152-4 (for feast held on 17.10.1886): pp. 255-6 (for feast held early in Oct. 1887).

There is frequent mention in the sources, especially during the reign of Menelik, of Gondarē (or Gondaris) and Tigreans in the service of the King of Shoa. These "northerners" were said to have had both political and military significance. Politically, they were believed to have been spies for, or at least sympathetic to, the Emperor's policy towards Shoa. It was said that under the guise of volunteers in the Shoan army, they constituted a powerful pressure group both in and out of the Court, and that their pro-imperial sympathies considerably weakened Menelik's freedom of action in his relations with the Emperor. It was believed that Menelik's wife, Wayzero Taitu, herself a northerner, was the unofficial head of this party. The marriage between Taitu and Menelik which took place in April 1883 was initiated by the Emperor, with the intention, so it was believed, of planting a person sympathetic to him at the very centre of Menelik's court.¹

That "northerners" held posts in the Court and in the provinces cannot be denied. Menelik's principal interpreter and "secretary" Joseph Negoussie was by origin a Tigrean churchman

¹ASHAI, 36/3-38 Antonelli to M.A.E. Entoto 11.5.1886.
Lande: art. cit., in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Dec. 1878, pp. 890-1, 893.

who had been associated with the Lazarites there, had later given up religious life and had come to Shoa where his knowledge of French made him an invaluable asset to the King.¹ Makorie who held the post of Turk Pasha (Commander-in-Chief of the royal bodyguard) in 1887 was also a Tigrean.² Similarly, Mashasha Warkie who in 1887 was governor of the district of Derra and commanded a force of two thousand soldiers was a Tigrean.³ Mashasha Warkie, it will be remembered, was the man who, together with the Abuna Mateos, was sent on a mission by Menelik to the Emperor in 1887. There were many others including Mangasha Atikem from Agaumeder, two of the sons of Ras Ali, the former ruler of Amhara province, Mashasha, son of the Emperor Theodoros, Dedjaz Sejum and Dedj Guangual, to mention only a few.⁴ It is, however, difficult to prove that they were spies for the Emperor, or even that they were, on the whole, more sympathetic to the Emperor than to Menelik. For one thing, many of them are merely mentioned by name without any information being given about them. And the information we have about some of the better known ones

¹Borelli: op.cit. p. 105 Antoto 19.7.1886. Propaganda Archives (Rome): S.R.nei C. Vol. 10 Taurin to Cardinal Massaia, Harar 18.7.1889.

²ASMAI 36/5-43 Antonelli.

³ASMAI, Ibid, Antonelli. ASMAI, 36/4-42, Antonelli to M.A.E., Addis Abeba 9.10.1887. Borelli: op.cit., p.258, Antoto 18.10.1887.

⁴Massaia: I.Hiei, Vol. II, p.204; Vol. XI, p.26. ASMAI, 36/5-49, (cont.)

is not nearly enough to enable one to say anything conclusive. Of the prominent ones named here, Waizero Taitu was represented as being anti-European.¹ If this were true, it would probably be the sentiment or factor which could be found to link her to the Emperor, Yohannes, who was also opposed to the presence of the Europeans in Shoa partly on religious grounds and partly because he believed that they were Menelik's political advisers. Beyond this there is little else that could be said since there is no information to indicate that Taitu was an informant for the Emperor. Mashasha Warkie according to Massaia, was on friendly terms with the Emperor.² If it was true, it probably explains why he was chosen as one of the two men sent on the mission to the Emperor in October 1887. And according to Wylde he even entered the Emperor's service in 1884.³ The indications are that of the prominent ones named here only Mashasha Warkie could be pointed at with some justification as having been sympathetic to the Emperor's attitude to Shoa. Apart from Mashasha Warkie, the evidence available suggests that, with the exception of

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(cont.) Anjonelli. Lande: art.cit. in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Dec. 1878 pp. 878-9, 890-1. Sellassié: Chronique, Vol. I, p.129, 183.

¹See Footnote 2, p.376 above.

²Massaia: op.cit., Vol. XI, p.26.

³A. B. Wylde, '83 to '87 in the Soudan, Lond. 1888, Vol. I, p.268.

Waizeru Taitu, all the "northerners" named here (and possibly most of the northerners in Shoa) were either deserters or fugitives who, for one reason or another, had fled their original homes to seek safety in Shoa. Besides those who fled the territories which were under the Emperor's direct rule for their own offences, as for example, Joseph Negoussie and Alaka Birru, there were others who thought it unsafe to live there because of their relations with former rulers of those provinces. Among these would be the two sons of Ras Ali and the son of the Emperor Theodros. Indeed, such were Menelik's relations with the Emperor Yohannes that Shoa at this time offered the greatest security to deserters and refugees of all kinds from the northern provinces. It will be misleading, therefore, to suggest that the northerners who were in Menelik's service in Shoa were political agents for the Emperor.

Militarily, the northerners were a great asset to Shoa, especially during the early years of Menelik's reign when his "Shoan" forces were not well organized. At that time the northerners appear to have been enlisted mainly in the royal troops and were equipped with firearms. This is not surprising, because the northern provinces of the Empire were always better supplied with firearms so that Menelik must have found the northerners better at

handling guns than the "Shoans". In this connection it should be noted that enlisting people from the northern provinces as soldiers in Shoa had been practised long before the reign of Menelik. The earlier rulers of Shoa had employed matchlockmen from the north, and Sahele Sellassie had even enlisted some Wallo gunmen in his service.¹ In 1875 the northerners in Menelik's service were described as the finest warriors in Shoa. And when speaking of them to Arnoux, Menelik proudly remarked thus: "If I had 10,000 of those men I would become the master of the whole Ethiopia".² As Menelik's stock of firearms increased and as more of his own subjects became proficient in their use, the military importance of the northerners as a group diminished correspondingly. By the 1880s the royal troops were composed almost entirely of war captives and fresher recruits and the backbone of the provincial garrisons were mostly Galla.³ It should also be noted that not all the northerners in Shoa were offenders or refugees. Some were men who had voluntarily come to Shoa to enlist in the King's army. This group of northerners was attracted

¹ IOL: LG 193 No. 2919 Harris 10.6.1842. See also Chapter I.

² M.A.E. M.&D (Afrique) Vol. 62 Arnoux's Journal, entry for 25.2.1875, p.353.

³ Cecchi: Da Zeila, Vol. I, p.417. ASMAI, 36/4-41 Antonelli to H.A.E. Entoto 19.9.1887.

to Shoa by the prospects of rich booty that they believed could be obtained as a result of the campaigns of expansion.¹ All the northerners, refugees, deserters and volunteers appear to have been constituted into one cohort, probably in order to prevent them from infecting the King's Galla troops with ideas of sedition and rebellion.²

Mention has been made of the part played by firearms in the Shoan conquests. We must now consider the rate at which firearms were imported into the Kingdom, and the effect, if any, which their introduction had on Shoan society.

In Chapter I we saw that the early rulers of Shoa imported matchlocks from the northern provinces of the Empire. There must have been a considerable stock of these weapons in Shoa by the accession of Sahla Selassie although the exact quantity is difficult to estimate. During the reign of Sahla Selassie the inflow of matchlocks increased considerably. This was partly because by this time the eastern route from Shoa to the coast at Tadjura and Zeila had become frequented and it

¹Borelli: op.cit., p.175, Antoto 29.11.1886. ASMAI, 36/5-43 Antonelli.

²Borelli: Ibid. Antonelli: Ibid.

is almost certain that some matchlocks were imported into Shoa directly from the coast. It was also partly due to the advent of the Europeans into the Kingdom in the 1830s and early 1840s. Individual travellers made gifts of guns and other articles to the King. But the largest single source of supply was the stock brought by the Harris mission on behalf of the Bombay Government and that brought by Rochet d'Héricourt on behalf of the French Ministry of War. The former consisted of three hundred muskets, one hundred pistols, two cannon, fifty pounds of gun powder, five thousand percussion caps and one detonating double barrelled gun.¹ The latter consisted of two cannon of four mountains each, fifty cannonballs, one hundred shot guns, fifty pistols, one hundred broadswords, three cuirasses, two carbines for light infantry, five muskets, together with their accessories.²

Attempts by HaileMalakot and the governors of the Inter-regnum to secure supplies of firearms from the Europeans on the coast appear to have met with no success.³ Similarly,

¹IOL. LG 195 No. 3197 Harris 1.8.1842. Krapf: Journal of Isenberg and Krapf, p.344. Rochet d'Héricourt: Second Voyage, p.344.

²M.A.E. M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 13, p.298. Rochet d'Héricourt: op.cit., pp. 127-8.

³See Chapter II.

Menelik's early efforts to get firearms from the coast met with a dismal failure.¹ It was not until about 1875 that the flow of arms into Shoa re-started. It has been assumed that Menelik derived some arms from the Khedive of Egypt. Pankhurst has even referred to the mission of Ras or Alaka Birru (Bourru) and that of a certain Boghos from Menelik to the Khedive with the purpose, at least in part, of getting firearms. And, quoting from Douin, the official historian of the khedive's reign, he has pointed out that the first batch of arms to Menelik was despatched from Egypt on September 19, 1875.² That Menelik sent missions or messengers to Egypt cannot be denied; but, while Douin's statement about the despatch of the firearms may well be true, it should nevertheless be pointed out that the arms in question do not appear to have reached Menelik. It should be noted that Ras Birru on his return journey from Egypt to Shoa travelled with the Egyptian expedition intended against the Emperor of Ethiopia, which was led by Munsinger Pasha and which was killed almost to a man by some Afar tribesmen; Munsinger and Ras Birru were among those who died.³ Moreover, Arnoux, who recorded the arrival in a

¹See Chapter III.

²R. Pankhurst: "Firearms in Ethiopian History (1800- 1935)" in Ethiopian Observer, Vol. VI, No. 1962 p.150.

³M.A.E.: M. &D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, p.375, Arnoux's journal for 26.12.1875. Also see Chapter III, pp 153-154.

Shoa of messengers from the Khedive with letters to Menelik in January 1876, does not say anything to indicate that they brought firearms with them.¹ Yet the circumstances were such that Arnoux could not have omitted to mention them, if arms had been brought.

It will be boring to record every single occasion on which guns, pistols or rifles were brought to Menelik, and only the important stocks will be mentioned in the account which follows. The purpose behind this enumeration of figures is not to try and calculate precisely how many rifles or pistols or other kinds of firearms Menelik possessed. Indeed it will be impossible to do this since not all the stocks which came to Shoa are known; even of those that are known the exact quantity of some are not known. The reason for recording the stocks known to have reached Shoa is partly to give an idea of the rate of inflow of firearms and partly to bring out some of the sources and the methods by way these firearms came into the kingdom.

Between the autumn of 1876 when the Italian Geographical Expedition led by Antinori reached Shoa and November, when Martini and Antonelli arrived in the kingdom, Menelik received a total of

¹M. & D. (Afrique) Vol. 62, p. 376 Arnoux's Journal, entry for 13.1.1876. Also Lande, 2nd Art. in Rev. des Deux Mondes, Vol. 31, 15.1.1879, p.380.

four hundred and forty seven shot guns, rifles, pistols, cannon, and at least twelve thousand cartridges from the Italian sources.¹

With the entry of Antonelli into the scene the flow of arms into Shoa assumed marked proportions. It was seen in Chapter III how he contracted privately to supply Menelik with two thousand Remington rifles and how this was fulfilled on his return to Shoa late in 1882 as an emissary of the Italian government. On this visit Antonelli is believed to have signed another private contract with the King to furnish him with fifty thousand Remingtons, but how much of this was actually supplied is not clear.² For Antonelli's second official mission to Shoa on behalf of the Italian government in 1884 three hundred and ninety six pounds' worth of firearms were brought from a London firm of gun manufacturers and sent on direct by the manufacturers to Aden from where they were forwarded on April 21, en route to Shoa. The stock consisted of a total of twenty one rifles and revolvers and seven thousand cartridges.³

¹C. Giglio: L'Italia in Africa (Roma 1956), Vol. I, pp. 138, 144-5, ASSGI: Cartoni VIB (G) Gabinetto Particolare di S.M. il Re d'Italia al Presidente della SGI. 27.2.1877; Cartoni VIIIB Antinori to President of SGI, Let-Marefia 9.6.1880. Antonelli to his family Let-Marefia, 29.3.1880 in BSGI, Serie II, Vol. V, 1880 p.458.

²Giglio: op.cit., Vol. I, p.273-4.

³ASMAI: 36/2-21: Count Nigra (Italian Ambassador in London) to Mancini dated London 12.4.1884. Ibid. Bienenfeld (Consul in Aden) to Mancini, Aden 16.4.1884.

The number of firearms sent from Italy to Shoa between 1885 and 1888 is difficult to pin down. A list of "gifts" drawn up in February 1888 and intended to be taken to Shoa by Ragazzi who was then back in Italy included six million percussion caps, one and a half million cartridges, and two machine guns.¹ Four days earlier the Ministry of War had reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that one thousand Remington rifles and 150,000 cartridges intended for Menelik had been packed into eighty cases and were at Naples awaiting embarkation for Aden.² It is not known to the present writer whether or not this stock and the proposed list were in fact sent to Shoa. The indications are that they were not dispatched, for when Ragazzi finally left Assab for Shoa in September he carried with him only sixty-two Remington rifles and six thousand cartridges which were sent to him by the Commander at Massawa on the orders of the Ministry of War. Ragazzi's request for 80,000 cartridges for Menelik was turned down by the Ministry of War on the grounds that, since Menelik had refused to attack the Emperor, it was prudent to wait a little and see what his real intentions might be. The refusal and the explanation for it were both subsequently approved by the Ministry of Foreign

¹ ASMAI: 36/5-45. Ministero della R. Casa. Elenco dated 7.2.1888.

² ASMAI: 36/5-45. M. della Guerra to M.A.E., 3.2.1888.

Affairs.¹

About July 1888 when Ras Areyä Selassie, the son and heir of the Emperor Yohannes, died, Menelik's chances of succeeding to the Imperial throne became very great.² In view of this Antonelli left Shoa in August for consultations in Italy. He returned to Addis Ababa on January 22, 1889 with instructions to sign an immediate treaty of friendship with Menelik should the latter become Emperor, and brought with him four thousand seven hundred Remington rifles and 220,000 cartridges. In addition he carried as gifts to Menelik, Ras Dargue, Ras Gobana, Dedjaz Makonen, Azaj Walda Tzadek and two other nobles a total of two hundred and sixty-eight guns of various descriptions and about two thousand cartridges.³

Although the word "doni" (gifts) was often used in the Italian official circles in relation to the firearms sent to Shoa, it should be noted that with a few exceptions, which were comparatively insignificant in number, all the stocks were paid

¹ ASMAI, 14/1-5. M. della Guerra to M.A.E. 21.2.1888. M.A.E. to M. della Guerra (ufficio d'Africa) 27.7.1888.

² See Chapter III, pp. 159-160

³ ASMAI, 36/5-48; Telegramma (Antonelli) to Governor of Assab dated Roma 29.9.1888; Ibid, Antonelli: "Nota dei doni per S.M. Menelik II, Re di Scioa", same date. Also Sellassié: Chronique Vol. I, p. 256, footnote 15.

for by Menelik in ivory and other "Abyssinian products".¹
 The use of the word "doni" was only a diplomatic subtlety intended to get the better of the attempts which were then being made by Britain to get the European powers concerned to put a ban on the arms trade into the interior of Africa. These attempts will be discussed later.

Apart from the Italians, Menelik had other sources from which he derived firearms. As had been the case in the reign of his grandfather, the King obtained gifts of arms from the European travellers who visited the Kingdom. For example, a little over four weeks after his arrival in Shoa, Borelli noted that he had given the King thirty-five of his personal firearms as gifts.² Admittedly arms received from this source could not have been much, nevertheless, considering the number of Europeans who visited Shoa during Menelik's reign, the stock must have been considerable. Also when Menelik conquered

¹See for example ASMAI 36/2-17: Menelik to Antonelli, Entoto 8.5.1884 where he wrote: "J'enverrais le prix entier de fusils avec la seconde caravane. Je ferai de manière de pouvoir contenter et vous et le Gouvernement Italien." Same doc. in LV XV Etiopia as Doc. 74 (Annesso I).

ASMAI 36/3-28: Antonelli to R. Commissario Civile in Assab dated Hori (Efrata) 19.1.1886. "Prima di lasciare lo Scioa incaricai il sig. Cesare Viscaroli di condurre in Assab una carovana di avorio dir S.M. il Re che mi fu data come parte del denaro che deve a me e ad altri. I denti erano 966 del peso di 5599 rotoli." Antonelli left Entoto on Dec. 10. 1885 with Menelik for Borumeda where the king was to meet the Emperor Yohannes.

See also: Chapter V, pp. 337, 339

²Borelli: op.cit., p.100, 104.

Harar, he took possession of the firearms which had been left to the Emir by Major Hunter who had supervised the evacuation of the Egyptian forces. The exact quantity of these arms is not known for certain. Borelli put the number at 600,000 cartridges, three thousand shrapnels and four Krupp Cannon, adding that the Cannon were left behind for the use of the Shoan governor of Harar.¹

Another valuable source of supply of firearms to Menelik besides the Italian Government was the individual arms traders, mostly French. Most of the Frenchmen who visited Shoa during Menelik's reign traded in arms, but the most important of them were Chefneux, Soleillet, Brémond, Labatut and Savoure. Between them these five Frenchmen sold several thousand guns, pistols and rifles to Menelik between about 1882 and 1889. Soleillet and Labatut both died in 1886 but the rest continued their activities into the 1890s. It is, however, impossible to give the exact figures of the firearms which reached Shoa. The figures available were taken either in Aden or in one of the Somali coast ports. Though it is probable that all the stocks mentioned at the coast reached Shoa intact, the known hazards of the journey from the Somali coast to Shoa make one hesitate before

¹Borelli: op.cit., p.214 Antoto 14.3.1887, p.266. Bienenfeld,
(cont.)

admitting this probability. On the other hand, there is no other way of arriving at a near satisfactory estimate since very few figures are given from Shoa itself. In the account which follows, therefore, it will be assumed, unless otherwise indicated, that the figures given at the coast all did reach Shoa.

On his first journey to Shoa (1882-4) Soleillet was reported by the British Consul in the Somali coast to have sold Menelik two hundred breach-loaders and two thousand muskets.¹ In February 1886 a consignment of military material belonging to Soleillet became the subject of correspondence between the British and the French Residents in Aden. The British Agent, to whom an application for trans-shipment permission was made, insisted on refusal while the French Vice Consul continued to plead for Soleillet. Eventually, however, the stock, consisting of two thousand one hundred rifles, 300,000 Remington cartridges

(cont.) probably basing his account on information from Sacconi, his agent in Harar, reported that Menelik took with him to Shoa two excellent Krupp cannon, two mountain cannon and an unspecified quantity of ammunition. ASMAI: 8/1-2. Bienenfeld to General Gené, Aden 12.2.1887. According to the Editor of Sellassié's chronicle, (Chronique I, p.248 footnotes 10 and 11.) Menelik took away two million cartridges but left behind two Krupp cannon for the use of his governor of Harar.

¹F.O. 78/3497: Major Hunter to Resident in Aden, 27.11.1882.

twelve pistols and one case of gunpowder, was given the required licence and was accordingly trans-shipped.¹ Soleillet died before the consignment could be taken to Shoa and it was not until 1887 that the stock was despatched from Ambadu for Shoa.

In February 1883, the British sources reported that warlike material to the value of 36,000 francs had been embarked at Marseille to the address of Jules Brémond in Aden. The consignment was landed at Obock in March and according to Brémond himself consisted of six thousand rifles and their accessories for which he had already received an advanced payment of about 80,000 francs from Menelik. In May, Antonelli reported from Ankober that Brémond, who had written to the King to announce his arrival, was expected there any time with the six thousand rifles in question.² Again, early in February 1889 an Italian resident in Marseille reported that Brémond had embarked on the gunboat "Saghalien" on January 27, with two thousand and five hundred Remington rifles and a quantity of ammunition

¹F.O. 78/3972: Brigadier General Hogg to M. Gasparay, Aden, 19.2.1886; M. Gasparay to Brigadier General Hogg, Aden, 22.2.1886; Brigadier General Hogg to M. Gasparay, Aden. 23.2.1886. Note that Starkie mistakenly put these references in F.O.78/3971.

²F.O. 403/81: Friend of British Government to F.O. Marseilles 6.2.1883. Brémond: "L'Expédition Scientifique et commerciale d'Obock" in L'Exploration 1883. ASMAI 36/2-11: Antonelli. Report dated Ankober 22.5.1883.

intended for Shoa. This consignment, it was added, was only part of a large stock and that the rest had been packed into sixty cases which were to be embarked for Obock on the "Amazone" due to leave Marseille on February 12. Upon the orders of the Italian Foreign Ministry the Italian Consul in Marseille verified and later confirmed the report, but he pointed out two days later that the sixty cases were left behind when the "Amazone" sailed from Marseille on February 12.¹ It is certain that by the time the two thousand and five hundred Remingtons arrived in Shoa Menelik had already become Emperor of Ethiopia as a whole.

Reports from Aden reveal that large stocks of **military** material were transhipped from there to the Somali ports en route to Shoa between February 14, 1885 and 1st February 1886 by various merchants. The list shows the following: On February 14, 1885 Capitain E. Pino secured a transhipment licence for two thousand and one hundred and ninety seven rifles, six revolvers, one sword, 292,000 percussion caps, four hundred pounds weight of lead, 40,000 cartridges balled, and one thousand two hundred cartridges for the revolvers.² The arrival of this

¹ASMAI 14/1-3: Anonymous to M.A.E., Marsiglia 4.2.1889. Simondetti to Crispi, Marsiglia 10.2.1889. Same to Same, Marsiglia 12.2.1889.

²F.O. 78/3972: Brigadier-General Hogg to Secretary to the Bombay Government, Aden 22.2.1886. "Statement showing the consignment

consignment in Shoa was reported by Audon about September 1885.¹ Pino, it is interesting to know, was a regular officer in Ras Gobana's army. He had received an advanced payment of six thousand thalers against firearms which he was unable to supply, and being also unable to refund the money he had been detained in the service of the Ras for indebtedness.²

On February 17, 1885 a certain M. Loses transhipped 150,000 percussion caps and six hundred carbines. On 27th June of the same year a transshipment licence was issued to Savoure to cover a consignment of 30,000 cartridges, 600,000 percussion caps, three thousand muskets, twenty four guns, three thousand safety cartridges, two hundred sword blades, two hundred pounds weight of lead and two hundred pounds of gunpowder. The arrival of this stock in Shoa was mentioned by Antonelli in a letter to the Italian Foreign Minister in May of the following year.³

On 21st January 1886 Labatut transhipped two thousand two hundred and thirty fusils. Two days later he transhipped 194,000 cartridges

¹Audon: "Voyage au Choa" in Le Tour du Monde, 2e Semestre 18889, p.139. Also ASMAI: 36/5-46: Pino to De Simone, dated Falle (Ville Galla) 30.12.1887.

²ASMAI 36/5-46: Pino to De Simone cited. ASMAI 14/1-4: Alfieri's letter to the newspaper "Corriere di Napoli" issue for 10th-11th February 1889.

³F.O. 78/3972: Hogg to Secretary to the Bombay Government Aden 22.2.1886: "Statement..." cited. ASMAI 36/3-28: Antonelli to N.A.E. Entoto 11.5.1886.

(cont.) of Arms, ammunition, military stores etc. transhipped at Aden for Gbock from 14th February 1885 to 1st February 1886."

balled, and 80,000 percussion caps. Again on 1st February he transhipped another three hundred and fifty eight fusils, two hundredweights of lead, and four thousand cartridges balled.¹ Rimbaud on his journey to Shoa in 1886 carried for sale to the King eight hundred rifles.² In addition to all these, there were the stocks furnished by Chefneux for which there are no figures but which must have been as large as those supplied by either Savoure, Brémond or Labatut. By 1889 when Menelik became Emperor he had, according to figures cited in the foregoing pages, a total of six cannon, forty pistols, 11,692 guns of various kinds, 21,726 rifles, 972,000 percussion caps and 1,569,000 cartridges. Considering the suggestion that all this was only a portion of what he must have had, Menelik had enough firearms to equip at least, half of the overall total fighting force which Shoa could put to the field.

It is clear from the foregoing paragraphs that throughout the 1880s firearms were poured into Shoa by individual arms traders despite the efforts by Britain to prohibit the arms trade into Africa. The question of prohibiting the arms trade is beyond the scope of this chapter and only one or two of its relevant

¹F.O. 78/3972; Hogg "Statement..." cited.

²E. Starkie: Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia, Oxford 1937, p.80.

issues will be discussed here. The attempt first to limit and then to prohibit completely the importation of firearms into Africa started, as far as it applied to the North-Eastern part of the continent, about 1884. In this, as in the anti-slave trade campaign, the initiative was taken by Britain, who was quick to realize the danger that unrestricted importation of firearms into Africa entailed not only for individual European travellers but also to the governments in their efforts to acquire colonies. The important point to note about the two agreements signed in December 1884 and November 1886 between Britain and France was that it aimed, in effect, at preventing the Somali and Afar tribes bordering on the ports controlled by the European powers from getting firearms. It did not thus refer to the independent ruler of the Ethiopian Empire or the King of Shoa.¹ This was a loophole which was cleverly exploited by the French arms traders to obtain transshipment licences. This weakness in the Agreements was brought to a head in 1888 when the French authorities, in answer to British protests about the liberal issue of licences, argued that "the terms of the agreement (of 1886) appeared to (the French Foreign Minister) that they are

¹For the Agreements see F.O. 78/4077.

not prohibitive of the transport of arms and powder either to Shoa or Abyssinia through territories under French or English protection on the coast." M. Flourens agreed that it was politic to prevent the acquisition of European arms of precision by the neighbouring chiefs of small and barbarous countries but pointed out that both the Emperor of Ethiopia and King Menelik of Shoa were powerful independent princes possessing considerable military forces which could practically not be prevented from being equipped with European firearms. He observed further that the troops of the Emperor were equipped with repeating rifles which were not of French manufacture or obtained through French agency, and remarked that if the Ethiopian princes did not obtain war material from that portion of the coast which was under French or English protection they would get it from Italian or other sources of supply.¹ It was necessary, in view of the French argument, that amendments had to be made in the existing agreement, or that a new agreement altogether was to be negotiated to meet as many contingencies as possible. While discussions were going on towards this end French traders, taking cover under the loopholes in the existing agreements, continued to pour military material

¹F.O. 78/4161. Lord Lytton (British Ambassador in Paris) to Lord Salisbury, dated Paris 28.3.1888 (reporting the substance of an interview with the French Foreign Minister).

into Shoa. In October 1888 it was estimated that Menelik had "at least 50,000 men equipped with European firearms of all kinds" and a good stock of ammunition and accessories.¹

The flow of arms into Shoa had important and advantageous political effects for the Crown. In the first place the possession of firearms strengthened the King's hold over his subjects. As has been seen, the royal troops were all to a man equipped with firearms and the military review which was held on feast days at least once a year, must have impressed the subjects with the formidable display of royal firearms. The possession of arms was a military advantage which the King was careful not to lose. Unlike the Kabakas of Buganda who were unable to prevent firearms from reaching their neighbouring states of Bunyoro and Ankole, Menelik succeeded in keeping the arms out of the reach of his Galla enemy. He did this by imposing a strict control over the movement of firearms into his tributary territories and into the lands beyond his frontiers, so that, as Traversi noted, travellers who wished to visit any part of Menelik's kingdom had to have his permission in order to carry firearms even for their own personal protection.²

¹ASMAI 36/5-50. Antonelli to N.A.B., Assab 31.10.1888.

²ASSGI: Cartoni VIII D, Traversi's letter dated Let-Marefia 10.4.1888.

In many parts of Africa, the expansion of a nuclear group to create a strong centralised state generally entailed the development of a new class of aristocrats who traditionally had no rights to office or positions of influence and power. Members of this class depended on the ruler for their positions and in general tended to be devoted to his interests. This development often had far reaching social and political consequences. In Buganda for example, as has already been mentioned, the new aristocracy, armed with the gun and progressive in outlook, came into conflict with the conservative forces as represented by the traditional aristocracy, the chiefs of the various clans. In Shoa, a new aristocracy indeed developed but the social effects of its development was somewhat different and the introduction of the gun therefore did not have the revolutionary political effect which it had in Buganda. Apart from the royal family there was no other group of people with traditional rights to power. The church, of course, had traditional rights and privileges which were respected by the Kings of Shoa, but the Church as a group played no direct part in the political life of the kingdom. Early in the history of Shoa, one could distinguish, especially among the Amhara of Manz, families which could claim traditional rights to govern certain districts. But

as has been seen, these traditional claims were gradually destroyed by the rulers of the rising kingdom until by the opening of our period there was hardly any Amhara family with traditional claims to offices. Similarly, when a Galla tribe was conquered, its traditional rulers were removed and the tribe was constituted into a district or a province of Shoa administered by a governor appointed by the Shoan ruler. As we have seen elsewhere, this governor's security of tenure depended on his retaining the confidence of his master; loss of the master's confidence entailed deprivation and often imprisonment for the governor. There was not even the guarantee that the personal property of a governor would descend to his children and family for, as has been seen already, the Kings of Shoa resumed possession of the wealth of any of their officials who either died or lost royal favour. This policy of centralisation was so successful that Shoa in our period was, to all intents and purposes, a casteless society. The success of this policy is to be explained by a number of related factors all of which have been discussed in the course of this study, and may here only be briefly summarised. The weakness and the mutual hostility of the surrounding Galla tribes meant that often they found security in linking themselves with Shoa, their stronger neighbour. The effect of this was that

the Galla subjects, finding protection in Shoa, tended to be very devoted to the Crown and its provincial officials. And the ruler's policy of encouraging such devotion with lavish rewards and of punishing refractoriness severely had the effect of welding the subjects to the interests of the rulers.

An important result of the success of royal absolutism was that in the Shoa of our period the conflict between the social classes which occurred in some expanding kingdoms in Africa was avoided. It was avoided because the whole aristocracy in Shoa was the creation of the Kings and could be ruined, all without exception, at the will of the Crown. No section of the aristocracy had any basis in tradition and therefore as a group the aristocracy had nothing in common to defend against the absolutist tendencies of the Crown. On the other hand, the one thing they had in common was to safeguard their individual selves by serving the Crown faithfully. The effect of royal absolutism was not only political but also economic. As a result of the Crown's iron control over everything in the kingdom, it was only the crown that really grew rich, both in liquid and in real assets, from the economic effects of the expansion of Shoa. Individual governors grew rich in lands and in livestock but their wealth died with them, and even while alive, their wealth remained theirs only for as long

as they retained royal confidence. It may be said, therefore, that in Shoa it was individuals and not groups, either families or clans, that mattered in public life. Here, incidentally, is to be found one of the essential differences between Shoa and other contemporary African kingdoms with which, otherwise, Shoa had much in common. In Buganda or the Akan societies, unlike in Shoa, individuals and clans were almost equally important in public life, for the success of an individual redounded to the credit of his family or clan as a whole and increased both the prestige and power of the family and clan in the state.

Politically as well as economically the nature of royal absolutism in Shoa was to have far-reaching effects on the Ethiopian Empire as a whole. When in 1889 King Menelik of Shoa became the Emperor of a united Ethiopia, the system of administration, both military and political, which had been so successfully applied in Shoa was gradually extended to cover the whole Empire, despite the formidable opposition which had to be met from the established nobilities in the northern Christian provinces. And with this extension the social and economic pattern of the Empire gradually became "shoanised". The Shoan system of administration, of course, had its disadvantages; among these was the fact that it tended, politically to stifle individual

initiative, and economically to suppress free enterprise in the most profitable trading spheres. This would, in part at least, explain why the political and economic life of Ethiopia, which did not experience what present day African politicians would call the baneful effects of colonial rule, was what it was until the reign of the present Emperor.

EPILOGUE

The development of Shoa which has been reconstructed in the foregoing chapters reached its climax in 1889 when Menelik, the king of Shoa, became the Emperor of the whole of Ethiopia, and Shoa, once again, became the centre of the Empire. The policy followed by Emperor Menelik and the methods by which that policy was put into execution are well known to students of Ethiopian history. What is not nearly so well known is that neither the policy nor the methods originated in or after 1889. Both had their origin in the years during which Menelik was king of Shoa.

The Kingdom of Shoa over which Menelik ruled from 1865 to 1889 had been built up by eight generations of his ancestors. The military offensive of these rulers against their Galla neighbours was part of a general process, which went on all over the Christian provinces of Ethiopia, by which Amhara culture was saved from destruction during the period of the decline of the Imperial power. The first five rulers of Shoa set the stage for their successors. Taken together their period was marked more by conquest than by administrative organisation. However, the need to organise the conquered provinces into some form of administrative pattern did not escape the early rulers, and a rudimentary governmental structure

was established. Wassen Saggad (1808-12), the sixth ruler of Shoa, carried both conquest and administrative organisation a stage further. The achievements of Wassen Saggad's reign, which lasted only four and a half years, were surpassed in importance only by those of Sahla Selassie and of Menelik. Among other things, by adopting the title of Ras, Wassen Saggad took the first step towards breaking all the political ties which had subordinated Shoa to the decadent imperial authority at Gondar.

When our period opens in 1813 Shoa was independent of the Emperor in all but name. Sahla Selassie who succeeded Wassen Saggad as ruler completed the process of Shoa's independence by adopting the title of Nigus (King) without seeking the approval of the authorities at Gondar. It was during this reign that all that was noble in the aspirations of the Shoa dynasty came to light. The wars of Nagassi and Sebastiyos, the first two rulers of "Shoa", had been limited in aim to securing an influence over the few Amhara people who still lived in Manz and who were surrounded by Galla. Their successors initiated campaigns against the Galla and succeeded in conquering many Galla tribes. Sahla Selassie's control over the Amhara of Manz was almost complete and his influence

on the conquered Galla was great, so he sought to advance his conquests to Guraghe and the Galla country to the south-west of Shoa. His aim was to re-unite all the provinces which had formed part of the medieval Christian empire of Abyssinia. This was a stupendous task the achievement of which required great military and organisational abilities. Sahla Selassie possessed these qualities and many others equally admirable. He was kind and benevolent and his concern for the welfare of his subjects impressed the Europeans who visited his kingdom. For his time and country Sahla Selassie was, without doubt, an enlightened ruler. With all his qualities, however, Sahla Selassie could not achieve the difficult task of re-uniting the scattered provinces of the former Empire. His country, his manpower resources and armament were too limited to have enabled him to achieve his ambition. Nevertheless, his contribution to the development of Shoa should not be under-estimated. Sahla Selassie built in Shoa a polity which was distinguished by justice, peace and security. Under these conditions his subjects were able to pursue their various occupations without fear for their security and safety. The effect of this was to make both agriculture and commerce expand and prosper. Ultimately it was the Crown which really benefited from the atmosphere of

peace, security and prosperity which existed in Shoa. The subjects came to regard their welfare as linked with the interests of the Crown; for this reason they gave the Crown loyal support in its policy of conquest and expansion, and of maintaining the independence of the kingdom. It was the loyal support which the "Crown" enjoyed from the subjects which enabled Sahla Selassie to sever the political ties which had made Shoa a dependency of the Empire. More important, it was the loyalty of the subjects and the community of interest which existed between the subjects and the Shoan crown, which urged the "Shoans" to resist and ultimately to overthrow the government imposed on them by Emperor Theodros when the Emperor conquered Shoa in 1855-6.

From the point of view of the imperial authority the emergence of Theodros was a step towards revival; for Shoa (and the other provinces of the Empire) on the other hand, the conquest of Theodros was a definite set back since it aimed at destroying her independence. In the history of modern Shoa, the period 1855-65 was an anti-climax. Not only were no new territories conquered and in fact there was a danger that the peripheral districts would actually break away. The strong leadership which the country had had under Sahla Selassie and

his predecessor was no longer there. With the king dead and the heir apparent, Menelik, a prisoner at the headquarters of the Emperor, Shoa entered on a period of decline. Yet, it was at this critical period that the achievements of the previous reigns in general and of Sahla Selassie in particular come to light. The success of the reigns before 1865 had united both ruler and subjects in the conviction that their welfare lay in maintaining the independence of their kingdom. Thus although cut off from their king, the inhabitants of Shoa struggled on to overthrow the imperial administration, established by Theodros. The escape and return of Menelik to Shoa in the second half of 1865 sealed the success of "Shoan" resistance to imperial conquest. The restored king gave effective leadership in the country and once more Shoa became a peaceful prosperous and powerful kingdom. As it turned out the reign of Menelik marked the climax of Shoa's development.

The last phase of Shoa's development, like the preceding phases, was made possible partly by the co-operation of the subjects and partly by the qualities of the ruler. Menelik was probably the most capable of the Shoan rulers. He inherited both his policy and his qualities - military prowess, admini-

strative ability, benevolence and intelligence - from his Shoan ancestors. But the bitter experiences of his youth and his early contact with Europeans sharpened his latent natural intelligence. He was quick to realize the advantage that his position as king of Shoa gave him in the Empire and he determined to make good use of this to win the imperial crown for his dynasty. And his astute mind enabled him to employ European nationals and to manipulate his relations with European powers in various ways to further his policy of conquest and expansion. Thus when in 1889 Menelik became Emperor of the whole of Ethiopia he had behind him over twenty years experience not only in the art of governing but also in dealing with European powers. It was the experience which Menelik gained as King of Shoa which made his imperial reign the success that it was.

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