CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ETHIOPIAN REGION AND THE HORN OF AFRICA UP TO 1529

- .The downfall of the Zagwe dynasty around 1270 A.D.
- .Was followed by the rise to power of a new dynasty called the **'Solomonic' dynasty**.
- .This dynasty began to trace its genealogy from the ancient kings of Israel.
- .It gradually shifted its political centre from Lalibela to northern Shewa.

Golden Words

-Kafficho -Legitimacy -"Makhzmite dynasty"

-Motelami -Mikrecho -"Mountain of kings"

-Port of Zeila -Dahlak Islands -'Restoration'

-"Solomonic' dynasty" -Sultanate -Tegulet

-Gult system -bala-gult -Rist Right

-"Walasma Dynasty" -Ahmad Badlay -"Halmam Gama"

-Tato -Omotic State -"House of garad"

7.1. "Restoration" of the Solomonic Dynasty and the Christian Highland Kingdom

- . The return of a monarch to a throne, a head of state to government, or a regime to power is known as **restoration**
- .The Amhara ruling class also took away political power from their predecessors around 1270.
- . The founder of the new dynasty was a local ruler in Amhara called Yekuno-Amlak.
- .This dynasty, which came to power in 1270, called itself 'Solomonic'.
- .Yekuno-Amlak and his followers took this dynastic name to justify their legitimacy by claiming that the Zagwe rulers were illegitimate.
- .To justifies this they resorted to the legend of **Queen Sheba** and **King Solomon**.

- He said **"I restored the lost power",** and hence the “restoration” of the 'Solomonic' dynasty.
- From about 1270 until fall of the despotic Haile Selassie I rule in 1974.
- **His success had economic and military reasons**
- .Yekuno-Amlak maintained friendly relations with the Christian rulers and traders of the Zagwe dynasty as well as the Muslim traders of Shewa..
- .Using the revenue from the trade, Yekuno-Amlak built an effective army by which
- He was strong militarily, economically and politically.
- .At the beginning the new dynasty established its centre around Tegulet, a district in northern Shewa.
- But later on the royal court has shifted from region to region on the eastern foothills of the Shewan plateau.

Internal political instability

- After the death of Yekuno-Amlak in 1285, the dynasty began to face internal political instability.
- .One of the reasons for this instability was lack of formal rules of succession to the throne.
- .As a result, the sons and descendants of Yekuno-Amlak began to fight each other over this issue.

The AmbaGishen royal prison

- .All male descendants of Yekuno-Amlak were detained at a royal prison at **AmbaGishen** after he came to the throne.
- .The passes and foothills of the mountain were guarded by loyal warriors.
- .This measure solved the problem of succession and facilitated the consolidation of the power of the Christian kingdom of the medieval period.
- .During the reign of Yekuno-Amalk, the kingdom had peaceful relations with all its neighbors.

The economy of the kingdom

- .In the early period of the ‘Solomonic’ dynasty, the economy of the kingdom mainly depended on agriculture,
- .which was dominated by mixed farming.

- .Most of the members of the communities were prosperous with large families. Such families also kept slaves who were used for domestic purposes.
- .As a political and economic system, **feudalism** also began to take shape beginning from the fourteenth century.
- .Trade took a very important place in the economy after the conquest of the Muslim sultanates in the southern parts of the region.
- .During this period, Zeila had completely overtaken Dahlak as a gateway of internal and external trade.
- .Most of the trade items came from the western and southwestern parts of the Ethiopian region.
- .Among the trade items were slaves, ivory and gold. Cereals and fruits of the highland were also highly demanded in the lowlands on both sides of the Red Sea.
- .The trade of the region was still controlled by Muslim merchants.

Important feature of the medieval Christian highland kingdom

- .The large scale territorial expansion
- .The consolidation of the feudal mode of production.
- . This was mainly the creation of a feudal administration.
- .The kings maintained both hereditary chiefs and appointed officials.
- .In some regions, the earlier ruling classes were allowed to remain in power
- .With close supervision of the central government.
- . In the other regions, new officials were appointed by the kings from the center.
- .sent to the newly conquered areas with large number of soldiers.
- .These officials, administrative as well as military
- . The right to collect tribute from the local people over whom they were appointed.
- .This system was called the Gult system.

The Gult system

- .Gult was a right to right to levy tribute on the owners of rest and produce of rest land.

- **.**The gult system had served two very important purposes in the medieval Christian kingdom.
- .**Firstly**, it helped the kingdom to maintain large territorial army during the period. Because almost every bala-gult was responsible to recruit soldiers from his region and command them.
- .**Secondly**, it greatly simplified the task of administering the vast Christian kingdom of the period.

The bala-gult is responsible for;

- .The maintenance of law and order in his region.
- .He acted as a chief judge and gave an administrative justice to his people.
- .He could also raise a regional army from his region and command them during the time of regional or national crisis.
- .He was responsible for the collection of tributes in kind from the peasants under him.
- .He can also use the corvee or free labour of the people under him
- .These may include items like grains, cattle, honey, butter, salt, house hold equipment's, etc.

The Rest System

- .Rest was hereditary right to land use by members of families
- .And clans whose ancestors retained the land for the long period of time.
- . *Rist* land was like private ownership except the holder lacked the right to sell the land.
- .The peasants could be able to use, rent, and inherit the land to family members
- .In exchange, peasants were obliged to make payments for variety land related taxes
- .Selling the land to non-family members was prohibited.
- .Land was then transferred in the form of inheritance from family to children for generations, which over time reduced the size of the farm lands.
- . In North Ethiopia, the *Rist* land may have originated with ancestral first holders through government grant for a loyal service, clearance of forest or purchase.

♍ .Then the land remained within the family forever and descendants would get a share of it irrespective of their presence or absence in the area.

The obligations of the Rist holders were mainly two

i. .The first was ***giber*** **(land tax**), which mostly amounted to **one fifth** of the produce or some form of fixed obligation delivered in kind that would be shared between the local gult-holder and central state.

ii. .The second was ***Asrat*** **(tithe)** in which **one-tenth** of all crops grown had to be paid to the state.

The mobile nature of the royal court

♍ . Throughout the period there was no permanent capital city like Aksum or Lalibela.

♍ .Instead, the kings lived in roving or moving capitals.

♍ .They roamed around in the various parts of their domains followed by their court officials and soldiers.

♍ .During this time the monarchs and their dignitaries lived in tents, while the other camp followers lived in temporary huts.

♍ .There was no permanent structures like palaces and castle.

Why the constant move of the royal court from region to region?

♍ .Itowes partly to the lack of provision or supply for the large number of camp followers and partly to the shortage of firewoods.

♍ .But they moved also for political reason, i.e. to control rebellions in different regions of the empire.

7**.2. Muslim States in the Ethiopian Region and the Horn of Africa up to 1529**

♐ .Trade and Islam were the main factors for the emergence of the Muslim sultanates in the Ethiopian region and the Horn of Africa.

♐ .Islam was introduced to the region through **two points**:

i. The Red Sea and

ii. The Gulf of Aden coasts.

i. The Red Sea

- .**The First** of the gates was the Dahlak Islands in the Red Sea.
- .With the Muslim Arab occupation of the Islands in 702,
- Dahlak and the Red Sea coastal regions began to have their first Muslim expriences.
- .The Muslim Arab merchants played the role of converting the people of the area to Islam.

ii. The Gulf of Aden coasts.

- .**The second**, and perhaps the most important gate for the spread of Islam into the interior of the region was the port of Zeila on the Gulf of Aden coast.
- .Here also, the Muslim Arab merchants were the agents of the expansion of Islam.
- .Along the Zaila trade route into the interior, these merchants established important market centers.
- .Apparently, it was in this process that Islam was peacefully introduced to Harar, Eastern Shewa, Wollo, Bale, Arsi and the other regions of the interior of Ethiopia.
- .The introduction of Islam in the region, together with the trade, led to the establishment of a series of Muslim sultanates or states along the Zeila trade route into the interior.

These sultanates shared many features in common, such as:

- .Their population was made up of Muslim communities.
- .Their rulers exercised both religious and political powers.
- .Islam and trade were the main factors for their emergence.
- .Most of the sultanates were located in the southeastern lowlands of the Ethiopian region.
- .Although some of the communities practiced mixed farming, the economy of the sultanates mainly depended on trade.

The medieval Muslim states of the Ethiopian region as follows.

The Sultanate of Shewa

- .The sultanate of Shewa roughly occupied the northeastern half of the present province by that name.
- .It was the oldest Muslim state in the Ethiopian region.
- .The first ruler of the sultanate came to power around 897 A.D.
- .The ruling dynasty of this Sultanate was called Makhzumite.

- .The Makhzumite claimed to have descended from the Makhzumi clan of South Arabia.
- .The rulers used the Muslim title called sultan.
- . Finally, one of the sultans of Ifat deposed and murdered the sultan of Shewa in the mid-1280s.

The Sultanate of Dahlak

- .Dahlak is a common name for a group of islands in the Red Sea.
- .The islands are located not far from the port of Massawa.
- .Since ancient times, the islands were a port of call for sailing ships from north to south in the Red Sea.
- .For most of its existence, the sultanate of Dahlak had attracted the interest of three powerful states, i.e., the Mamluks of Egypt, Yemen and the Ethiopian Christian Kingdom.

The Sultanate of Ifat

- .The sultanate of Ifat seems to have emerged in the mid thirteenth century.
- . In the lowlands east of the Shewan plateau.
- .It was founded by a local Muslim ruling family called Walasma.
- .Umar walasma, was the first historically known ruler of the sultanate, Ifat attained military and political prominence during his reign.
- .During the region of Umar Walsma Ifat subdued and incorporated the Muslim sultanate of Shewa.
- .During his reign Ifat was ruled by one of its strongest sultan called Sabredin..
- .But he was finally defeated, after which Ifat became a tributary state to the Christian Kingdom.

The Sultanate of Hadya

- .Hadya was one of the medieval Muslim sultanates of the Ethiopian region.
- .However, the sultanate is mentioned for the first time during the reign of AmdeSeyon.
- .At the time the sultanate was one of the tributaries of the Christian Kingdom.
- .Hadya occupied the most westerly territory of the Ethiopian region.
- .The western frontiers of Hadya touched the Gibe River.

- . In the south the territory of the sultanate seems to have stretched up to Lake Awasa,
- .while in the north it extended a little to the north of Lake Zway.
- .The economy of Hadya mainly depended on mixed farming.
- .while some part of the population led a purely pastoral life.
- .Trade also contributed to the economy of the state.
- .Hadya was the main source of slaves for the region.
- .The rulers had the title of **garad**.
- .The garads rebelled now and then against the Christians kings.
- .They even went to the extent of securing the loyalty of the rulers of Hadya by means of political marriage.
- .The daughter of a well-known Hadya garad was married to Emperor Zar'aYa'eqob and became Queen Illeni,
- A famous woman in the politics of the Christian Kingdom.
- .BaideMariyam and LibneDengel were also officially married to Hadya princesses.
- .This policy was followed by the other members of the Christian ruling class.

The Sultanate of Bali

- .Bali was another Muslim sultanate of the Ethiopian region.
- Its rulers also used the title of garad.
- .Bali occupied the most southerly territory of the Ethiopian region.

The Sultanate of Sharka

- The present territory of the Arsi Oromo made part of the territory of the medieval sultanate of Sharka.
- . One of the medieval settlers of Sharkawere the ancestors of the present day Alaba people.

The Sultanate of Dawaro

- .Dawaro was situated south of Shoa, bordering on Ifat on the right bank of the Awash.
- .Stretching Southwards as far as the river Webi which marked the border with the neighboring state of Bali.

The Sultanate of Dera

- **.**Dera was a very small sultanate located east of the Awash River between the sultanates of Dawaro and Bali.

The Sultanate of Fatagar

- .The sultanate of Fatagar emerged around the middle of the thirteenth century.
- .The sultanate was located between Lake Zway in the south
- .The present town of Bishoftu (DebreZeit) in the north.

The Sultanate of Arbabini

- .The information we have is only about its location which comes from an Arab historian called **al-Umari**.
- .According to al-Umari the sultanate of Arbabini existed south of the Awash River between the sultanates of Hadya and Dawaro.

The Sultanate of Adal

- .The sultanate of Adal emerged towards the end of the fourteenth century.
- .Ifat and Adal shared a common history.
- .At one time or another both were ruled by the same dynasty called Walasma.
- . Its ruling class began to be divided into two groups.
  1. .**The first group**, **the merchant class**, decided to recognize the authority of the Christian kingdom over Ifat.
  2. .**The second group**, **the militant wing,** however, opposed this Christian domination and determined to regain the lost independence of Ifat.
- . This militant group decided to establish a new base by retreating further to the south eastern lowlands of Harar.
- .Where they founded the sultanate of Adal around 1380.
- .The first centre of Adal was at Deker, southeast of Harar, which later shifted to Harar.
- . Among the successors of Umar Walasma, Haqadin II and Saadadin rebelled against AmdeSeyon's son and successor, Sayfa Arad (r. 1344-71).
- . The Christian kingdom did not recover from the weakness.

7.3. Omotic States in the Ethiopian Region and Horn of Africa up to 1529

The Kingdom of Damot

- .Damot was one of the oldest and strongest states in the Ethiopian region.
- . Occupied the western and southwestern part of the Ethiopian region.
- .The eastern part of the state probably included what is now the territory of the Regional State of BeniShangul- Gumuz.
- .The northern frontier of the kingdom stretched to the present day northern Shewa
- .Damot also included the central and southern parts of Shewa.
- .A vast territory south of the Abbay gorge was also part of the territory of Damot.
- .However, the history of the kingdom goes back to the Aksumite period.
- .Damot was known for its gold which reached the market of Aksum and the ports of the Red Sea coast.
- . The dominance of Damot in the Ethiopian region continued during the Zagwe period.
- .From Damot trade items such as gold, ginger and slaves were exported to countries as far as Arabia, Persia, India, Egypt and Greece.
- . Motalami is constantly mentioned in the records of the period.
- . Motalami was converted to Christianity which marked the beginning of a growing Christian influence in Damot.

The Kingdom of Kafa

- .The medieval kingdom of Kafa was located south of the Gojebriver.
- . There is evidence which indicates the rise of the kingdom in the 14th C.
- .The people of Kafa call themselves Kaficho.
- .They traces their origin to a people called Minjo.
- .This original people of Kafa are considered as a royal clan from which the kings of Kafa were descended.
- .The crown of Kafa was hereditary in the Busase family of the Minjo clan.
- .The kings used a title called tato..He was assisted by a council of seven called Mikrecho, which had a very strong power in the state system.
- . The kingdom of Kafa was known for its defense system.
- .The northern frontier of the kingdom was defended by the Gojeb River.

- .The kingdom of Kafa was a very rich area.
- .Its economy depended on trade and agriculture.
- . Land was the property of the king.

The Kingdom of Enarya

- . was located immediately to the north of the GojebRiver
- .west of the upper course of the Gibe River.
- .Enarya became the tributary of the Christian kingdom during the reign of AmdeSeyon.
- Pure gold from Enarya was exported to the countries as far as Egypt, Greece and Rome.
- .The conquerors took the name Limmu-Enarya, signifying a complete assimilation of the people of Enarya to the Mecha Oromo.

The Kingdom of Bizamo

- .The kingdom of Bizamo existed on the southern bend of the Abbay River
- .just opposite to the present district of Wambarma in southern Gojjam.
- .But it existed until the end of the sixteenth century under the control of the Christian kingdom.
- Bizamo consisted of the speakers of the Omotic language family.

The Kingdom of Welayita

- .The medieval kingdom of Welayita was located south of the sultanate of Hadya.
- . It may have derived its origins from the ancient kingdom of Damot.
- .During the reign of AmdeSeyon, Welayita became the tributary of the Christian kingdom.
- .It paid tribute in horses to King Yeshaq (r.1413-1430).
- .Welayita was invaded by the army of Imam Ahmed Ibrahim.
- .The kings of Welayita used the title of Kawo.
- .Welayita was a very fertile area rich in different products like ensat, maize, wheat, barley, coffee, tobacco and cotton.
- .The kingdom of Welayita was successively ruled by three dynasties.

i. The first dynasty came to power towards the end of the Zagwe period.

- .The founder of the dynasty was Motalami,

- .who is said to have originally been the king of Damot.,

ii. **The second dynasty came from Kucha and ruled Welayita**.

- .It is not known when the second dynasty rose to power
- .This dynasty came to an end around 1550.

iii. The third dynasty came to power and expanded

- Peoples living in the Omo river valley: like Gamo, Kucha, Boroda and Dawro.
- .The dynasty continued to rule Welayita right upto the end of the 19th C.
- .when the kingdom was made part of the territory of Ethiopia.

The Kingdom of Yama

- .The kingdom of Yama existed between the Gibe River and the upper course of the OmoRiver.
- .The kingdom is mentioned in the Christian king's literature for the first time during the reign of King Yeshaq to whom it paid tribute in horses.
- .The first kings of Yama belonged to a dynasty called **Halmam Gama**.
- .Later on, this dynasty was overthrown by a clan called **Mwa**.
- .The Yama kings had absolute power.
- .They wore golden bracelets which were an emblem of kingship.
- .The economy of Yama mainly depended on agriculture.
- .Barley and sorghum were the main cereal crops produced in the kingdom.

7.4. Hegemony of the Christian Highland Kingdom in the Ethiopian Region and the Horn of Africa up to 1529

- .From 1270-1529 the Christian kingdom was in constant war, particularly with the Muslim sultanates.

Causes

- .The conflict arose over the control of the trade routes along which the long distance trade of the region was conducted.
- .This trade was totally monopolized by Muslim traders who sometimes acted as agents of the Christian kings.
- .But it was difficult for the Christian kings to depend on them, because the traders were not under the sovereign power of the kings.
- .On the other hand, the trade routes passed through the territories of the Muslim sultanates, to which the merchants paid tributes.

- .This created constant threat to the economic interest of the kingdom.

The War of Expansion

- .The wars of expansion of the Christian kingdom were initiated by AmdeSeyon.

AmdeSeyon

- .He was **the most expansionist** king in the highland Christian king of the medieval period.
- .His first military campaign was directed against Damot, Falasha and Gojjam.
- .These territories were annexed to Christian kingdom in 1316 and 1317.
- . The initial campaigns of AmdeSeyon prepared the ground for the major war against the Musluim sultanates.
- .He prepared for war cautiously and stayed until he could find a pretext to pick up a conflict with Ifat.
- .The sultan of Ifat called **Haqqedin** provided that pretext by arresting a commercial agent of AmdeSeyon towards the end of 1325.
- .At the time, Ifat was not prepared for war and AmdeSeyon's attack took Ifat by surprise.
- .The Christian army gained an easy victory, after which many villages, including the town of Ifat, were plundered and burnt.

Deradir

- . Haqqedin's successor called Deradir who opened a massive offensive on the territory of the Christian kingdom.
- .In one of the battles that followed, Deradir defeated the Christian army.
- .But the Christian army soon recovered from its defeat and even reversed the situation by scoring a major victory.
- .In the battle, Deradir himself was captured and killed.
- .Earlier, AmdeSeyon had conquered the sultanate of Hadya around 1317.
- .The leader of the front was the sultan of Ifat called **Sabreddin** who launched his attack in 1332.
- .In the final battle the Muslims were completely defeated and Sabreddin escaped to the neighboring sultanate of Dawaro.
- .Finally, AmdeSeyon died in 1344, extending the Christian control over a large area including the Muslim sultanates of the southeast.

Haqqeddin II (AD 1363/4-1373

- .The struggle against the Christian rule started during the reign of Sultan Haqqeddin II.
- .Who extended his power over many of the sultanates from the new centre of Adal in Harar.
- .During the first years of the reign of King Dawit (r. 1382-1413) Haqqeddin opened a massive offensive against the Christian kingdom.
- .In the first engagements Haqqeddin scored a series of victories over the Christian army.
- .However, the Christian army finally defeated the army of Adal in 1387.
- .Haqqeddin himself was killed in the battle.

Sa’adaddin

- .The struggle continued during the time of the next sultan called Sa’adaddin.
- .who waged a guerrilla type resistance.
- .This continued until the early fifteenth century, when the army of Adal faced another defeat.
- .Sa’adaddin succeeded to escape from the battle field.
- .But he was pursued and killed in Zeila in 1403

Consequences of the War of Expansion

- .For the next thirty years, the Christian kingdom did not face any challenge from Adal.
- .The power of Adal was weakened and the sultans were exiled to Arabia.
- .They returned from exile and the sultanate again revived under Ahmed Badlay, one of the most powerful sultans of Adal.

Ahmed Badlay

- .He resumed guerrilla warfare against the Christian kingdom.
- . King Yishaq (r.1413-30), Marched to Adal to finish off this Muslim resistance.
- . But he lost his life in 1430.
- .Unfortunately, Ahmed Badlay faced an equally powerful Christian king.

Zar'aYae'qob (1434-1468)

- Sultan Badlay organized a united Muslim front against Zar'aYae'qob.
- .He also won the support of Mahigo, the garad of Hadya.
- .Although Zar'aYae'qob faced serious military set-backs during the first engagements;
- .he finally defeated the army of Adal in 1445.
- .Sultan Badlay and his collaborator Mahigo were killed in the battle.
- .This marked the peak of the dominance of the Christian kingdom in the Ethiopian region and the Horn of Africa.
- .The dominance of the Christian power began to decline during the last quarter of the fifteenth century.
- .His successor, **Ba'idaMariyam (1468-1478)** was not powerful enough to push back the mounting pressure.
- .It was during the reign of Ba'idaMariyam that the Christian army faced its first serious defeat.