Subject: History **Grade 12**

The Zemne Mesafint (the Era of the Princes)

- ✓ It was a period from about 1769-1855, characterized by:-
- ✓ The downfall of central government/authority of the monarchy and relatively strong regional political power.
- ✓ Intense power struggle between the monarchy and the nobility for political power.
- ✓ Feudal political disintegration such as governors Shewa and lords of Tigray established foreign relations independently.
- ✓ Absence of rule of law, which brought about arbitrariness, lawlessness, instability, disorder and destructions.
- ✓ Economic decline because of endless wars.
- ✓ Foreign threat from the western frontiers of Ethiopia, like Egyptian invasion of the christian kingdom in 1821.

Example:- When Mohammad Ali of Egypt extended Egypt's rule over the Sudan and invaded Ethiopia in 1821, Dejazmach Wube of Simen, Dejazmach Kinfu of Quara and Dejazmach Kassa Hailu(Half-brother of Kinfu) paid enormous sacrifices to save the independence of their country.

Conditions that led to the Zemne Mesafint were:-

- ✓ The erosion of the traditional power and authority of the Christian monarchy by wars of Adal, humiliation from the Oromo warriors.
- ✓ the establishment of Gonder as a fixed capital, where kings remained to be in the city and neglected the provinces far from the center, which led to the rise of powerful regional lords like Ras Wolde Silassie of Tigray and rulers of Shewa.

- ✓ determination of Itge Mintewab to control political power by arranging political marriage between her son Iyasu the Little and the daughter of the Wello Oromo chief, which enabled the Wello Oromo to take a power base, to enjoy a leading role and to influence in their own right brought about revolts, disorder and instability between the Qaran born individuals reprsented by Mintewab and the Wello Oromos represented by Wabi(Bersabeh)- wife of Iyassu the little.

Example: -The Yejju Oromo or Warra Sheh Dynasty/Ruling Family (r- 1786-1853) was established by the Wello Oromos, using their political marriage with Itge Mintewab of Quara as a power base.

Activity one

I. Write short and precise answers for the following questions.

1. Mention some of the basic features of the Zemne Mesafint.
2. What were the leading conditions of the birth of the Era of the Princes?
3. Why was Itge Mintewab arranged political marriage between her son Iyassu the little and Bersabeh/ daughter of the Wello Oromo Chief,Amizo?
4. Name the three Ethiopians who paid an enormous sacrificies against Egyptian invaders in 1821.
5. How was the Yejju Oromo /Warra Sheh ruling family established?