UNIT THREE

POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN TO THE END OF THE 13TH C.

Emergence of States

- **Unit Starters (State mean; earliest States; relationships; and role of religion)**
- One important factors for the emergence/evolution of states was **the beginning of sedentary agriculture**.
- Families-communities
- states were formed mainly through the expansion of agriculture that gave rise to class differentiation.
- the growth of **trade** further **facilitated the development of states**.
- **State** refers to an **autonomous political** unit having ***Population, defined territory, sovereignty and government*** with the power to decree and enforce laws.
- State was the outcome of regular cultural process.

- The first states were **theocratic states** and **priests (shaman**) maintained the **social and religious affairs of their people d**uring initial formation of states.
- As production became **market oriented**, ***religious elites were gradually replaced by chiefs***, who began collecting regular and compulsory tributes **known as protection payments** with which they maintained themselves; their supporters chiefly the **army**, the bureaucracy and other followers.
- Ethiopia and the Horn is one of the regions in Africa, where early state formation took place.

Ancient States: North and Northeast

A. **Punt- earliest**, Egyptian hieroglyphic writings

B. **Da'amatand Other Cultural Centers in Northern Ethiopia and Eritrea**

C. **The Aksumite State**

D. **Zagwe Dynasty**

A. Punt

- Punt was the **earliest recorded state** in Ethiopia and the Horn.
- The evidence on Punt comes from **Egyptian hieroglyphic** that tells of a series of naval expeditions, which the Egyptian Pharaohs sent to Punt.
  - ✓ **Pharaoh Sahure** (r. 2743-2731 B.C.)- to collect myrrh, ebony and electrum (gold and silver alloy).
  - ✓ **Pharaoh Asosi -**treasurer of God Bawardede took dancing dwarf “dink" to Egypt
  - ✓ **Queen Hatshepsut** (1490-1468 B.C.)-best described and illustrated expedition, documented at her tomb in **Dier El Bahri**.; Black Nubian Captain **Nehasi via Wadi-Tumilat.** There was warm welcome by Puntites King **Perehu**, his wife Ati, sons, daughters and followers. Able to return by collecting frank incense, cinnamon, sweet smelling woods (sandal), spices, ivory, rhinoceros horn, leopard and leopard skins, ostrich feathers and egg, live monkeys, giraffes, people etc.

- Based on this evidences punt was **the most important sources** of myrrh, ebony and electrum (gold and silver alloy), frank incense, cinnamon, sweet smelling woods (sandal), spices, ivory, rhinoceros horn, leopard and leopard skins, ostrich feathers and egg, live monkeys, giraffes, people etc
- Iron, bronze, asses, foxes, cattle, animals fur, dying and medicinal plants were also exported from Punt to Egypt. In return, **axes, daggers, swords, knives, sickles, clothes, bracelets, necklaces, beads and other trinkets were imported from Egypt to Punt**.
- Scholars have not reached agreement as to the **exact location of Punt**

- It was suggested that may be punt is located in
  - ✓ **Northern or northeastern Somalia-** as varieties of incense and myrrh mentioned in the writings have suggested to some scholars
  - ✓ **Northern Ethiopia-** others are inclined more towards Northern Ethiopia because of the reference to *gold, ebony and monkeys* and reinforce their argument that at that early period, **Egyptian sailboats** might not have been strong enough to pass through the **Strait of Bab-el Mandeb** into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean
  - ✓ still some others argue that it probably stretched from **Swakim or Massawa to Babel Mandeb (Gate of Tears) and Cape Guardafui**

B. Da'amat and Other Cultural Centers in Northern Ethiopia and Eritrea

- The center of **Da'amat** was located **south of Aksum**.
- based on 5th c B. C inscription of the King of Da'amaat, he used **politico religious title** known as ***Mukarib***.
- Various gods and goddesses {***Almouqah*** (principal god), ***Astarr*** (Venus god), ***Na'uran*** (light god), ***Shamsi*** (sun god), and ***Sin*** (moon god)} were worshipped in Da'amat and pre-Aksumite cultural centers, as did in **South Arabia**.
- From a number of cultural centers in northern Ethiopia, **Yeha, Hawulti Melazo, Addi-Seglemeni** were the major ones.
- **Yeha-**The **oldest**; emerged around **1, 000 BC**; located **30** KM northeast of Aksum; reached in its prosperity (zenith) from about

750 to 500 B.C; remains of its buildings and stone masonry and still standing temple and inscriptions indicate **Yeha's glory**.

B. Hawulti Melazo: Situated to **southeast** of Aksum

- **C. Addi-Seglemeni**: Located to 10 Kms **Southwest** of Aksum, where the **oldest Ethiopian monumental inscription** is discovered.

- There were also other cultural centers like **Addi Gelemo**, **Addi Grameten**, **Addi Kewih**, **Atsbi Dera**, **Feqiya**, **Hinzat**, **Sefra**, **Senafe**, **Tekonda** etc.

C. The Aksumite State

- The **nucleus of the Aksumite** state was formed around **200-100** B.C. **limited to a relatively small area.**
- In its **heyday**, Aksumite territories extended **from the Red Sea coast in the East to the Western edge of Ethiopian plateau** overlooking the vast **Nile Valley** in the **west** and **from the northern most corner of Eritrea** and possibly as far **south** as **northern parts of Shewa**.
- According to *Periplus of Erithrean Sea* **Adulis** on the **western coast of the Red Sea** was the major port of

Benadir Coasts like **Serapion** (Moqadishu), **Nicon** (Brava) and Merca.

- **The major items of export** of the Aksumite state consisted mainly of the ***natural products*** such as **ivory, myrrh, emerald, frankincense and some spices (like ginger, cassia and cinnamon), gold, rhinoceros horns, hippopotamus hides, tortoise shells and some curiosity animals like apes**.
- In turn, a number of ***manufactured products*** like **garments** and **textiles** from **Egypt**, **India**, **Roman Empire**, and **Persia**; ***glassware*** and ***jewelry*** from **Egypt** and other places; **metallic sheets, tools or utensils of various kinds, oil** and **wine** from **Roman Empire** and **Syria** were **imported.**
- **Zoscales** (c. 76-89), the then king of Aksum, used to speak the **Greek language, Lingua Franca of Greco-Roman world.**

- **Aksum** also had relations with **Ceylon** (Sri Lanka) and **Laodicea** (Asia Minor).
- the ***Christian Topography*- commercial activities** of the Red Sea areas; mentions the **internal long distance trade** between Aksum and a distant region called **Sasu…**caravan…special agents of the kings of Aksum would take to Sasu…silent trade.
- **Aksumite kings had extensive contacts** with the outside world notably with the **South Arabian region**, **leading to exchange of ideas, material and spiritual culture.** Conflicts …200 AD… the Aksumite king Gadarat
- **From the third to seventh centuries**, Aksumite kings like Aphilas, Endybis, Wazeba, Ezana, Ousanas II, etc. **minted and issued different kinds of coins** in gold, silver and bronze for both overseas and local transactions.

- Aksum was one of the four great powers of the world
  - ✓Roman Empire, Persia, China , and Aksum at the time.
- It was a major **naval** and **trading power** from the **1st** to the **7th** c.
- **Aksumite ships** were the main means of transporting goods.
- Aksum had a **large fleet of ships**, which was used for both **trade** and its **wars** across the Red Sea.
- **Kaleb** (r. 500-35) expanded overseas territories of **Aksum** beyond **Himyar** and **Saba**.
- **Dhu-Nuwas (**Judaism, … **Zafar** and **Nagran**)
- **Byzantine Vasaliev Justinian**
- Kaleb appointed **Abraha** as governor of Arabia …**570** A. D
- Kaleb was succeeded by his son **Gabra Masqal** (535-48), built a church at **Zur Amba** in Gayint; **Yared** developed **Ethiopian Orthodox Church liturgical songs and hymns.**

The decline of Aksumite state

- The Aksumite state had begun to decline since the **late seventh** century because of **internal** and **external** challenges.
- **Factors for its decline**
  - ✓ Environmental degradation
  - ✓ decline in **agricultural productivity** and
  - ✓ **Possibly plague** infestation started to weaken it
- With the destruction of the **port of Adulis** by the **Arabs** around **702,** the international lifeline of the state was cut- Aksumite **international trade** came under the **control of Arab Muslims**, **isolating** from its old **commercial** and **diplomatic** partners

- Due to this the Aksumite state declined **economically**, **politically** and **militarily** both on the **Red Sea coast** and in its **interior provinces** .
- Internally Aksumite hegemony was challenged by local rebellions. The recurring rebellions of
  - ✓ the **Beja**,
  - ✓ the **Agaw** and
  - ✓ **Queen Bani al Hamwiyah** (**Yodit**) finally sealed/closed the collapse of the Aksumite state.

Contribution/Legacies of Aksumite state/Civilization

- Aksumite civilization had a profound impact upon the peoples of the Horn of Africa and beyond and, on its **successors** such as the **Zagwe**, '**Solomonic Dynasty**', the **Gondarine period.**
  - ✓ Sub-Saharan Africa's only **surviving indigenous script** and calendar and **EOC hymns, chants and paintings**; **diversified ceramic and lithic tools**, ivory curving, and **urbanization** and **sophisticated** building traditions (palaces, stele, rock-hewn churches…)
  - ✓ [illegible] **administrative** and

D. Zagwe Dynasty

- The centre of Aksumites state **shifted southwards to Kubar** rural highland in the territory of the **Agaw**.
- This gave **Agaw elites the opportunity** to take part in **Aksumite state structure serving as soldiers** and **functionaries** for at least four centuries.
- After **integrating** so well with **Aksumite ruling class**, they successfully took over the state administration.
- The Agaw prince Merra-Tekle-Haimanot married ***Masobe Worq***, **the daughter of the last Aksumite king Dil Na'od.** Later he overthrew his **father-in-law** and took control of power (founder of **the Zagwe dynasty)**.
- His successors include **Yimirahana Kirstos**, **Harbe**, **Lalibela** (1160-1211), **Ne'akuto La'ab**, **Yetbarek** etc. Notwithstanding the debates, the Zagwe Dynasty is believed to have ruled from c. **1150 to 1270**.

- made its center in **Bugna** District at **Adafa** near **Roha** (Lalibela).
- The **territory of the Zagwe kingdom** extended from **most of the highland provinces of the ancient Aksumite kingdom** in the north down to **northern Shewa in the south**; the **Lake Tana region** and the **northern** part of what is today **Gojjam** in the **west**.
- The **Agaw maintained** the ancient Aksumite traditions almost intact.
  - ✓Zagwe rulers renewed **cultural** and **trade** contact with **eastern Mediterranean region.**
  - ✓The most important **export items** were included

- It was a ***golden age*** in Ethiopia's **paintings** and the translation of some of religious works from **Arabic** into **Ge'ez**.
- Zagwe **rulers** are **best known** for the **construction of Cave**, **semi-hewn**, and **monolithic churches.**

1. **Cave**: with some **decoration inside**, almost **similar with natural cave**, eg. **Bete-Mesqel**.



2. **Semi-hewn**:

- ✓ UNESCO world heritage and unique in construction
- ✓ With **detailed interior decoration** and **partial decoration outside**.
- ✓ not totally separated from surrounding rock.
- ✓ Their **roofs** or **walls** are still attached to rock eg. Bete Denagil, Bete Debresina/Mikael, Bete Golgota, Bete Merqoriwos, Bete Gabri'el Rufa'el and Bete Abba Libanos.

3. Monolithic

- had detailed decoration in the interior including roof and outside/exterior parts
- are **completely separated** (carved out) from **surrounding rock**

eg. Bete Amanuel, Bete Giyorgis, Bete Mariyam and Bete Medhanialem

- Among the eleven churches of Lalibela, **Bete Medhanelem** is **the largest** of all and **Bete Giyorgis** is said to be the **most finely built** in the shape of the **cross**.

- **Lalibela** wanted to **establish the second Jerusalem**, and mitigate or **avoid** difficulties, which Ethiopian Christians encountered in journey **to Holy Lands** at least once in their lifetime, by **constructing churches** based on the **model of Holy Lands in Israel**.

The decline of the Zagwe Dynasty

1. ***Internal problems of royal succession*** **and**
2. ***Oppositions from groups claiming descent from the ancient rulers of Aksum*****.** Considered them as "**illegitimate rulers**" based on the legend of the Queen of Sheba (a book known as ***Kebra-Negest*** **(Glory of Kings**) that was translated from **Coptic** to **Arabic** and then into **Ge'ez**).

- The power claimants contend that "Solomonic" Dynasty ruled the ***Aksumite state*** until its power was "usurped" by the Zagwes.
- Yekuno-Amlak (r. 1270-1285), who claimed decent from the last Aksumite king **Dilna'od** defeated and killed the last Zagwe king **Yitbarek at Gaynt**.

East, Central, Southern, and Western States

❖ Bizamo, Damot, Enarya and Gafat

A. Bizamo

- ✓ It was located on **the southern bend of Abay River** around the current **Wambar**a area.
- ✓ It was founded in the **8th c** and **had early connections with Damot**.

B. Damot

- ✓ It was **strong kingdom** that expanded its territories into most of the **lands to south of Abay** and **north of Lake Turkana** as well as **west of Awash and east of Didessa.**
- ✓ **Motalami** was a prominent king of Damot in the **13th century**.

c. Enarya

- It was a kingdom in **the Gibe region** in southwestern Ethiopia.
- The royal clan was **Hinnare Bushasho (Hinnario Busaso**).
- Enarya **kingship** was a **divine one**: **the king (Hinnare-Tato) was secluded and considered as sacred**. He communicated **visitors through an intermediary, Afe Busho**.
- The **real power rested with Mikretcho** (council) including **Awa-rasha** (king's spokesman) and Atche-rasha (royal treasurer).
- The kings had residences in **Yadare** and **Gowi.**
- Aksumite **king Digna-Jan** is said to have led a **campaign into Enarya**, accompanied by **Orthodox Christian priests carrying arks of covenant (*tabots)***.

D. Gafat

- ✓ Historically, the territory of **Gafat lies south of Abay (Blue Nile)**
- ✓ It was inhabited by **Semitic speaking** population related **to Adere/Harari and the Gurage.**
- ✓ It is **not clea**r from available records whether the **Gafat formed a "state" or not**, but Gafat mountains provided a rich source of **gold**.
- ✓ The Gafat largely remained practitioners of **their own indigenous religion.**
- ✓ As of early medieval period, **Gafat** was paying tribute to the Christian Kingdom mainly in **cattle**, which came from six districts, among which **Gambo** and **Shat** are Gafat clan names
- ✓ **The province/**state was governed by rulers bearing the title of ***Awalamo .***

Muslim Sultanates

- **8th c-spread of Islam was started; viable Muslim communities** and **states** had been established, especially along the main trade routes from Zeila and its many branches penetrating the interior

A. Shewa

- ✓ **Makhzumite Sultanate was f**ounded/set up by **Makhzumi Khalid ibn al-Walid**, who claimed decent from **Meca**, **in 896 A. D (283 A.H.)** on **northeastern foothill of Shewa**.

B. Fatagar

- ✓ It was founded around **Minjar, Shenkora and Ada'a in the 11th** c.
- ✓ **It was a hilly lowland area** with thoroughly cultivated fields of wheat and barley, fruits, and extensive grazing grounds full of numerous herds of cattle, sheep and goats.

C. Dawaro

- ✓ **Located south of Fatagar** between **upper waters of Awash** and **Wabi Shebelle** extending to Charchar in Northeast and Gindhir in Southeast.
- ✓ We have valuable information on Dawaro by an Egyptian courtier ***Ibn Fad Allah el-umari***
- ✓ had a currency called *hakuna* for transaction
- ✓ was much smaller than Ifat, but resembled in many aspects.

D. Bali

- ✓ It was an **extensive kingdom occupying high plateau, separating basins of Shebelle and Rift valley Lakes.**
- ✓ **Bali was one of the largest of Ethiopia's Muslim provinces**.
- ✓ economic activity- resembles those of other nearby Muslim lands, ***barter based trad***e-exchanging cattle, sheep, cloth etc.

- had **strong army composed of cavalry and infantry**

E. Ifat

- located adjecent to Shewan Sultanate
- Its territory ran from **northeast-southwesterly in the Afar plain eastward to the Awash**.
- **It was established by Umar Walasma**, from **Hashamite clan**

- The sultanate was **fertile and well watered**.
- **Its inhabitants earned their living from cultivation of wheat**, sorghum, millet and teff, and animal husbandry. Sugar cane, bananas, variety of fruits, beans, squashes, cucumbers, and cabbage completed the diet.
- **Chat** was described in here **for the first** time as being **consumed as a stimulant.**

F. Others

- Mutually independent states like Arababani (between Hadiya and Dawwaro)
- Biqulzar, Dera (between Dawaro and Bali), Fadise, Gidaya, Hargaya, Harla, Kwilgora, Qadise, Sharkah (West of Dawaro and North of Bali in Arsi) and Sim were established and flourished.

External Contacts

- **Egypt**
- **Mediterranean World/Greeco-Roman World**
- **Byzantine/Eastern Roman Empire-** after the introduction of Christianity
- **Europeans-** legend of Prester John

External Contacts

- **Ethiopia and the Horn had contacts with Egypt since at least 3,000 B. C.** These relations may be the region's earliest contacts with the **Mediterranean world** or the **Greco-Roman World**.
- **South Arabian Kingdoms** starting sometimes before 1,000 B.C.
- **Following the introduction of Christianity**, **Aksum** had established close relationship with **the East Roman or Byzantine Empire** with which it shared common commercial interest in the Red Sea area against their **rival Persians**.
- There was **fairly smooth and friendly relation until 7th** c AD
- in the seven century, this relation became complicated and began to deteriorate.

- **Mamluk**
- the tradition to **visit Jerusalem** and other holy places in the **Middle East**
- to reach the places, Ethiopian Christian pilgrims used the **land route** to Egypt. …Christian communities lived …became important bridge between Ethiopian Christian Kingdom and Europe.
- **A legend about Prester John**. Why? How?
- Around the middle of the **12th century** the **Europeans** began to consider Ethiopian Christian Kingdom as a **very powerful** and **wealthy state**

Economic Formations

- **Agriculture and Land Tenure System, handcraft and Trade**

A. Agriculture and Land Tenure System

- The main stay of ancient states' economy in highland areas was **plough agriculture**.
- The mastery of the **technology of irrigation** also contributed to the **growth of agricultural production**.
- The rules according to which members of the **society hold**, **share** and **use land** constitute is known as **the land tenure system.**

- The most ancient system of land holding which survived in many parts of Ethiopia and the Horn is the **communal land tenure system**.
- **Communal right to land is a group right**. Here group refers to the **family**, the **clan** and the other **lineage groups** to which the individual belonged, had communal right to the land they lived in and freely exploited the resources of the land.
- Peasants in the north had ***rist*** **rights** in their respective areas.
- **Rist is a kind of communal birthright** to land by members of the families and clans whose ancestors had settled and lived in the area over long periods.

- **Bale-rist - rist owners.**
- They **paid tributes** to the state and all land belonged to the state theoretically.
- **Gult** is a right to levy tribute on rist owners' produce.
- The tribute collected by **bale-gults**, partly apportioned for their own up keep and the rest were sent to the imperial center.
- **Riste-Gult**- When Gult right became **hereditary**, famous well placed officials used to transfer their position to their offspring.

B. Handicraft

- Indigenous handcraft technology had existed since the ancient period.
- The social, economic and political conditions of ancient states had allowed the emergence of **artisans** in various fields with diverse forms and applications including metal work, pottery, tannery, carpentry, masonry, weaving, jeweler, basketry and others.
- However, the artisans were mostly **despised** and **marginalized** except the carpenters and masons in some cases.
- The **ruling class** – import luxurious items
- The general public attitude towards artisans was not at all encouraging. …Contributed to did not show any **significant improvement and sophistication**

c. Trade

- **Trade** was another important economic activity of ancient states that obtained considerable income from both internal and international trade.
- Network of roads

Socio-cultural Achievements

Architecture

- one of the unique architectural technologies was t**he engraving of stele in the 3rd century AD.**
  - **There were totally 58 steles in and around Aksum**
  - They can be grouped into three
    - well made and decorated
    - half completed and
    - megaliths (not hewn), which are engraved at **Gobadra**
- **The longest one of these stele measures 33meters heights** (the first in the world).
  - **It is highly decorated in all of its four sides**

- It represents **a-14 storied building** with many windows and a false door at the bottom
- It also bears **pre-Christian symbols**, which are a disc and a crescent (half moon) at the top. Broken during erecting time

- **The second longest obelisk measures 24 meters height**
  - It was **successfully erected** and represents a **ten storied building** with many windows and a false door at the bottom.
- **The third longest stele measures 21 meters**
  - It represents a **nine-storied building** with many windows and a false door at the bottom.
  - It is smooth at the back of its side with no decoration.

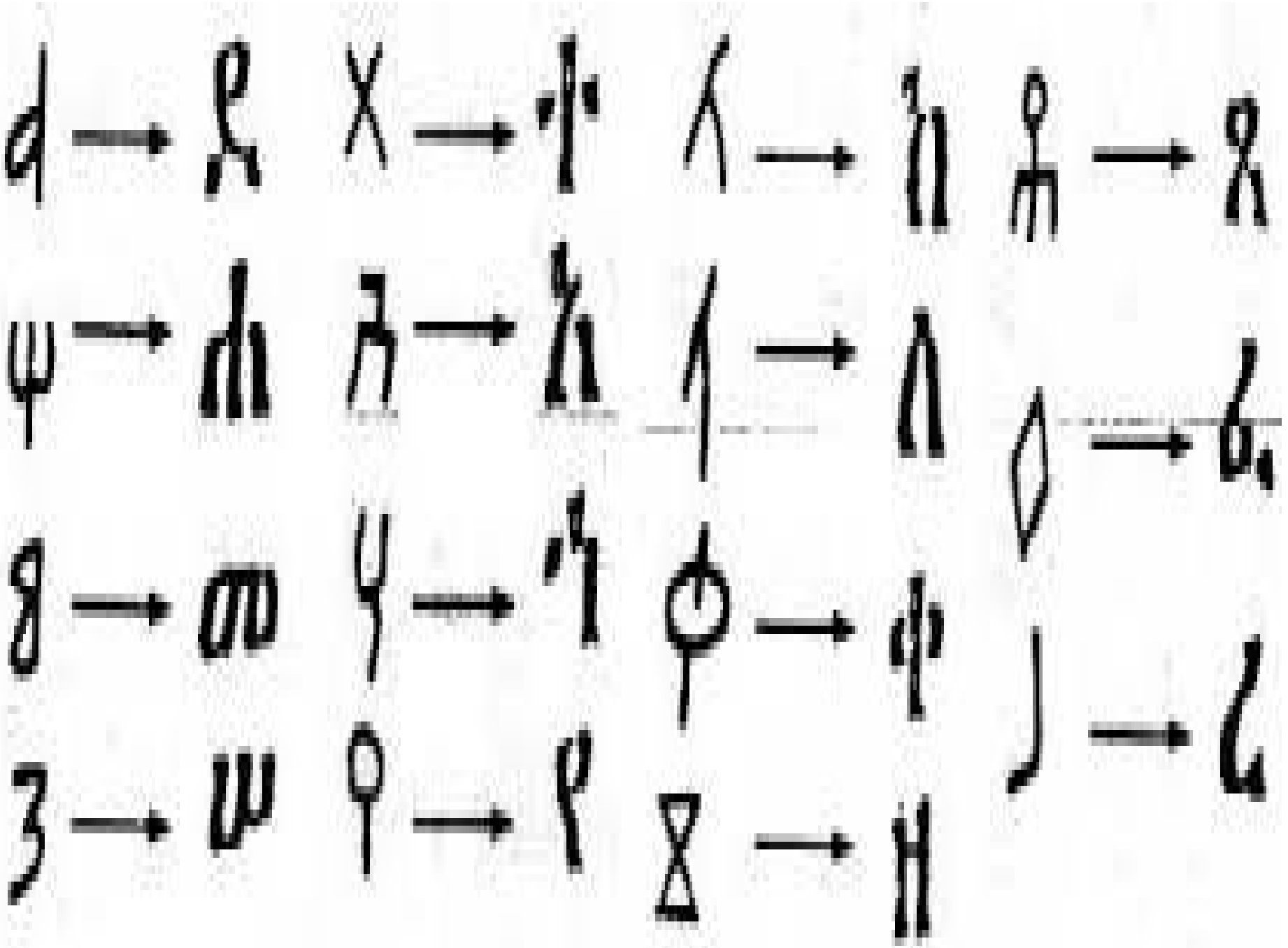


- **The Zagwe churches-** Regarded as some of the **finest architecture of artistic achievements of the Christian world**.
- It was **registered** by **UNESCO** as part of **world cultural heritage in 1978.**
- Zagwe



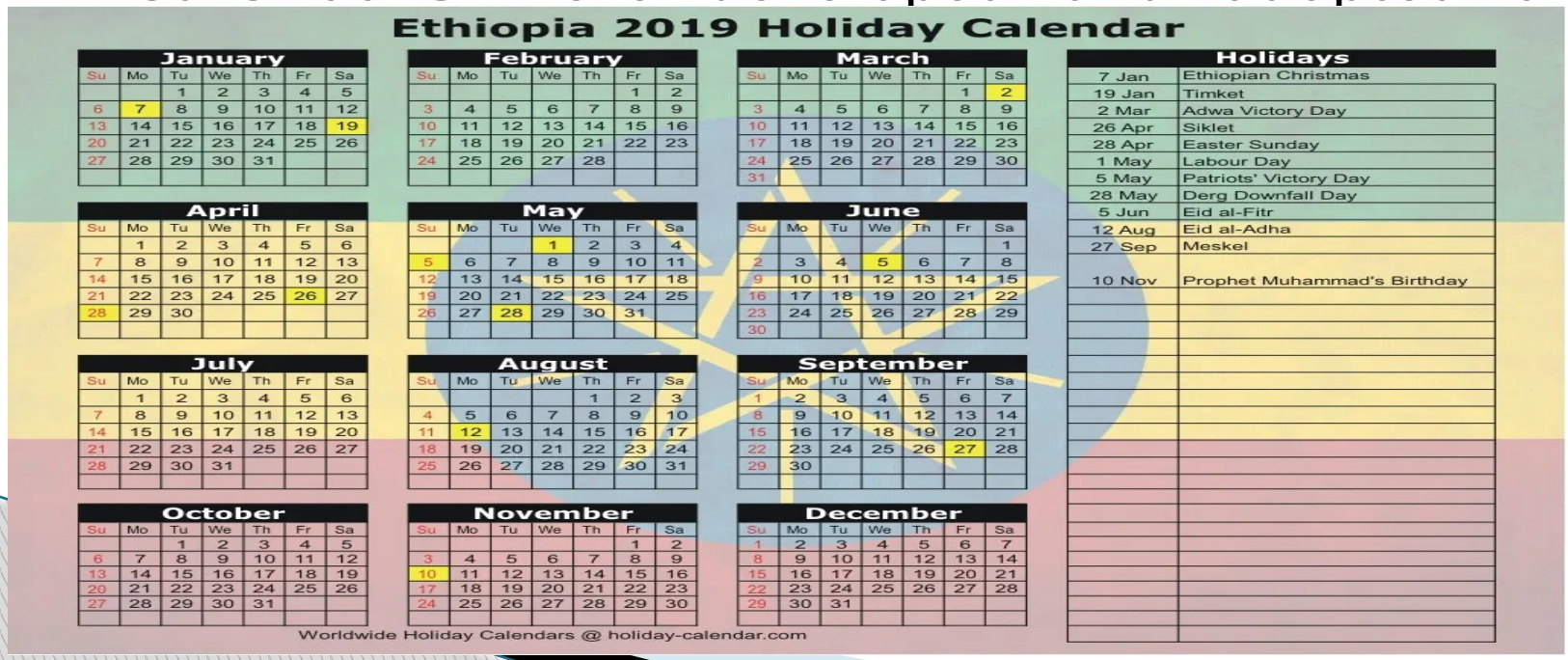
Writing System

- **The earliest Sabean language in Eth. & Er. that date to 9th c BC**
  - had **an alphabet with boustrophedon** writing type
  - One peculiar feature of Sabean inscriptions is **absence of vowels** as most of the words are written in consonants
  - For instance, **Da'amat** was described as **D'mt**, while its successive kings as RDM, RBH and LMN using title, mlkn
- **Geʿez script**
  - "Geʿez alphabet'' appeared in **1st** c AD
  - **It has 26 consonant letters written left-to-right**
  - **Ethiopia's ancient indigenous writing system** has immense contribution to the development of literature, art and the writing of history



c. **Calendar-**times

- ✓ the length of the month was based on the **movement of the moon** or the apparent movement of the **sun**. the **number of days in the week** or in the year varied from region to region
- ✓ **Calendars** were developed and adopted among



The Oromo calendar

- ✓ It has been based on **astronomical observations of moon** in conjunction with **seven or eight particular stars** called ***Urjii Dhahaa*** **(guiding stars) and *Bakkalcha* (morning star).**
- ✓ **29.5 day in a month and 354 in a year**

The Sidama calendar

- ✓ It rotates **following movements of stars with 13 months a year,** 12 of which are divided equally into 28 days while the thirteenth month has 29 days.
- ✓ **The Sidama week has only 4 days** (**Dikko**, *Dela*, *Qawado* and *Qawalanka*) and hence **each month has 7 weeks**.
- ✓ Fiche Chambalala, it is New Year for Sidama

❖ Ethiopic solar calendar

- ✓ **It has 12 months of 30 days plus 5 or 6** (is added every 4 years) **Epagomenal** days, which comprise a thirteenth month.
- ✓ **A gap of 7–8 years between Ethiopic and Gregorian** calendars results from **alternative calculation in determining date of Annunciation**.
- ✓ The **Ethiopic solar calendar** has evolved to become the ***official calendar of the country.***

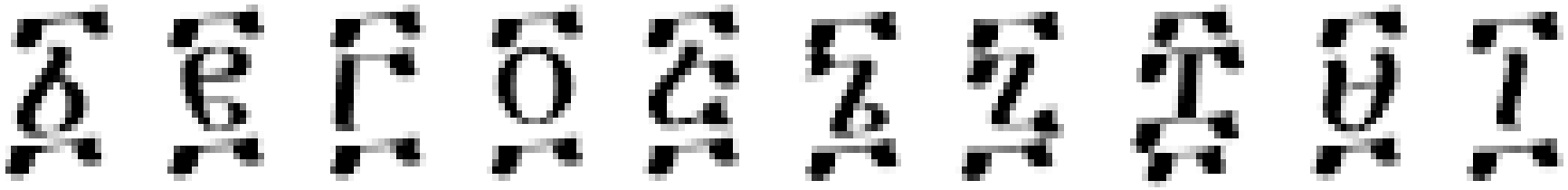
The Muslim (Islamic) calendar

- **It is a *lunar calendar* consisting of 12 lunar months in a year of 354 or 355 days.**
- **Hijra (year of 622 AD)**, in which Mohammed and his followers made flight from Mecca to Medina and established the **first Muslim community (ummah), taken as departure**
- **AH&BH- Years prior to the Hijra are reckoned as BH ("Before the Hijra").**

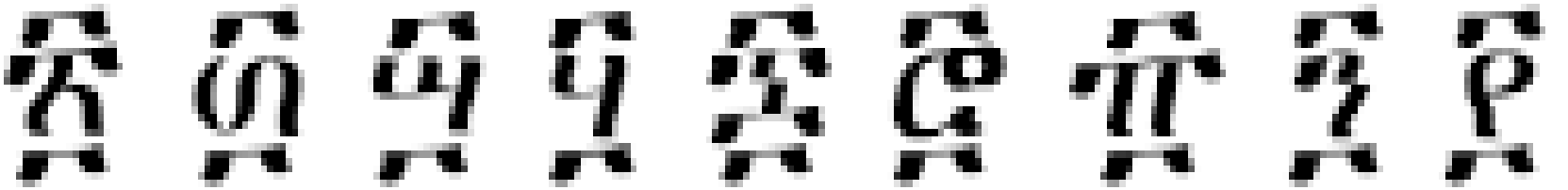
- Other peoples like the **Agaw**, **Halaba**, **Hadiya**, **Wolayta**, **Gedeo**, the **Nilotes**, etc have their own **dating system.**

D. Numerals

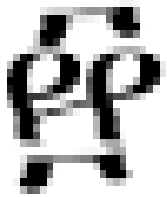
- **Numerals** appeared in **Ethiopia** and the **Horn** at the **beginning of fourth century AD**.
  - ✓ **Geʿez** uses numeral system comparable to the **Hebrew**, **Arabic** and **Greek** numerals, but it *lacks individual characters for multiples of 100*.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



10,000

Thank You!